

Verse 2

Clouds and darkness are round about him - It is granted that this is a subject which cannot be comprehended. And why? Because God is infinite; he acts from his own counsels, which are infinite; in reference to ends which are also infinite: therefore, the reasons of his government cannot be comprehended by the feeble, limited powers of man. There must be clouds and darkness - an impenetrable obscurity, round about him; and we can no more comprehend him in what is called aeternitas a parte ante - the eternity that passed before time commenced, than we can in the aeternitas a parte post - the eternity that is to come, when time shall be no more. Yet such a Being cannot but see all things clearly, and do all things well; therefore the psalmist properly asserts: -

Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne - Righteousness, צדק (tsedek), the principle that acts according to justice and equity; that gives to all their due, and ever holds in all things an even balance. And judgment, משפט (mishpat), the principle that discerns, orders, directs, and determines every thing according to truth and justice: these form the habitation of his throne; that is, his government and management of the world are according to these; and though we cannot see the springs, the secret counsels, and the times, which this omniscient and almighty

Father must ever have in his own power, yet we may rest assured that all his administration is wise, just, holy, good, and kind. For, although his counsels be inscrutable, and the dispensations of his providence be sometimes apparently unequal, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

In this most sublime description, the psalmist, by the figure termed prosopopoeia, or personification, gives vitality and thought to all the subjects he employs; here, the very throne of God is animated; righteousness and judgment are two intellectual beings who support it. The fire, the lightnings, the earth, the heavens themselves, are all intellectual beings, which either accompany, go before him, or proclaim his majesty.

Verse 3

A fire goeth before him - Literally, this and the following verse may refer to the electric fluid, or to manifestations of the Divine displeasure, in which, by means of ethereal fire, God consumed his enemies. But fire is generally represented as an accompaniment of the appearances of the Supreme Being. He appeared on Mount Sinai in the midst of fire, thunder, and lightnings, Exodus 19:16-18. Daniel, Daniel 7:9, Daniel 7:10, represents the Sovereign Judge as being on a throne which was a fiery flame, and the wheels of his chariot like burning fire; and a fiery streamer issuing from it, and coming forth from before him. St. Paul tells us (2 Thessalonians 1:8) that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire; and St. Peter, (2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:11), that when the Lord shall come to judgment the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed by fire. the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth and its works be burnt up. Here then, will appear: -

Our God in grandeur, and our world on fire.

Burneth up his enemies round about - The fire is his pioneer which destroys all the hinderances in his way, and makes him a plain passage.

Verse 4

His lightnings enlightened the world - Though this be no more than a majestic description of the coming of the Lord, to confound his enemies and succor his followers, yet some spiritualize the passage, and say, the lightnings signify the apostles, who enlightened the world by their heavenly doctrine.

The earth saw, and trembled - The earth is represented as a sentient being. It saw the terrible majesty of God; and trembled through terror, fearing it should be destroyed on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

Verse 5

The hills melted like wax - The fire of God seized on and liquefied them, so that they no longer opposed his march; and the mountains before him became a plain.

The Lord of the whole earth - אדון כל הארץ (adon col haarets), the Director, Stay, and Support of the whole earth. The universal Governor, whose jurisdiction is not confined to any one place; but who, having created all, governs all that he has made.

Verse 6

The heavens declare his righteousness - They also, in this poetic description, become intelligent beings, and proclaim the majesty and the mercy of the Most High. Metaphorically, they may be said to declare his glory. Their magnitude, number, revolutions, order, influence, and harmony, proclaim the wondrous skill, matchless

wisdom, and unlimited power of the Sovereign of the universe. See the notes on Psalm 19:1-14 (note).

And all the people see his glory - Whatsoever God has made proclaims his eternal power and Godhead; and who, from a contemplation of the work of his hands, can be ignorant of his being and providence?

Verse 7

Confounded be fell they - Rather, They shall be confounded that boast themselves in idols. There is a remarkable play on the letters here, **חזקו חזקו** (hammithhalelim), who move like madmen; referring to the violent gestures practiced in idolatrous rites.

Of idols - **בלילים** (baelilim), in vanities, emptinesses; who **עושה** make much ado about nothing, **עושה** and take a mad and painful pleasure in ridiculous and unprofitable ceremonies of religion.

Worship him - Who? Jesus: so says the apostle, Hebrews 1:6. Who will dare to dispute his authority?

All ye gods - **אֱלֹהִים**, his angels: so the Septuagint and the apostle: **עבדו** Let all the angels of God worship him: **עבדו** and the words are most certainly applied to the Savior of the world by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; see the note there. The Chaldee says: **עבדו** All nations who worship idols shall adore him. **עבדו**

Verse 8

Zion heard, and was glad - All the land of Israel, long desolated, heard of the judgments which God had shown among the enemies of his people.

And the daughters of Judah - All the villages of the land - Zion as the mother, and all the villages in the country as her daughters, rejoice in the deliverance of God's people.

Verse 9

For thou, Lord, art high - Thou art infinitely exalted above men and angels.

Verse 10

Ye that love the Lord hate evil - Because it is inconsistent with his love to you, as well as your love to him.

He preserveth the souls of his saints - The saints, **חַסִּידַי** (chasideiv), his merciful people: their souls - lives, are precious in his sight. He preserves them; keeps them from every evil, and every enemy.

Out of the hand of the wicked - From his power and influence.

Verse 11

Light is sown for the righteous - The Divine light in the soul of man is a seed which takes root, and springs up and increases thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold. Gladness is also a seed: it is sown, and, if carefully improved and cultivated, will also multiply itself into thousands. Every grace of God is a seed which he intends should produce a thousand fold in the hearts of genuine believers. We do not so much require more grace from God, as the cultivation of what we have received. God will not give more, unless we improve what we have got. Remember the parable of the talents. Let the light and gladness be faithfully cultivated, and they will multiply themselves till the whole body shall be full of light, and the whole soul full of happiness. But it is the righteous only for whom the light is sown; and the upright in heart alone for whom the gladness is sown.

The words may also signify that, however distressed or persecuted the righteous and the upright may be, it shall not be always so. As surely as the grain that is sown in the earth shall vegetate, and bring forth its proper fruit in its season, so surely shall light - prosperity, and gladness - comfort and peace, be communicated to them. They also will spring up in due time.

Verse 12

Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous - It is your privilege to be happy. Exult in him through whom ye have received the atonement. Rejoice; but let it be in the Lord. All other joy is the mirth of fools, which is as the crackling of thorns under a pot - it is a luminous blaze for a moment, and leaves nothing but smoke and ashes behind.

At the remembrance of his holiness - But why should you give thanks at the remembrance that God is holy? Because he has said, Be ye holy; for I am holy: and in holiness alone true happiness is to be found. As he, therefore, who hath called you is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. False Christians hate the doctrine of Christian holiness; they are willing to be holy in another, but not holy in themselves. There is too

much cross-bearing and self-denial in the doctrine of holiness for them. A perfect heart they neither expect nor wish.

The analysis considers the whole Psalm as relating to Jesus Christ and the last judgment: so it was understood by several of the ancient fathers. The reader may take it in either sense.