

Psalm 96:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

Analysis

This verse calls for declaration of God's glory among the nations and peoples. 'Declare his glory among the heathen' uses 'glory' (Hebrew 'kabod') to describe God's manifested power, splendor, and weighty significance. 'Glory' is not abstract but visible, demonstrated in divine acts. The command to declare this 'among the heathen' (non-Israelite peoples) reflects a missionary impulse: all nations should know of God's glory. 'His wonders among all people' repeats the universal scope while shifting emphasis to 'wonders' - miraculous acts that demonstrate divine power. Throughout the Old Testament, God's wonders (Hebrew 'pele') are His mighty acts - the plagues on Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, or the restoration of Israel. These wonders serve as signs pointing to God's character and power. This verse establishes that authentic worship cannot remain privatized or national but must overflow into testimony and witness. The progression from singing to blessing to declaring creates an expanding sphere of influence: from worship in the Temple to proclamation before all peoples. The verse's vision encompasses a universal awareness of God's glory among all humanity.

Historical Context

The concept of declaring God's glory and wonders to the nations appears throughout the Old Testament, particularly in post-exilic literature (Isaiah 40:5, 66:19; Malachi 1:11). During the exile, when Israel was captive and powerless, such declarations would have seemed visionary - yet they expressed confidence in God's ultimate vindication. The idea that Israel's purpose included bearing witness

to God's character among the nations reflects their calling as 'a light to the nations' (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). In the Hellenistic period and beyond, Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world served this witness function, attracting 'God-fearers' (Gentiles who acknowledged YHWH). The emphasis on 'wonders' would have recalled Israel's foundational narrative - the exodus from Egypt with its miraculous signs - which had demonstrated God's incomparable power. The vision of universal knowledge of God's glory foreshadows the ultimate goal of all creation recognizing YHWH's supremacy. This verse establishes that witness to God is not a later Christian innovation but a core part of Israel's theological identity.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What is the relationship between experiencing God's glory and feeling called to declare it to others?
2. How does this verse challenge the idea that faith is merely private or individual?
3. Why might God's wonders be particularly important as evidence of His power to those who don't yet know Him?
4. In what ways does the command to declare God's glory 'among all people' anticipate a universal recognition of God?
5. How should Christians understand their inheritance of Israel's calling to declare God's glory among the nations?

Interlinear Text

1 סִפְרֵר	בְּגֹויִם	בְּכָל	בְּעַמִּים	גִּפְלָאוֹתִים:
Declare	among the heathen	his glory	H3605	among all people

H5608 H1471 H3519 H5971 H6381

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 22:27 (Parallel theme): All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

Luke 24:47 (Parallel theme): And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Isaiah 49:6 (Parallel theme): And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Zechariah 9:10 (Parallel theme): And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Matthew 28:19 (Parallel theme): Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Micah 4:2 (Parallel theme): And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
