

Psalms 88:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?

Analysis

Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? (הִיטָפֶר בַּקֶּבֶר חֶסֶדְךָ, hayesupar bakever chasdekha)—The word chesed (חֶסֶד) is God's covenant loyalty, faithful love, the very essence of His character toward His people. Can this chesed be recounted, declared, proclaimed among the dead? The psalmist assumes not—death silences testimony. **Or thy faithfulness in destruction?** (אֶמֻנַתְךָ בְּאַבְדֹן, emunatekha ba-avadon)—Abaddon means destruction, ruin, perdition, used as a name for the realm of the dead (Job 26:6; Proverbs 15:11).

The irony is profound: the psalmist questions whether God's faithfulness can be known in the place of destruction, yet he is experiencing that very destruction now while still alive. His situation feels like Abaddon already. Still, the New Testament reveals that Christ descended into destruction itself, proclaiming victory even to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19), demonstrating that God's chesed reaches even to the grave.

Historical Context

Abaddon appears six times in the Old Testament, always referring to the realm of the dead. Revelation 9:11 personifies it as "the angel of the bottomless pit." The ancient Israelite understanding that death ended the declaration of God's faithfulness made earthly life precious—every day was an opportunity to testify to God's chesed that would be lost at death.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does knowing that God's *chesed* (steadfast love) reaches even to the grave change your perspective on death?
2. When life circumstances feel like "destruction," how can you still declare God's lovingkindness?
3. In what ways does Christ's descent to the dead demonstrate the extent of God's faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

הִסְפֵּר	בְּקֶרֶב	חַסְדְּךָ	אֶת־אֱמוּנָתְךָ	בְּאַבְדֻּן:
be declared	in the grave	Shall thy lovingkindness	or thy faithfulness	in destruction
H5608	H6913	H2617	H530	H11

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org