

Psalms 88:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

Analysis

They came round about me daily like water (סַבּוּנִי כַמַּיִם כָּל־הַיּוֹם, sabuni chamayim kol-hayom)—"They" refers to the terrors mentioned in verse 16, now personified as assailants surrounding the victim. "Like water" suggests overwhelming, inescapable encirclement—not just a single wave but constant immersion. "Daily" (kol-hayom, literally "all the day") emphasizes the relentless, unceasing nature of the assault. **They compassed me about together** (הִקְיִפוּ עָלַי יַחַד, hikifu alay yachad)—"Together" suggests coordinated attack from all sides simultaneously, leaving no escape route.

Psalms 88 ends at verse 18 with the haunting word "darkness"—no resolution, no deliverance, no praise. The psalmist remains surrounded, overwhelmed, and alone. Yet this unresolved ending points forward to the darkest moment in history: Christ on the cross, surrounded by mockers, engulfed by divine wrath, crying out in abandonment. But that darkness gave way to resurrection light, transforming every experience of unresolved suffering into a temporary prelude to eternal glory.

Historical Context

This psalm's placement in Book III of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) is significant. Book III deals with national suffering and the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant, ending with Psalm 89's lament over rejected kingship. Psalm 88 personalizes that national crisis—what does it feel like when God's promises seem to fail? Yet the

Psalter continues to Books IV-V, which emphasize God's eternal reign and ultimate faithfulness, providing the hope that Psalm 88 itself lacks.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do you maintain hope when suffering feels relentless—coming at you "daily" with no reprieve?
2. What does it mean that Scripture includes a psalm that ends without resolution, validating your own unresolved struggles?
3. How does the three-day gap between Christ's unresolved death and resurrection morning speak to seasons when you are still waiting for deliverance?

Interlinear Text

סָבּוּ וַיָּבִי	כַּמַּיִם	כָּל	הַיּוֹם	הֵקֵי יָפוּ	עָלַי
They came round about	like water	H3605	me daily	they compassed	H5921
H5437	H4325		H3117	H5362	
יָחַד:					
me about together					
H3162					

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 22:16 (Parallel theme): For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

