

Zephaniah 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

Analysis

The LORD will be terrible unto them (nora YHWH aleihem)—'Terrible' (nora) means fearsome, awe-inspiring, even dreadful. This anticipates God's final revelation when every knee will bow (Philippians 2:10-11), not from love but from sheer terror for many.

For he will famish all the gods of the earth (ki razah et kol elohei ha'aretz)—'Famish' (razah) means to make lean, to starve. Without worshipers bringing offerings, pagan gods will 'starve.' This is biting satire: idols depend on humans for sustenance (Psalm 115:4-8), while YHWH needs nothing (Acts 17:25). **Men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen**—Universal worship is the eschatological goal. Malachi 1:11 and Revelation 7:9-10 envision this global homage.

Historical Context

This prophecy began fulfillment when Babylon destroyed Moabite/Ammonite temples and their gods proved impotent. Ultimate fulfillment awaits Christ's return, when 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2:14).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God will 'starve' false gods—how are idols dependent on their worshipers?
2. How does this prophecy of universal worship encourage missionaries and evangelists facing resistant cultures?
3. What contemporary 'gods' (ideologies, systems, values) does God's Word expose as powerless and doomed to 'famine'?

Interlinear Text

אָתָּה	צַדְקָה	נֹזֵךְ	עַלְיָהָם	יְהִי	כִּי
unto them	for he	will famish			will be terrible
H853	H7329	H3588	H5921	H3068	The LORD
אֵלֶּה	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	יְשִׁמְךָנִים	לְאֵלֶּה	אֵלֶּה
him every one	and men shall worship	of the earth	all the gods	H3605	H430
H376	H7812	H776	H3605		
הָגִיאָה	אֵלֶּה	מִלְקָומָה	כֵּל	אֵלֶּה	מִלְקָומָה
of the heathen	even all the isles	from his place	H3605	H4725	
H1471	H339				

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 13:2 (References Lord): And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

Psalms 138:4 (Worship): All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

Zechariah 2:11 (References Lord): And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

Genesis 10:5 (Parallel theme): By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Malachi 1:11 (References Lord): For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

Hosea 2:17 (Parallel theme): For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

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