

Psalms 91:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Analysis

Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked—

The Hebrew phrase בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְטַח (raq be'eynekha tabbit, 'only with your eyes you will look') emphasizes passive observation rather than personal experience. The righteous dwelling in God's shelter (v. 1) will witness divine judgment from a position of safety, not suffer it themselves.

The phrase **reward of the wicked** (שִׁלּוּמָת רָשָׁעִים, shillumat resha'im) uses שִׁלּוּמָת (shillumat), meaning 'recompense' or 'retribution'—the same root as שָׁלֵם (shalem, 'complete, finished'). This is not vindictive pleasure but sober recognition of God's justice. Jesus echoed this principle in Luke 21:28: 'When these things begin to come to pass, look up... for your redemption draweth nigh.' The believer observes God's righteous judgments while personally protected by covenant relationship.

Historical Context

Psalm 91 is traditionally attributed to Moses, reflecting Israel's wilderness experience where God's protection was visibly demonstrated while surrounding nations faced judgment. The psalm became a messianic text—Satan quoted verses 11-12 during Christ's temptation (Matthew 4:6), and Jewish tradition associated it with pestilence protection, making it particularly relevant during plagues.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does witnessing God's justice affect your understanding of His holiness and mercy toward you?
2. What is the difference between observing divine judgment with reverent sobriety versus taking pleasure in others' downfall?

Interlinear Text

תְּرָא אֶת־שְׁלָמָם תַּבְּנֵי־בָּעֵד יְמֵי־בָּרָא
H7535 Only with thine eyes H5869 H5027 H8011 H7563 H7200

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:34 (Evil): Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

Malachi 1:5 (Parallel theme): And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

Psalms 92:11 (Evil): Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.

Isaiah 3:11 (Evil): Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

Hebrews 2:2 (Parallel theme): For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

