

Psalm 97:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.

Analysis

Divine lightning illuminating the world (tevel) represents God's revelation breaking through darkness. The earth seeing and trembling (chul—writhing, travailing) depicts creation's response to its Creator's unveiled presence. This isn't mere natural phenomenon but theophanic manifestation—God making His power visible. The universal scope ('world... earth') emphasizes that all creation witnesses and responds to God's glory. The trembling is appropriate reverence, not servile terror—the creature acknowledging the Creator.

Historical Context

Lightning was often associated with divine activity in ancient literature, but here it serves as God's self-disclosure rather than capricious divine anger.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. When has an encounter with God's glory caused you to 'tremble' with reverential awe?

2. How can you cultivate appropriate fear of the Lord while also enjoying intimacy with Him through Christ?

Interlinear Text

רָא יְרָא בָּרְקֵן יְהִי תְּבִלְתָּה וְתַחַת לְתַחַת הַמָּרָאָה וְתַחַת לְתַחַת הַמָּרָאָה

enlightened His lightnings the world saw and trembled the earth

H215 H1300 H8398 H7200 H2342 H776

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 77:18 (Light): The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

Psalms 104:32 (Parallel theme): He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

Revelation 11:19 (Light): And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

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