

Psalm 98:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

This concluding verse returns to the theme of God's coming judgment that appears at the end of Psalm 96. 'Before the LORD; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth' establishes God's future role as cosmic judge. The repetition 'for he cometh, for he cometh' emphasizes both certainty and imminence. 'Judge the earth' reiterates the cosmic scope of God's justice - His judgment extends over all creation and all peoples. 'With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with his truth' specifies again that God's judgment is characterized by righteousness and truth. The verse concludes the psalm by placing present worship in eschatological perspective: the worship, celebration, and joyful noise of the present (verses 1-8) are authentic responses to God's character and foreshadow the day when His judgment will be universally acknowledged. The movement from celebrating God's past mercies to affirming His future judgment suggests that authentic worship encompasses both gratitude for salvation already experienced and hope in salvation yet to come. The closing verses of Psalm 98 thus mirror those of Psalm 96, providing structural and theological cohesion to the twin psalms.

Historical Context

The eschatological vision of God's coming judgment provided sustained hope for Israel throughout their history, particularly during periods of oppression and exile. The affirmation that God 'shall judge the world with righteousness' asserted that

despite present injustices, God's ultimate justice would prevail. This hope was particularly vital during the late post-exilic period, when Jews lived under successive foreign powers (Persian, Greek, Roman) and yet maintained faith that God remained sovereign. The concept of God judging 'with truth' - that is, based on actual knowledge and reality rather than appearance or deception - distinguished God's judgment from human justice that might be corrupted. The parallel structure with Psalm 96:13 suggests these were companion psalms used in worship, perhaps in responsive fashion. The placement of both psalms in the Psalter, immediately before Psalm 99-100, creates a progression emphasizing God's kingship, coming judgment, and ultimate vindication. The eschatological perspective grounds present worship in ultimate reality: the celebration offered now anticipates and foreshadows the universal acknowledgment of God's kingship at the end of time.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the affirmation of God's future judgment provide comfort and motivation for present worship and obedience?
2. Why might post-exilic Jews have found particular strength in the vision of God's coming judgment?
3. What is the relationship between celebrating God's past mercies (verses 1-8) and affirming His future judgment (verse 9)?
4. How does God's judgment 'with righteousness and truth' ensure cosmic justice and order?
5. In what ways should confidence in God's ultimate judgment transform how we live and worship in the present?

Interlinear Text

ל פָּנִי	כ י הָיָה ה	בָּא	וְשִׁפְטָה	בְּאָרֶץ	וְשִׁפְטָה
Before	the LORD	H3588	for he cometh	shall he judge	the earth
H6440	H3068		H935	H8199	H776
תִּבְשְׂרִים:	בְּמִשְׁרִים:	בְּאָרֶץ	בְּמִשְׁרִים:	בְּאָרֶץ	בְּמִשְׁרִים:
the world	with righteousness	H6664	and the people	with equity	H4339
H8398			H5971		

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 96:13 (Righteousness): 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.

Psalms 96:10 (Righteousness): Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

Acts 17:31 (Righteousness): Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Revelation 1:7 (Parallel theme): Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

Isaiah 5:16 (Righteousness): But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

Acts 24:25 (Righteousness): And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.