

Psalm 98:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

Analysis

This verse expands the circle of worship to include non-human creation, suggesting that nature itself should rejoice in God's rule. 'Let the floods clap their hands' uses vivid imagery: floods (represented as having hands) clapping together suggest waters flowing powerfully, meeting, and creating sound. The metaphor gives agency to nature and includes it in worship. 'Let the hills be joyful together' similarly attributes joy to hills, suggesting that all of creation should share in celebration of God's glory. The verse reflects a theology that sees all creation participating in recognizing God's supremacy. This is not merely poetic fancy but theological assertion: the entire created order exists to glorify God and respond to His grandeur. The parallelism between 'floods clap their hands' and 'hills be joyful' suggests that different aspects of creation - mobile waters and fixed mountains - both participate in worship. This verse indicates that human worship does not occur in isolation but as part of a cosmic reality where all creation responds to God. The notion that nature 'claps' and 'rejoices' elevates creation beyond being passive background to worship but as active participant in praising the Creator.

Historical Context

The concept of creation worshipping or praising God appears throughout Scripture (Psalm 148, Isaiah 44:23, Romans 8:19-22). In ancient Near Eastern thought, the cosmos was understood as responsive to divine will and power. The language of creation celebrating God reflects the conviction that the entire universe is oriented toward divine glory. In the post-exilic period, as the Jewish community rebuilt and restored the Temple, the vision of cosmic celebration of God's rule affirmed that

renewal extended beyond human restoration to the restoration of cosmic order. The image of 'floods clapping hands' and 'hills rejoicing' appears in Isaiah 55:12, suggesting it was part of Israel's theological vocabulary. The vision of nature responding to God's rule connects to hopes for eschatological renewal, when creation itself would be transformed and purified (Isaiah 11:6-9, Revelation 21:1-4). The inclusion of creation in worship also establishes theological anthropology: humans are not separate from creation but part of it, and our worship should be in harmony with the entire created order's orientation toward God's glory.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does attributing praise and joy to non-human creation expand our understanding of worship and God's sovereignty?
2. What does it suggest about God's character that creation itself is oriented toward glorifying and celebrating Him?
3. In what ways does the vision of cosmic worship challenge anthropocentric (human-centered) worldviews?
4. How might we better align our worship with the reality that all creation participates in praising God?
5. What implications does creation's participation in worship have for environmental stewardship and care?

Interlinear Text

Let the floods	clap	their hands	together	let the hills	be joyful
H5104	H4222	H3709	H3162	H2022	H7442

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 55:12 (Parallel theme): For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Psalms 47:1 (Parallel theme): O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

Psalms 89:12 (Parallel theme): The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

Psalms 93:3 (Parallel theme): The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

2 Kings 11:12 (Parallel theme): And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

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