

Psalms 97:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

Analysis

Fire going before God symbolizes His holiness consuming impurity and His judgment against sin. The verb 'burneth up' (lahat) indicates complete consumption. This imagery recalls the pillar of fire, Elijah's altar, and anticipates eschatological judgment. God's enemies being consumed demonstrates that opposition to Him is futile. The fire represents both God's zeal for His own glory and His active judgment against evil—He is not passive but dynamically opposes wickedness.

Historical Context

Israel witnessed God's fire consuming sacrifices, destroying Sodom, and defeating Baal's prophets—establishing fire as a symbol of divine presence and judgment.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the imagery of God's holiness as consuming fire affect your understanding of sin's seriousness?

2. In what ways should awareness of God's judgment against His enemies humble and sober you?

Interlinear Text

אֵשׁ	לִפְנֵי	יְהוָה	וְתֵלֶה	סָבִיב	צָרָיו:
A fire	before	H1980	him and burneth up	round about	his enemies
H784	H6440		H3857	H5439	H6862

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 50:3 (Parallel theme): Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

Psalms 18:8 (Parallel theme): There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

Hebrews 12:29 (Parallel theme): For our God is a consuming fire.

Malachi 4:1 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (Parallel theme): In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Daniel 7:10 (Parallel theme): A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Deuteronomy 32:22 (Parallel theme): For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.