

Psalm 96:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.

Analysis

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. This verse personifies all creation as participants in universal worship. The imperatives summon cosmic celebration: "Let the heavens rejoice" (yismechu ha-shamayim, יִשְׁמְחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם) uses samach (שָׁמַח), to rejoice or be glad. The heavens—sky, celestial realm, perhaps angelic hosts—are called to joy.

"Let the earth be glad" (vtagel ha'arets, וְתַגֵּל הָאָרֶץ) employs gil (גִּיל), meaning to exult, rejoice exceedingly, or spin around in joy. If the heavens rejoice, the earth must respond with corresponding gladness. "Let the sea roar" (yir'am hayam, רַעַם הַיָּם) uses ra'am (רַעַם), to thunder or roar—the ocean's mighty voice contributes to the cosmic hymn. "And the fulness thereof" (umlo'o, וְלֹאָוֶן) includes everything filling the sea—marine life, ships, islands—all joining the chorus.

This passage anticipates Romans 8:19-22, where creation groans awaiting redemption but will be liberated into glorious freedom when God's children are revealed. Creation's joy in Psalm 96 celebrates God's kingship (v. 10) and righteous judgment (v. 13). When Christ returns, creation itself will be renewed, and the new heavens and new earth will echo with perpetual praise (Revelation 21:1).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cosmology conceived the universe as ordered layers: heavens above, earth in the middle, and seas below. Psalm 96 summons all three to

worship, demonstrating Yahweh's total sovereignty over every realm. While pagan religions had separate gods for sky (Zeus/Jupiter), earth (Gaia/Terra), and sea (Poseidon/Neptune), Israel's monotheism confessed one God ruling all. This cosmic scope reflects creation's original purpose: to glorify its Maker (Psalm 19:1). The fall subjected creation to futility (Romans 8:20), but redemption promises cosmic restoration.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does creation's current 'groaning' (pollution, natural disasters, extinction) reflect the fall and await redemption?
2. What does it mean that inanimate creation can 'worship' God, and how does this shape environmental stewardship?
3. How does recognizing that all creation will ultimately worship God affect your confidence in the gospel's victory?

Interlinear Text

רֹאשֶׁת	שְׁמָמִים	וְשָׁמָחַ	לְ	בְּ	שְׁמָמִים	וְתַגֵּל	בְּאֶרֶץ	וְרֹעֵם	בְּ	יָם	וְרֹעֵם	וְשָׁמָחַ
rejoice	Let the heavens	be glad	and let the earth					roar	let the sea			
H8055	H8064	H1523	H776					H7481	H3220			

וְמַלְאָן
and the fulness
H4393

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 49:13 (Parallel theme): Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Psalms 69:34 (Parallel theme): Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.

Psalms 97:1 (Parallel theme): The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Isaiah 44:23 (Parallel theme): Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

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