

Psalms 88:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Analysis

Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? (הַיְיָ וְיָדְךָ פָּלָךְ בְּחֹשֶׁךְ, hayivada vachoshekh pilekha)—Darkness here is both literal (the darkness of Sheol) and metaphorical (spiritual darkness, ignorance, despair). Can God's miraculous works be known in such darkness? **And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?** (וְצִדְקָתְךָ בְּאָרֶץ נֶשִׁיָּה, vetzidkarekha be-eretz neshiyah)—The "land of forgetfulness" is Sheol, where the dead forget and are forgotten. Can God's righteousness be recognized there?

These rhetorical questions assume the answer "No"—driving home the urgency of the psalmist's plea for deliverance now. Yet providentially, these questions point forward to Christ, the light who shone in the darkness (John 1:5), whose righteousness was declared even in death (Romans 4:25), and who ensures believers are never forgotten by God. Paul declares that nothing—not even death—can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38-39), directly answering Heman's dark questions.

Historical Context

The "land of forgetfulness" captures the ancient conception of Sheol as a place where memory fades—both God's memory of the dead and the dead's memory of God. This made the Jewish emphasis on remembrance (memorial stones, feast days, genealogies) all the more critical. Only in this life could one remember and be remembered by God—or so it seemed until Christ's resurrection.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. When you are in seasons of spiritual darkness, how do you remind yourself of God's "wonders" and "righteousness"?
2. What does it mean that Christ is the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it?
3. How does the promise that God never forgets His children provide comfort when you feel forgotten?

Interlinear Text

בְּאָרוֹן | צְדָקָתְךָ פָּلָא תָּ | בְּחַשְׁבָּן הַיּוֹם
in the land | thy righteousness and thy wonders Shall thy in the dark be known

בְּשִׁזְבָּה: of forgetfulness

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 9:5 (Parallel theme): For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

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