

Psalms 96:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Analysis

This closing verse of Psalm 96 presents God in the role of cosmic judge, establishing the ultimate vindication of His justice. 'Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth' announces God's coming as judge. The repetition 'for he cometh, for he cometh' emphasizes certainty and imminence - the coming is sure and perhaps near. God comes 'to judge the earth' - to exercise righteous judgment over all creation. 'He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth' specifies the character of God's judgment: it is righteous (just, proper, aligned with moral law) and truthful (based on reality, not deception). The parallel structure creates a cosmic scope: both 'world' and 'people' are subject to judgment, both according to God's justice and truth. This verse provides eschatological perspective - it reminds worshippers that earthly injustices will not persist forever. God's future judgment will vindicate His righteousness and punish rebellion. The movement of the psalm culminates here: from worship and witness (earlier verses) to the assurance of final judgment. This provides theological foundation for hopeful faith: despite current injustices, God will ultimately establish righteous rule.

Historical Context

The vision of God coming to judge the earth appears throughout the Old Testament, particularly in prophetic literature (Isaiah 34:8, 40:10; Joel 3:12) and in apocalyptic passages (Daniel 7:10-14). This eschatological hope sustained Israel

during periods of oppression - the confidence that God would ultimately vindicate the righteous and punish the wicked. The emphasis on judgment 'with righteousness and truth' reflects the covenant values central to Israel's theology: God's character is inherently just and truthful. Unlike human judges who might be corrupted or deceived, God's judgment is absolutely reliable. In the post-exilic period, when Jews lived under foreign rule and oppression, such affirmations of God's coming judgment provided hope for vindication. The New Testament reinterprets this coming judgment through Jesus (John 5:22-27), suggesting that the ultimate judge is the God-man who combines divine justice with human redemption. The cosmic scope of judgment ('earth' and 'world') reflects the belief that God's justice is not limited to Israel but extends to all creation.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What comfort and challenge does the affirmation of God's coming judgment provide to believers experiencing injustice?
2. How does belief in ultimate judgment affect our response to present unrighteousness?
3. Why is it significant that God judges 'with righteousness and truth' rather than arbitrarily or capriciously?
4. In what ways does the certainty of coming judgment ('for he cometh, for he cometh') shape hope and vigilance?
5. How should the expectation of God's judgment transform our priorities and values in the present?

Interlinear Text

לִפְנֵי י	יְהוָה הוּא	כִּי י	בָּא	כִּי י	בָּא	יִשְׁפֹּט
Before	the LORD	H3588	for he cometh	H3588	for he cometh	he shall judge
H6440	H3068		H935		H935	H8199
הָאָרֶץ	יִשְׁפֹּט	יְהוָה ל	בְּצִדִּיק	וְעַם יִם		
the earth	he shall judge	the world	with righteousness	and the people		
H776	H8199	H8398	H6664	H5971		

בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ:

with his truth
H530

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 19:11 (Righteousness): And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

2 Timothy 4:8 (Righteousness): Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.