

Psalm 95:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

Analysis

This verse establishes God's superiority within the cosmos through explicit theological declaration. 'For the LORD is a great God' employs the word 'gadol' (great), indicating supremacy in power, authority, and dignity. The emphasis 'and a great King above all gods' makes a twofold claim: first, that God is king (ruler and sovereign), and second, that He is exalted above all other gods. This declares not merely monotheism but explicit supremacy over any claims rival powers might make. The phrase 'above all gods' acknowledges the existence of other deities in the religious landscape of the ancient world (whether understood as demon powers, false gods, or merely the gods worshipped by other nations) while asserting their absolute subordination. The 'For' (Hebrew 'ki') suggests this verse provides the theological rationale for the worship commands of verses 1-2: we worship the Lord with such intensity because He is uniquely great and supremely authoritative. This verse functions as a doctrinal anchor, establishing God's absolute sovereignty as the foundation for corporate praise.

Historical Context

This verse reflects Israel's theology during periods when they were surrounded by nations claiming divine authority for their own gods. In the ancient Near East, each nation understood its god as supreme and called its king the god's representative. Israel's declaration that YHWH was 'great' and 'above all gods' was countercultural. The language parallels declarations in Exodus 15:11 ('Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?') and throughout the Psalms (Psalm 86:8, 89:6-8). During the Babylonian exile, when Marduk was proclaimed supreme in

Babylon and Israel's Temple lay in ruins, such affirmations of YHWH's supremacy would have sustained faith. In the post-exilic period, when Jews lived under Persian rule and later Greek rule, this declaration maintained theological identity and religious confidence despite political subjugation. The phrase echoes the second commandment (Exodus 20:3) and theological statements throughout Deuteronomy that assert YHWH's exclusivity and supremacy.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean theologically to assert that God is 'great' and 'king above all gods' in a world that claims many sources of power and authority?
2. How should the declaration of God's supremacy affect our willingness to worship Him alone rather than offering allegiance to competing authorities?
3. In what ways does recognizing God as 'great' challenge human pride and the tendency to elevate human accomplishment or wisdom?
4. How does this verse provide rational and theological foundation for the passionate worship commanded in the preceding verses?
5. What does 'great King' imply about God's authority to govern our lives and demand our allegiance?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	עַל	גָּדָל	וְאֶל	כָּל	יְהִי הָרָא	גָּדָל	וְאֶל	כָּל
H3588	God	and a great	For the LORD	King	and a great		H5921	H3605
	H410	H1419	H3068	H4428		H1419		

אלֹהִים:

above all gods

H430

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 96:4 (References God): For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

Psalms 145:3 (References Lord): Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

Psalms 97:9 (References God): For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

Psalms 135:5 (References God): For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

Exodus 18:11 (References God): Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

Matthew 5:35 (Kingdom): Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Psalms 47:2 (Kingdom): For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

Isaiah 44:8 (References God): Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Jeremiah 46:18 (Kingdom): As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come.

Malachi 1:11 (References Lord): For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org