

Psalms Explained & Applied 19

Ger de Koning & Tony Jonathan



Song of Praise

The Book of Psalms

Explained and Applied

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Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Book of Psalms

Introduction

It is with gratitude to our God and Father that we are hereby permitted to offer the reader a commentary on Psalms. In writing this commentary, we have become increasingly aware of the great privilege God has given His people – both His earthly people, Israel, and His heavenly people, the church – by making this book part of His inspired Word.

Being engaged with the book of Psalms gives one a burning heart. The Emmaus disciples say to one another, after the Lord Jesus came to them and walked with them to Emmaus: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32). They were sad at first, but because He opened the Scriptures to them, in which He Himself is presented (Lk 24:27,44), their sorrow has turned to joy (cf. Jn 16:20,22; 20:20b).

We often see this change of feelings in Psalms. This is also recognizable in our own lives. We cry out to the Lord from the depths of our distress and He comforts us through the Scriptures: “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

We have experienced something of this as we examined this part of the Scriptures, or rather, were examined by this part of the Scriptures. We hope and pray that it will not be a passing experience for ourselves. We hope and pray that the reader, while reading and examining, may also experience this.

Ger de Koning / Tony Jonathan

Middelburg / Arnhem, Translation May 2021

Introduction to Psalms

The book of Psalms, like all the other books of the Old Testament, is a testimony about the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 5:39). The Lord Jesus puts it this way: “All things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the

Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Lk 24:44). The explanation of Psalms is found in the New Testament. There we see that the psalms are not only *applied* to the Lord Jesus, but are also and especially *fulfilled* in Him. They were given with that prophetic purpose. We see this, for example, in some quotes from Psalms that are fulfilled in Christ on the cross (Jn 19:24,28; Psa 22:18,15). It says with these quotes that is was “to fulfill the Scripture” which shows that the Lord Jesus Himself is speaking in the psalms. The Man Jesus Christ experienced the feelings described in Psalms perfectly and at their deepest.

Directly connected to this, we find in this book prophetically the condition and experiences of the Jewish believing remnant in the end time. The Messiah has a special connection with them. The remnant gains its experiences in the way God goes with them toward the goal He has determined. As a result, they encounter all kinds of diverse circumstances in which faith is tested and refined. This is not only true of the faithful believers of the Old Testament, but also for New Testament believers. The result is one grand praise of God by all that has breath, as described in the last psalm (Psa 150:1-6).

This book stands at the center of the Bible, forming its heart, as it were. In this book we hear, so to speak, the beating of the heart of believers who walk with God in this world. The words of the psalms have echoed and vibrated in the hearts of countless believers throughout the years. They have been of support to believers in the greatest need. They express the feelings of their hearts. For example, Psalm 23, which is probably the best known psalm, is for many a much-loved chapter in the Bible.

The closing verse of the second part of the book says: “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended” (Psa 72:20). We can infer that David’s previous psalms have the character of “prayers”. There is also one single mention of “[A Psalm] of Praise, of David” (Psa 145:1), whereby the word “praise” in Hebrew, *tehilla*, is the singular of the Hebrew title of Psalms, *tehillim*. These two features, prayer and praise, are the two typical features of the believer who walks with God in this world. He prays for help and salvation in and out of hardship, and then he praises God for that help and salvation.

Psalms received its Hebrew name *sefer tehillim* from the Jewish rabbis. The name means 'the book of praise'. That name was given because of the use of this book in the services in the temple of Solomon. Later, in the second or first century BC, the Old Testament, Psalms included, was translated into Greek (the Septuagint). The book was then given the Greek title *psalmoi*, which means 'song accompanied by an instrument'.

The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 songs written by different writers over a period of about a 1,000 years. The oldest psalm, Psalm 90, is of Moses (Psa 90:1), which means that it is written about 1500 BC. The (probably) youngest psalm, Psalm 137, is written during the Babylonian exile (Psa 137:1), that is about 600 BC. It may even be that Psalm 126 was written after the return from exile (Psa 126:1), that is in 500 BC. Already at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah we find that the psalms are sung (Ezra 3:10-12; Neh 7:44; 12:24,36,45-46).

The order of the chapters in Psalms is not arbitrary. We can infer from Paul's speech in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch that each psalm is in its proper place. In that speech, Paul quotes a verse from Psalms and says that this verse is written in "the second Psalm" (Acts 13:33).

The Old Testament is called TeNaCh in Hebrew. This word is called an 'acronym', which is a word formed by the initial letters of a number of words. TeNaCh is a word made up of the initial letters of the three parts of the Old Testament. These parts are successively: the Torah (law of Moses), the Nevi'im (the prophets) and the Chetuvim (the scriptures or psalms).

This division is mentioned by the Lord Jesus (Lk 24:44). In fact, the book of Psalms is one of the many books of the Chetuvim (the scriptures). But because this book is both the first and the largest book of the Chetuvim, this third part of the Old Testament is called psalms instead of the scriptures.

The most quotes in the New Testament are from the book of Psalms, along with the book of Isaiah. Of the approximately 283 direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament, 116 come from Psalms.

The Writers of Psalms

Many thousands of psalms were written during the Old Testament period. From King David we know many psalms. He is the principal writer. He

wrote most of the psalms. That is why in the Codex Sinaiticus this book is called 'the Psalms of David'. King Solomon, David's son, also wrote songs or psalms, even a 1,005 (1Kgs 4:32). One of them, Psalm 127, is found in the book of Psalms (Psa 127:1). In addition, there are several other composers – we list them below – who wrote one or more psalms.

Of the thousands of psalms, the Holy Spirit has inspired 150. Together they form a part of the Word of God: the book of Psalms. Of most of the psalms, we know who the author is.

1. David wrote at least 73 psalms; these are the psalms that bear his name in the heading: Psalms 3-32; 34-41; 51-65; 68-70; 86; 101; 103; 108-110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138-145. To these are added Psalm 2 and Psalm 95. These psalms have no name in the heading in the book of Psalms. However, the New Testament quotes from them, stating that both psalms are written by David (Acts 4:25; Psa 2:1; Heb 4:7; Psa 95:7-8). That brings the total of psalms that are definitely written by David to 75, which is half of all psalms.

2. Asaph wrote twelve psalms: Psalms 50; 73-83.

3. The sons of Korah wrote eleven psalms: Psalms 42-49; 84; 85; 87.

4. Heman the Ezrahite, wrote one: Psalm 88.

5. Ethan, also an Ezrahite, wrote one: Psalm 89.

6. Moses wrote one: Psalm 90.

7. Solomon wrote two: Psalms 72; 127.

David is called in the Bible "the man ... the sweet psalmist of Israel" (2Sam 23:1). According to what we read in Amos, David did "improvise to the sound of the harp" (Amos 6:5). He also gave instructions about music in the service of the temple (Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:24).

Like Joseph and Moses, David is also a type of Christ. All three exhibit in their lives these two aspects: suffering through rejection and glorification afterwards. They experienced what Christ says of Himself: "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:26). Thus the psalms many times interpret Christ's feelings and experiences.

Hebrew Poetry

One of the features of Hebrew poetry is the use of ‘parallelism’. This is a style of writing in which a particular message given in the first line of the verse is repeated or elaborated upon in different terms in the next line of the verse. This can be done with or without extending the message, with a contrast or with a climax. In stories, prose, and especially in poetry, parallel sentences are often found. In doing so, the verses can also exhibit a variety of patterns that will not be elaborated upon here.

Several types of parallelism can be distinguished. We will mention two of them, through which the meaning becomes clear:

1. Parallels that *correspond to each other*, also called *synonymous parallelism*. We find this especially in ‘teaching psalms’, psalms that contain teaching. In this case, a thought from the first line of the verse is expressed in the next line with different words and sometimes a little more elaborately. It is two sentences representing one thought. An example is:

“Why are the nations in an uproar

And the peoples devising a vain thing?” (Psa 2:1).

2. Parallels that *are opposite*, that form a contrast, also called *antithetical parallelism*. In this case, a thought from the first line of the verse is expressed in opposite terms in the next line of the verse. This is often indicated by the word “but” at the beginning of the second line of the verse. An example of this is:

“For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked will perish” (Psa 1:6).

In addition to parallel phrases, many linguistic tools are used in Hebrew literature, some of which we will mention in the explanation.

It is important to realize each time that God is speaking in this book and speaking to us. This means that we find in it the intercourse between God and man. To portray this intercourse, He has used the psalm writers. We see this, for example, in Psalm 45, where the Holy Spirit is at work in the psalmist when he says: “My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my verses to the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer” (Psa 45:1b).

The meaning of the psalms for the Christian

Many Christians do not understand the meaning of the psalms because they do not know their New Testament position in Christ. They forget that the Old Testament is about an earthly people, Israel, before to the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. These people have no assurance of faith, an assurance so characteristic of the heavenly people of God, the church, in the New Testament. In their life of faith they are guided by the psalms, whereas these are characteristic of the life of faith of the Old Testament believers. The experience of their faith runs up and down with their feelings. The cause of this is not knowing the certainty of salvation by faith. By the Spirit of God every child of God can possess that certainty.

That assurance is that the relationship to God depends on faith in the accomplished work of Christ and not on feelings. The Old Testament believer knows nothing of this, for that work was not yet accomplished at that time. Hence, there can be no question yet of resting in that work, which is the privilege of the New Testament believer. Feelings are part of the life of faith, but they are not the foundation of it. The faithful acceptance of Christ and His work determines the relationship to God Who is thereby known as Father.

Through the prophets God speaks to man. In the psalms we hear man speaking to God in the midst of circumstances that are also future events to which the prophets have referred. The psalms are prophecy from the heart of the God-fearing person to God and not the other way around, which is common for the prophets, who speak to man on behalf of God. They are expressions of trust. The psalms presuppose knowledge of the prophecies.

In addition to the Lord Jesus, we find believers speaking in this book. These are prophetically the faithful of the end time, the faithful remnant of Israel that is closely connected to the Lord Jesus. The feelings of the psalmists that they had in their day and what they expressed will be present in the hearts of the faithful in the end time in the future.

The book of Psalms clearly has a prophetic character. This is evident from what Peter says in his speech on the day of Pentecost: "For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY

RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT [one] OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY" (Acts 2:25-31; Psa 16:8-11).

The psalms point to events that will take place in the future. They are about Israel and Zion and the Lord Jesus as King over His people. The psalms cannot apply prophetically to the church. We have a clear example in the so-called revenge psalms, in which the God-fearing Jews ask for judgment on their enemies (Psa 69:22-28; 137:7-9). This is not the language of the church of God. Following the Lord, it befits us, believers of the church, to pray for those who persecute and harm us (Mt 5:43-44; Lk 23:34; Acts 7:60).

The psalms cannot tell us anything of the fundamental truths of Christendom, simply because they have not yet been revealed. The horizon of the psalms is earthly; they deal with the feelings of people who are under the law. In the New Testament, the psalms are also seen as part of the law. After Paul quotes a number of verses from the psalms, he says of them that this is all "whatever the Law says" (Rom 3:19).

Many Christians find their feelings reflected in the psalms because they have wrongfully placed themselves under the law. The book lets us hear the feelings of believers who want to keep the law of God, but discover time and again that they are transgressing the law. Such a person is described in Romans 7 (Rom 7:7-25). As indicated above, the book does not describe the feelings of the Christian who knows the Father and what his position before God is, but of the pious Jew who does not have free access into the sanctuary. In the Old Testament, access to God has not yet been made known.

Our position, through the eternal life we have been given, is connected with the revelation of the Father's heart declared by the Lord Jesus when He came to earth. This is unknown at the origin of the psalms. Israel does know God as Father, but in the sense of Creator, as the Origin of His people (Deu 32:6; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Mal 2:10). We know God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Who is our life, the Father of the Son.

Added to this is the testimony the Holy Spirit gives of the Lord Jesus sitting at the right hand of God in heaven and what our place in connection with Him there is. The Holy Spirit dwells in the New Testament believer who has accepted the gospel of his salvation (1Cor 15:1-4; Eph 1:13). Old Testament believers know the Holy Spirit, but do not have Him indwelling. He *worked* on earth during Old Testament times, but He *did not dwell* on earth. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell on earth in the church and in the believer only after the Lord Jesus is glorified in heaven (Jn 7:37-39; 1Cor 3:16; 6:19).

Another difference is the knowledge of salvation. The New Testament believer knows that the Lord Jesus has obtained an eternal redemption, which makes a repetition of His sacrifice unnecessary. The Old Testament believer does not know a once for all accomplished sacrifice and must come up with a sacrifice every time he has sinned. This proves that he does not know a complete redemption, for there is not yet a once for all time accomplished work (Heb 10:1-3,11-14).

So, what value do the psalms have then for us, Christians? Much, in every respect. First, we find in the psalms the feelings of the Lord Jesus in connection with His earthly people. We get to know His feelings, His suffering and compassion for His own who are in trouble and tribulation. Precisely because it is about Him, we, Christians, want to know more about that. We want to know Him better.

Secondly, through the psalms we get to know the feelings of the faithful remnant in the end time. Because the Lord Jesus also passed through great and deep suffering, He suffers with the remnant. This concerns all the suffering they undergo on the part of men.

Third, for all that is written in the book of Psalms applies, what applies to the entire Old Testament: "For whatever was written in earlier times was

written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4). Although our position before God and our relationship to God is different, higher, than that of the Old Testament believers, we do share a lot with them. For the God of David is also our God and Abraham's faith in God is also our faith.

We also share with them our love for God and His Word and the confidence that He will fulfill all His promises. Like them, we experience the enmity of people who hate God and who therefore also hate His own, us. Like them, we go through much trouble and sorrow. With us, as with them, that can be the result of our own unfaithfulness. It can also, like them, happen that we don't understand why certain things happen to us and we have our questions about that. We recognize many of the feelings of God-fearing Israelites in our lives with the Lord. Their faith and the experience of it are an example for us.

The Lord Jesus and His Own

Yet another aspect of our keen interest in the psalms is that we are directly involved in the great end result of all God's ways that the Spirit reveals in Psalms. New Testament believers are joined to Christ in the closest way possible, namely, as a body with a head. As a result, they will reign with Him over the nations in the realm of peace. He, Who is the Messiah of His earthly people and the worldwide Lord and King, has been given by God as Head above all things to the church (Eph 1:10,22-23). Therefore, they take the greatest interest in Him, even when it comes to His connection with His earthly people.

In all ages there have been faithful ones in Israel who have always had the same feelings in their hearts that we find here. But they have always been individuals, never the multitude. The Lord Jesus makes Himself one with the remnant. The suffering of the people and the suffering of the Lord Jesus are found in this book. Even today He makes Himself one with all who suffer for His Name.

With regard to the suffering of the Lord Jesus in connection with His people, it is good to see that there are several aspects to that suffering. First, He suffers as atonement with God on behalf of all, on the day of atonement, represented by the first goat that is brought as a sin offering (Lev 16:15-19).

This implies that on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus, atonement can be *offered* to all people. Second, He also suffers as *substitute* for His people. This is shown on the day of atonement when the high priest laid both of his hands on the head of the second goat which is presented as the send away goat, the goat for Azazel (Lev 16:20-22). This implies that the Lord Jesus, through His work on the cross, actually reconciled with God all who accepted the offer of reconciliation.

This atoning suffering with its two aspects is always in singular in the New Testament. It is a suffering suffered by the Lord Jesus alone, just as on the day of atonement all the work is done by the high priest, alone. This illustrates what happened on the cross in the three hours of darkness. Then He was all alone, even forsaken by God.

Another aspect of His suffering is a suffering that He endures together with His people. This is the case in the suffering inflicted on His people from the side of men. This suffering in the New Testament is always in plural. That suffering is aptly rendered as follows: "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa 63:9a). We see a picture of this in the furnace of blazing fire into which Daniel's friends are thrown because of their faithfulness to God. He joins them in the midst of the fire (Dan 3:23-25). This is suffering for the sake of righteousness, suffering because of the fact that they are doing God's will, bearing witness to Him in the world.

There is another side to the suffering of His people, namely the suffering – plural in the New Testament – into which God brings them in order to purify them. This suffering was not necessary with the Lord, He was the Holy One and the blameless and unstained Lamb. His suffering in His earthly life and on the cross on the part of men was necessary just to show us that He was the Holy One, Who was qualified to be offered as a sin offering for atonement.

The remnant suffers inwardly, in their conscience, when they see what the Lord Jesus has done for them to deliver them from their sins. They become aware of their guilt. Their comfort is that they become aware of the forgiveness of their sins. The remnant also suffers on the part of those who persecute them because of their connection to Christ. Then they plead

their innocence. Their comfort is that the Lord Jesus knows their suffering and shares in it.

Division of Psalms

The book of Psalms can be divided into five books:

Book 1 consists of Psalms 1-41

Book 2 consists of Psalms 42-72

Book 3 consists of Psalms 73-89

Book 4 consists of Psalms 90-106

Book 5 consists of Psalms 107-150

This division is evident from the ending of books 1-4, each of which is characterized by the same praise (Psa 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48). In doing so, we find a double “amen” in books 1-3 (Psa 41:13; Psa 72:19; 89:52) and an “Amen. Hallelujah” (Psa 106:48). The book of Psalms closes with five ‘hallelujah-palms’, all of which begin and end with “hallelujah” (Psalms 146-150).

Because of the division of the collection of the psalms into five books, it has already been called by the Jews ‘the Pentateuch of David’. Pentateuch means ‘five-piece’. Known is the Pentateuch of Moses, which are the books Genesis through Deuteronomy. The Pentateuch of Moses can be compared to the five books into which the psalms can be divided. This division supports the observation made above that there is a clear order in the psalms:

Book 1 Psalms 1-41 / Genesis

Book 2 Psalms 42-72 / Exodus

Book 3 Psalms 73-89 / Leviticus

Book 4 Psalms 90-106 / Numbers

Book 5 Psalms 107-150 / Deuteronomy

1. Book 1 mentions most about the Lord Jesus and also about the remnant in connection with Him. The Lord Jesus is the center of God’s counsels and the source of blessing for the faithful remnant of Israel.

In this first book of Psalms, as in Genesis, it is about the Son of Man, Who created all things and to Whom all things are subject (Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3; Psa 8:4,7).

2. Book 2 deals with the remnant from the two tribes. This remnant has fled from Jerusalem because of the antichrist who is introducing idolatry (Mt 24:15-16). Their fleeing is because of the antichrist and is used by God to purify their faith.

The second book of Psalms begins with crying out to God in great distress and ends with the glory of God. We also see this in Exodus.

3. Book 3 deals with the history of the ten tribes. They are brought back into the land. The division of the people into two and ten tribes is undone. There is one people under one King, their Messiah. Here we see Israel connected to the sanctuary.

In the third book of Psalms we often hear about the sanctuary, where God dwells. This is also the theme of Leviticus.

4. In book 4 we see that after the failure of the first man, through the second Man, Christ, the promises made to Israel are fulfilled. There is blessing not only for restored Israel, but through them for all mankind. All blessing is the result of Christ's work on the cross and of His government.

The fourth book of Psalms speaks of the journey of the people of God through the wilderness. This is also the subject of Numbers.

5. In book 5 we are given a review of all God's ways and we are shown their final fulfillment. This is also what the book of Deuteronomy shows us. In book 5 of Psalms we see the full result, where God and the people have been brought together in harmony. Also, we see the foundation on which the people stand before God.

Introduction to book 1 (Psalms 1-41)

Book 1 is the book of Genesis of Psalms. Like Genesis, book 1 shows us the principles of the counsels of God in Christ. In Genesis we find how God created man and for what purpose. In book 1 of Psalms we see the way of the perfect Man according to God's thoughts.

In book 1 we can see the following subdivisions:

1. In Psalms 1-8 we see Christ in His ministry and His work. His ministry as King over Israel in Psalm 2 culminates in His glory as Son of Man Who rules over all creation in Psalm 8.

We can consider these psalms as an introduction to the entire book of Psalms.

a. In Psalms 1-2 the Son of God, the King of Israel.

b. In Psalms 3-7 the faithful remnant.

c. In Psalm 8 the Son of Man, to Whom all things are subjected.

2. In Psalms 9-15 we see the enemy and the antichrist, the tribulation and the redemption.

3. In Psalms 16-41 we see Christ amidst His own, to reveal God and sanctify His own.

a. In Psalm 16 we see Christ impeccable and immaculate. He is the foundation for the prayer for salvation in Psalm 17 and the answer to this prayer in Psalm 18.

b. In Psalm 22 we recognize Christ's work as a sin offering, while Psalm 40 describes His work as a burnt offering.

c. Psalm 41 shows that the two paths of Psalm 1 will culminate in the contrast between believing and not believing in the work of Christ on the cross.

Psalm 1

Introduction

Psalms 1 and 2 form the general introduction to the whole book. Psalm 1 shows the ways of God, Psalm 2 shows the counsel or purpose of God.

Psalm 1 is about the faithfulness of the single person. He trusts in God and finds his joy in the meditation in His Word. It is someone who is under God's law. Even more, we see here the One Who can say: "Your Law is within my heart" (Psa 40:8b).

While this description should appeal to every Israelite, indeed to every believer, it applies especially to the king of Israel. In particular, he has the task of meditating in the law of God (Deu 17:19).

In Psalm 2 we see the content of the Word of God: the Messiah and the firm counsel of God to make Him, the born King, His Son, King. His kingship is over His inheritance, Israel, and through Israel over the ends of the earth. God will achieve that goal.

Psa 1:1-2 | Features of the Righteous One

*1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*

*2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

Psalm 1 is the splendid introduction to the book of Psalms. It is a wisdom psalm, a psalm where teaching is given or summarized about the two paths man can choose in his life: the way of the righteous (verses 1-3) or the way of the wicked (verses 4-6). We see these two elements repeated throughout this book and in fact throughout the Bible. It is the choice between the way of blessing and the way of curse, the way with lasting fruit and the way where everything is blown away, the way of life and the way of death (cf. Deu 30:19).

It is in fact the difference between the way of Christ and the way of the antichrist. Christ is the Righteous One par excellence. He is the Only One Who could say: "I always do the things that are pleasing to Him" (Jn 8:29). The antichrist is the wicked and lawless one par excellence, the man of sin, the man who says in his heart: "There is no God" (Psa 14:1). He lives without regard to God in any respect.

The righteous is spoken of in the singular and the wicked in the plural. It is the God-fearing individual in the midst of and in opposition to the ungodly, apostate multitude. It is the few who walk the narrow way as opposed to the many who walk the broad way.

This first psalm is about the features of the God-fearing remnant of Israel. These are the features in particular of the Lord Jesus that will also be seen in the believing remnant in the end time. Those features are perfectly present in Him and are most definitely seen whenever and wherever He displays them. The remnant is not perfect, but they can demonstrate those features as a result of their connection with Him, because His Spirit works that in them.

We too, believers who belong to the church, have the task and the opportunity to show the features of the Lord Jesus in accordance with our heavenly position. It is written of us that we have put on "the new man which ... has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph 4:24). The features of the new man are identical to those of the Lord Jesus. The new man becomes visible wherever believers show the features of the Lord Jesus.

Psalm 1 begins, and with it the entire book of Psalms, by pronouncing "blessed" or "happy". In the sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus uses the same expression – translated from the Hebrew, *asre*, into the Greek, *makarios* (Mt 5:3-11). It is an exclamation of deep and abiding happiness and joy of God about the believer who lives amidst evil in fear of Him.

This first encounter with the God-fearing emphasizes that he lives in circumstances where God is not taken into account. In those circumstances he walks with God. God likes to identify with him and He will continue to give him His rest and peace. God particularly appreciates that he does not succumb to the pressure, but instead remains faithful to Him. God's "well

done” is a great encouragement to all who want to be faithful when the apostasy of the faith manifests itself more and more clearly.

It is noteworthy that the first features of the God-fearing believer are features that distinguish them from “the wicked”, the “sinners”, and the “scoffers”. Such people comprise the mass of God’s people. They are in charge in God’s people, just as they are today. The God-fearing lives in the midst of them, but has no fellowship with them. He lives separated from them, he does not participate with them.

The first feature of the righteous who walks with God is that he “does not walk in the counsel of the wicked”. This refers to the way he deliberates and by which he takes up his actions. There is no room for God in the deliberations of the wicked. A wicked person lives without involving God in his life, let alone giving Him authority over it. The principle of his life is that everything is centered around himself.

He “walks” in it, that is, his ungodly behavior results from his depraved way of thinking, which in turn results from excluding God in his decision-making. He devises sinful, selfish things in order to achieve satisfaction of his lusts at any cost. The God-fearing does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, he does not allow himself to be seduced or coerced into a way of deliberation or consultation in which God has no place, but he considers what God wants, he involves God in his deliberations.

The second feature of the man who walks with God is that he “does not stand in the path of sinners”. The word “stand” here is not a passive state, something like standing still. The word means to actively take a position, to deliberately stand somewhere. Sinners ignore God. They take that position consciously. By “the path” is meant, as usual, the path of life with its end. Sinners are people who have no interest in God’s purpose for their lives.

The meaning of the word “sin” is “to miss the goal”. Sinners miss God’s purpose with their lives. They live their lives as they see fit. That can be debauched, but it also can be very decent. Whatever they choose, they ask nothing of God, but decide for themselves what they do. It is “the broad way”, the easy and entertaining way of life, “that leads to destruction” (Mt

7:13). The God-fearing does not live this way, he does not stand in their path, but responds to God's intention for his life.

The third feature of the man who walks with God is that he "does not sit in the seat of the scoffers". The scoffers are people who ridicule God by ridiculing believers. Their rejection of God takes the crudest form, that of mocking God. Their sin is that of the tongue. They are the boasters, the overconfident, the frivolous. They sit glued to their own seat, their own throne, and put on a big mouth against God. Sitting in a seat shows pride and hardening. The mockery that is uttered is done deliberately. The God-fearing loathes that seat, and puts God in charge of his life.

We see an ascendancy in evil: Those who, as the *wicked*, do not reckon with God, will, as *sinners*, ignore their obligation to do what God says, leading to an open *scoffing* at God and His will.

Verse 2 tells why it is that the things mentioned in verse 1 are not present with the God-fearing. It is because he finds his joy "in the law of the LORD" in which he "meditates day and night" (cf. Psa 26:4-8). It is impossible for anyone to be "blessed" without engaging in the Word of God. Not the *acting* according to the law is in the foreground, but *loving* the law, finding one's joy in it. Acting according to the law without love and joy we see with the Pharisees. The heart of the God-fearing is occupied with it day and night, that is, constantly, unceasingly.

The "law" is not limited to the five books of Moses or even to the Old Testament as a whole. The Hebrew word for law, *torah*, implies all teaching that comes from God. The law is also God's demand to live by His commandments to be justified thereby (Lev 18:5). However, the psalmist is not speaking here of the deadly effects that the law has for every person because he cannot keep it. He is speaking of the life-giving aspects of the law. He who walks with God and lives in fellowship with Him because he has new life, finds his deepest joy in always being engaged in the teaching of God, for this gives him the deepest happiness.

It is a joy for the God-fearing to read God's Word and to meditate in it day and night (cf. Psa 19:7-10). He has an insatiable hunger for it and is like the believers in Berea, of whom we read: "They received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily [to see] whether these things

were so" (Acts 17:11). It is not a meditation at a certain time of day, but a day and night activity. He reads a text, takes it to his heart and carries it with him all day. And if he can't sleep at night, he continues to meditates in it. Regardless of the time of day or the circumstances, the God-fearing responds to life in accordance with God's Word.

We must remember by "and in His law he meditates day and night" that the Spirit of God works through the Word of God. We cannot separate them. The Word of God without the Spirit of God is dead orthodoxy, merely intellectual, without new, spiritual life. Likewise, the Spirit without the Word is an impossibility. If that happens, the spirit, that is, the spirit of man, will try to imitate the working of the Holy Spirit, and that will only lead to unbridled fanaticism.

'Day and night' does not mean that the believer studies the Bible twenty-four hours a day and stop doing other things. The believer who finds his joy in the Word day and night can be compared to a young man in love who constantly thinks about his beloved during all the activities of the day. During all the activities of the day, everything is permeated with the contemplation of the Word. What we read of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, indicates that meaning: "But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).

What is written in verses 1-2 has been perfectly fulfilled in and through the Lord Jesus. What will be true of every Israelite in the realm of peace (Jer 31:33-34; Heb 8:10) is perfectly true of Christ. The ideal of the final state is already seen in Him. In no way did He let Himself to be guided by the counsel of the wicked, never did He stand in the path of sinners, and of course was not sitting in the seat of scoffers. During His life on earth, He is in the midst of people who exclude God, while He is completely separated from them.

During His life on earth, His joy is in the law of Yahweh, which is in His heart (Psa 40:8). He has done what is said to Joshua: "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Jos 1:8). He did all that the law commanded and He did nothing that the law forbade (cf. Mt 5:17).

Psa 1:3 | The Result

*3 He will be like a tree [firmly] planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

Here the believer, who is not open to sin (verse 1), but is formed by the Word of God (verse 2), is compared to a healthy, fruitful, and enduring tree planted by streams of water. Comparing a person to a tree is more common, both positively and negatively (Jer 17:7-8; Lk 6:43-45). The God-fearing is “like a tree planted by streams of water”. He did not occupy that place himself, but was planted there by God. He is “the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified” (Isa 61:3).

There are also trees that are not planted by the LORD, but have planted themselves. They claim to be healthy and fruitful, but they moderate that place, like the Pharisees. They will be uprooted, as the Lord Jesus says in reference to them: “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted” (Mt 15:13).

The tree planted by God is not planted just by one stream of water, but by “streams of water”, plural. We can apply this to what the God-fearing has received in Christ, such as the blessing of forgiveness and grace, the blessing of promises through union with Christ, the blessing of fellowship with Christ. These and many more blessings are streams of water that come to us from the Word of God when we are planted by it.

As a result, fruit emerges from the life of the righteous and it is “its fruit” which he gives “in its season”. Each tree has its own fruit and produces it in the season designated for that tree, no sooner and no later. We can think by “its fruit in its season”, for example, of the fruit of patience in a time of suffering and the fruit of faith in a time of trial. The reader can add to these examples. In the life of every believer, the characteristic fruits for that believer emerge in the circumstances in which he finds himself.

This also makes it clear that God’s truth is not just knowledge of facts. God’s truth must be understood in a believing heart. The fruit then begins to grow in circumstances favorable to that particular fruit (verse 2; cf. Mt 13:18-23) and will become visible in due time. The fruit is not that which

we ourselves have produced, but the fruit is “Christ in us”. We see this in the Lord Jesus’ imagery in John 15. Because we abide in Christ, we, the branches, bring forth fruit (Jn 15:4-5). This fruit comes from the vine and not from the branches. It is the sap of the vine, which is transformed by the branches into fruit. It is indeed Christ in us, visible to others.

The point is that we are in Christ and He is in us. Only then do we “bear much fruit”, for without Him we “can do nothing” including bearing fruit (Jn 15:5). With the Lord Jesus there is always an abundance of fruit. With us, some fruits dominate, while other fruits are not so perceptible or even absent. God’s intention is that the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23a) will become manifest in fullness in our lives. Paul is a fruit bearing tree. He writes to the believers in Rome: “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ” (Rom 15:29).

Then it is mentioned that “its leaf does not wither”. The main thing about a tree is its fruit. But its leaf is also important, because it shows if a tree is healthy, even if there is no fruit. Leaves are a symbol of the external, the visible, in other words, the confession. The one with whom only the leaf of confession is visible, without any good fruit, will wither away. But if the Word of God rules in the heart, the confession will remain ‘green’, full of vitality. The confession of the God-fearing is in accordance with his fruit. In what he shows and says, there is no posturing or hypocrisy. In word and deed his life shows sincerity, freshness and strength.

The life of such a person is characterized by success. A successful life of the God-fearing is not determined by the amount of his bank account or the prestige he has acquired among men. “Whatever he does” comes from his fellowship with God. He knows His will, because he continually meditates in His Word. He is not after his own success, but his desire is to glorify God. And he succeeds, because he draws his life force from the waters of the Word of God.

We see this in perfection in the Lord Jesus. It is His food to do the will of Him Who sent Him to accomplish His work (Jn 4:34). And that work He did accomplish (Jn 17:4; 19:30). Because He was guided by His God in all things, the entire will of God will “prosper”. While to unbelief He is the loser, to faith He is the great Victor. Soon, when He comes back to earth,

this will also be evident to all creation. Success should not be determined by immediate results, but should be seen in the perspective of God's plans. This applies to our personal lives and to the world as a whole.

In summary, we can say the following: What richly flowing streams of water are to a tree planted on their banks, the Word of God is to everyone who devotes himself to meditating in it. It makes him, in accordance with his position and calling, always fruitful in good deeds which he performs at the right time. His inner and outer life remain fresh and vigorous because of it. Whatever he undertakes, he brings to a successful conclusion. The cause of this is the working power of the Word of God and the blessing that God connects to it. In the Old Testament we find this beautifully illustrated in the life of Joseph: everything he does succeeds.

When we think about leaves that do not wither and fall off, our thoughts go to the fig tree that is cursed by the Lord (Mt 21:18-19). The Lord goes to it and only finds leaves on it and no fruits. The fig tree is a tree that produces fruit even in spring. These are unripe fruits from the previous year that have remained through the winter and ripen in the spring, the early figs. Because this fig tree has no fruit at all, the Lord Jesus says: "No longer shall there ever be [any] fruit from you. And at once the fig tree withered" (Mt 21:19b).

Prophetically, this fig tree is a picture of Israel (cf. Mt 24:32). Israel doesn't bear fruit that the heart of God longs for (Mic 7:1). As a result, the leaves – which speak of confession (see above) – must be condemned and wither and fall off. In the New Testament church we see the same thing with the church in Ephesus (Rev 2:1-4). Because the fruit or first love has disappeared – love is the first feature of the fruit of the Spirit – the Lord Jesus must take away the testimony, the lampstand (Rev 2:5).

Israel, however, still has a future. The branch of the fig tree will soften and the leaves will sprout (Mt 24:32). Then the Lord will find the fruit He so longs to find. That fruit will be brought to Him by the new Israel, an Israel that He has kept for Himself as a remnant according to the election of grace. "Then all your people [will be] righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified" (Isa 60:21).

It is clear that in Psalm 1 we find a painting of the faithful remnant of Israel in the future (Isa 66:1-2). The wicked are the unbelieving part of Israel on whom God's judgment is coming (Isa 66:3-4).

Psa 1:4-5 | The Wicked

*4 The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

The contrast between the God-fearing – or the faithful remnant – described in the previous verses and the wicked now being described is strongly expressed in verse 4. The first line of verse 4 reads in Hebrew “not so the wicked”, indicating that the emphasis is on the words “not so”. It is a short and powerful exclamation saying that the existence of the wicked is totally different. The wicked have nothing of all that the God-fearing has and does. It is completely absent from the wicked.

The God-fearing is a vigorous, healthy, fruit-bearing, evergreen tree. Against this the wicked contrast dramatically, for they “are like chaff which the wind drives away”. The picture now portrayed is no longer that of a tree, but of a threshing floor, where the chaff is separated from the wheat. On a threshing floor, usually on a hill, both the chaff and the wheat are thrown up into the air, so that the chaff is blown away by the wind and separated from the wheat.

The chaff looks externally like wheat, but is worthless, useless, and weightless. The chaff, the wicked, may remain for some time among the wheat, the righteous, but the time is coming when the wind of God's judgment will blow it away. Christ will deal with the wicked at His coming. Then “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Mt 3:12; cf. Job 21:18; Psa 35:5; Hos 13:3). Prophetically, the chaff represents the unbelievers in Israel (Zec 13:8-9). They will be taken away by judgment, while the righteous will enter the kingdom alive (Mt 24:40-41).

Verse 5 begins with “therefore”, a word that indicates a conclusion from the preceding. Because the wicked are so worthless and weightless, “therefore the wicked will not stand in judgment”. The end of the wicked is not

always clear during their lives while they are practicing wickedness. They may reap appreciation from people. But from God's perspective, the wicked have no future. That will become apparent when they stand before the great white throne to be judged by Christ (Rev 20:11-15). Then they will have nothing left to say. All their boasting will be gone. They will be stunned to hear their judgment and without any resistance undergo their judgment: eternal fire.

When the wicked are blown away by judgment, "the assembly of the righteous" remains. No sinner is part of it. It is a holy fellowship. All dirt has been washed off from it and the blood-guilt has been washed away from it (Isa 4:3-4). On earth there is already a radical separation between the righteous and the sinners. That separation will be everlasting. On earth, the sinners have cast out the righteous from their fellowship. In the realm of peace and for all eternity, sinners will not be in the fellowship of the righteous (Mt 13:49-50; Rev 21:27).

Psa 1:6 | Two Ways, Two Destinations

*6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.*

The word "for" with which this verse begins indicates that the reason, or summary, follows from the judgment of the previous verses. "The way", both that "of the righteous" and that "of the wicked", refers to the entire walk of life of both groups. The LORD knows what both ways are like and what they end in.

Of the way of the righteous we read that "the LORD knows" it. This "knowing" has a deeper meaning than that He is familiar with it, that He knows which way they are going. It is not a purely intellectual knowing, but a knowing grounded in experience through communion of life, a knowing from love. Knowing the way of the righteous means that He has fellowship with the righteous on the way they go. He shares in their experiences. They go their way with Him and therefore He goes with them.

"But" – this indicates the contrast with the previous line – "the way of the wicked will perish." Their way is a way that leads to destruction and death. The LORD does not know their way. They live their lives in a way that He

abhors. Their whole life will perish, like the chaff. When He judges them, He will say to them: "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS" (Mt 7:23). They will not enter the realm of peace, but will be eternally unhappy and miserable.

This last verse clearly identifies the difference between the reason for the happiness of the righteous and the reason for the calamity of the wicked. God knows, approves, loves and rejoices over the life of the righteous, but He has no part in the life of the wicked. That life He does not approve, He does not love it, and He does not rejoice over it. Their eternal destiny depends on His appreciation of the lives of both groups.

The psalm begins with God's blessing on the single person, on the righteous (singular). The psalm ends with the warning that one who nevertheless chooses the way of the wicked (plural), the way without Him, will end in destruction.

Also in the sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus begins with a multitude of blessings: Happy, happy, happy ... (Mt 5:1-11). The sermon on the Mount ends with the two ways: the broad way, on which many walk, and the narrow way, on which few, some, walk (Mt 7:13-14). Reference is also made to two builders: one who builds on the sand and one who builds on the rock. The latter is the one who obeys the words of the Lord Jesus, "these words of Mine" (Mt 7:26).

We do not yet find this last in Psalm 1. Here we hear about the way with God, but we hear nothing about believing in a person, the Christ, the Immanuel or the God with us. All subsequent psalms are about Him.

Psalm 2

Introduction

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 belong together. Psalm 1 begins with “blessed” (Psa 1:1) and Psalm 2 ends with “blessed” (Psa 2:12). Psalm 1 is about the Word of God and Psalm 2 is about the incarnate Word of God (Jn 1:14), Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel (Jn 1:49).

Psalm 1 is about the teaching of God on the Scriptures that is meditated in by the believing remnant and especially by the Lord Jesus. Psalm 2 is about the Messiah, the King of God, the Person Whom the Scriptures are all about (Jn 5:39) and on Whom the hope of the believing remnant is based. The law of God and the King of God belong together. Man must submit to both in faith. He finds his joy in the Word (Psa 1:2) and sets his hope in Christ, the Son of God, the King (Psa 2:12).

As in Psalm 1, Psalm 2 the name of the poet is lacking. From Acts 4 we know that this psalm is of David, and that in connection with God’s promise (2Sam 7:13-14). Psalm 2 is quoted by the early Christians in their prayer prayed in response to the arrest of Peter and John who, after their release, shared their experiences with their fellow believers. In their prayer following the report of Peter and John, they quote verses 1-2 of this psalm (Acts 4:25-26).

Immediately following the quote, they say to God: “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel” (Acts 4:27). Believers may be the target of the world’s enmity, but the enmity is fundamentally directed at God and His Christ.

God rules the nations and especially Israel by the law and He exercises His government through His King, the Messiah of Israel. In Psalm 2, the nations are the main subject in that government exercised by God’s King from Zion. The rights of the Anointed do not concern only Israel, but go to the ends of the earth (verse 8). In Psalm 8 we see that the entire habitable

earth is subject to the Son of Man. From the New Testament we know that His government also includes heaven (Eph 1:10).

Prophetically, the psalm points to both the first and second coming of Christ. We may well say that we live just before the second coming of Christ. However, it is primarily about the time of the great tribulation that is yet to come. The rebellion of the nations, of which David speaks in verses 1-3, will then reach its climax (Rev 19:19). That is the time when the Lord Jesus will come back to earth. Then He will judge the rebellious and reign from Zion. We see this in verses 6-9.

This psalm is also the first example of what are called the Messianic psalms (Psalms 2; 8; 16; 22; 24; 40; 41; 45; 68; 69; 91; 97; 102; 110; 118). Messianic psalms are psalms that are not *applied* to Christ, but in which we hear Him speak personally. We find the evidence for this in the New Testament, where it is said of these psalms that the Lord Jesus speaks in them.

The poet of such a psalm is a prophet who by the Spirit speaks words that only the Lord Jesus has spoken. They come from the mouth of the perfect King, Christ, Messiah, God's Anointed (Psa 2:2). He is *the* King, Who is given the title Son of God in Psalm 2 (verse 2; cf. Jn 1:49). Then we can also apply parts of those psalms to the faithful remnant and to us.

We can divide Psalm 2 into four sections of three verses:

1. Verses 1-3 the worldwide rebellion against the LORD and the anointed King.
2. Verses 4-6 God's response to it.
3. Verses 7-9 God announces the coming of the Son.
4. Verses 10-12 God's advice to the nations of the world.

Psa 2:1-3 | Apart From God

1 *Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?*
2 *The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,*
3 *"Let us tear their fetters apart*

| *And cast away their cords from us!"*

The why-question in verse 1 with which the psalm begins is not a question to which an answer is expected. It is a question of amazement in the sense of 'who in a right mind would dare to do that?' The rebellion of the nations is foolish, unfounded, senseless. After all, it is clear in advance that all their fussing will come to nothing, or worse, will end in their ruin (cf. Job 9:4). Their uproar is all wasted effort. And what they devise – this is the same word as "meditate" in Psalm 1 (Psa 1:2) – is "a vain thing".

With one single sentence, God refutes all the conspiracies of the nations and their rebellion against Him. They come up with proposals that are meaningless because in reality they turn "against the LORD and against His Anointed" (verse 2). In the discussion of the issues by the nations and their proposed solutions, God and His Anointed have no place, because the kings will not submit to Them.

What the 'great minds' hatch are weapons they set up against heaven. It is all well-wrapped and presented in pleasant words, so that their subjects go along easily. But those who have eyes to see will see that they take counsel together, that they are joining forces, to banish from society and people's thinking anything that reminds them of God and His Christ.

Everything God says feels to them like "fetters" and "cords" (verse 3). They do not want restrictions imposed on them. They know well that God and Christ have given rules of life. That they are aware of this is evident from what they say, because they speak of "their" fetters and cords. Man feels autonomous and wants to be free from God. Therefore: Away with the squeezing yoke of marriage as only valid between one man and one woman. Away with the squeezing yoke of the family where a child is raised only by the father and mother by whom it was conceived and given birth in love.

Nor is their rebellion merely against the LORD by resisting His law – which is mentioned in Psalm 1 (Psa 1:2). Their rebellion is profoundly expressed by resisting His Anointed. This is true both for His first coming (Jn 1:10-11) and for His coming back in glory (Rev 17:14). The kings and lords of this world refuse to recognize the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

At His first coming we see a Herod and a Pontius Pilate putting aside their differences and conspiring to resist the Lord Jesus. They are a type of the two beasts described in Revelation 13. Herod is a type of the second beast, the antichrist, the future false king of Israel (Rev 13:11-18). Pontius Pilate is a type of the first beast, the future leader of the restored Roman Empire, the united states of Europe (Rev 13:1-10). They will both fight against the Lord Jesus at His return, a fight that will take place in the plain of Megiddo, which is in Har-Magedon (Rev 16:16).

The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God (Rom 8:7). We see the enmity at the coming of the Lord, both at His first and at His second coming. However, this enmity is not only the result of man's depraved heart, but also and especially the result of the power of satan, whom the Bible calls "the ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31).

Psa 2:4-6 | God's Response

*4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
5 Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."*

It is ridiculous to defy and reject God's authority, to rebel against Him and to try to be independent of Him. The response of "the Lord" – that is, Adonai or the Commander, the Ruler – to this is a mocking laughter (verse 4; cf. Psa 37:12-13; 59:7-8; Pro 1:24-27). God does not laugh at people who bow down to Him, but at people who rebel against Him. He cannot take their attempts seriously. After all, He sits, or is enthroned, in heaven, un-touchable from the rebellion of the nations.

That He cannot be affected by it does not mean that He is indifferent to it. That which He is far exalted above does not mean that He is indifferent to it. He knows exactly what people want and do. He will respond to that in His time in an appropriate, completely righteous way. His throne is in heaven, which means that He has supreme authority over the universe. *He* rules and not the kings and rulers.

Then He acts by speaking (verse 5). When He speaks, He acts. God acts through His Word. He only has to speak a word, and it happens. He will therefore wage war with the sword that comes from His mouth: His Word. He announces what He is going to do.

The tone in which He speaks is terrifying. The content of what He says means the end of all rebellion. God does not look lovingly on people who ball their fist at Him in conscious rebellion against Him and who roar at Him with muscular language. He speaks to them in His anger about what He intends. "His fury" indicates a consuming judgment. The anger of Adonai is like a fire that consumes everything.

His fury will be executed by His King, His Anointed, His Messiah (verse 6). The Messiah is Adonai Himself. He is none other than the Lord Jesus, the glorified Lord. Almost every word of this verse indicates why the resistance of the nations is so foolish and the installing or appointment of God's King is so obvious. God says: "But as for Me, I have." If God has done something, what will any man do to change it? The very idea is ridiculous, utter madness.

And what has God done? He says: "I have installed [or: consecrated, or: anointed] My King." With that, everything is determined and the future is fixed. Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. His authority is fixed, as is the submission to it of everyone and everything, whether voluntarily or forced. Before Him every knee will bow (Phil 2:10). No one escapes this. When God has installed or anointed His King, that is the end of all rebellion. Now we don't see that yet, but we see Him to Whom all things are submitted, and He is the guarantee that it will happen (Heb 2:8b-9).

That it is about the government of God's Messiah – "Anointed" is the translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah* and of the Greek word *Christ* – is evident from the center of His government: Zion, which is Jerusalem, and the holy mountain, which is the temple-mountain. This also makes it obvious that that government is yet to come, for His throne is not yet in Jerusalem.

Psa 2:7-9 | God's Son, the Messiah

| 7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:

*He said to Me, 'You are My Son,
 Today I have begotten You.
 8 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
 And the [very] ends of the earth as Your possession.
 9 'You shall break them with a rod of iron,
 You shall shatter them like earthenware.'"*

In verse 7, the Lord Jesus is speaking. He tells of the decree that God made known in the previous verse. This means that no man is excusable if he does not know this decree. He who does not know it has to blame himself. He could have known, but he did not want to know. It is a conscious and therefore culpable ignorance.

The Lord Jesus says what the LORD said to Him. First of all, there is that personal relationship: "You are My Son." Here we hear God's personal pleasure expressed in Him, a pleasure of which the Son is fully aware (Lk 3:22; cf. Heb 1:5; 5:5).

The LORD promised David that the King Messiah, the Son of David, will be at the same time the Son of God: "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me" (2Sam 7:14). This means that the King will reign as the representative of His Father. Israel's hope is inextricably linked to the Person of the King.

The purpose of the entire history of the world is God's plan with Him. The fact that people have seen the world as their property since the Fall and have treated it as such does not change that. On the contrary, it increases their responsibility toward God. They misuse what God has intended for His Son by using everything for themselves without any recognition of Christ as the rightful Owner.

Christ as Creator is the Owner of creation. Through the sin of man, creation has come under the authority of satan. But the Lord Jesus as Redeemer has retaken the right to creation through His work on the cross. He does not yet exercise that right publicly, but He has it. In order to do the necessary work of redeeming creation, He, Who is the eternal Son, became Man. This happened because God the Holy Spirit conceived Him in Mary (Lk 1:35).

This means that the Lord Jesus is Son of God in two respects. First, He is the eternal Son. He is eternal, just like the Father (Jn 1:1; 16:28; 17:4,24;

Heb 7:1-3). It is clear that the Father is eternally Father because the Son is eternally Son. He is, in the second place, Son of God as Man. He has not been that eternally, but He has become that and will remain that forever. He, Who has always been and always remains the eternal Son, came in the flesh. He was not begotten by a sinful father, but by God the Holy Spirit. This means that He is also the Son of God as Man.

Reference has already been made to Paul's speech in Pisidian Antioch, in which Paul quotes this psalm, and specifically this verse 7 (Acts 13:32-33). It is clear from the quote that the Lord Jesus is more than just the Son of David. He is also, by His birth, the Son of God; it points to the origin of His life as Man on earth. After the quotation indicating His conception, Paul goes directly to His raising from the dead (Acts 13:34-35).

Christ, as the risen Lord, has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). God says to Him here that He may ask to actually exercise that authority (verse 8). He doesn't do that on His own either. The despised, rejected and dead, but now risen and glorified Messiah waits for the time of the Father. He remains the dependent Man, Who will only act when the Father commissions him to do so. Then He will actually appropriate His rightful property and possession.

In His prayer to the Father the Lord Jesus says that He asks not for the world, but for those whom the Father has given Him (Jn 17:9). Then He will ask for the ends of the earth. He will do that when the church is complete. Therefore, He is not yet claiming His property and possession. After the church is caught up, He will do so and begin to reign.

The nations of the whole earth will notice this. When He rules "with a rod of iron", He will shatter all the enemies of God and His people (Rev 19:15b). What He does to them is like smashing "earthenware". This symbolizes the frailty of man. He is no more than easily broken pottery (cf. Jer 19:11). After all, man is made of dust of the earth (Gen 2:7), to which the word "earthenware" refers.

The exercise of judgment is here attributed to the Lord Jesus. This exercise of judgment is also declared applicable to the overcomers in the church in Thyatira. They are allowed to reign with Christ as a reward for their faithfulness (Rev 2:27). Any grant of power by the Lord Jesus to others is

the grant of a power which He Himself received from His Father (cf. Mt 11:27a; 28:18; Jn 3:35; 5:22,27; 13:3).

Psa 2:10-12 | Invitation to Do Homage to the Son

10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;

Take warning, O judges of the earth.

11 Worship the LORD with reverence

And rejoice with trembling.

12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish [in] the way,

For His wrath may soon be kindled.

How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

After the Father speaking to the Son (verse 6) and the Son speaking about Himself (verses 7-8), the Holy Spirit speaks in verses 10-12. The anger of God has not yet been kindled and the Lord Jesus does not yet rule with an iron rod on earth. With the exhortation, “now therefore”, the leaders, “kings” and “judges of the earth”, are called to action (verse 10).

It is “now” the prosperous time, it is “now” the day of salvation (2Cor 6:2b). “Now therefore”, quickly, change your attitude toward God. Kings must begin to show discernment, to act wisely. This is only possible if they break with their sins (cf. Dan 4:27). Judges or rulers must no longer seek their own advantage, but must begin to administer justice honestly. To do so, they must be willing to be taught and accept the teaching of God’s Word. Perhaps it is also meant that they let themselves to be taught and repent by the discipline that God brings upon them.

True repentance is evidenced by worshiping or serving “the LORD with reverence”. Human life is about worshiping or serving God. This is what God created man for, and therein lies the true meaning of his humanity, through which He fulfills his deepest desires. Worshiping or serving God is the only thing that gives satisfaction and meaning to one’s existence. We may worship or serve God with reverence for Who He is. It is worshiping or serving Him Who is far above us and entitled to our worship or service because He created us and sustains us.

There is joy associated with worshiping or serving God. That means it is not a forced, slavish worship or service. Yet we must never forget that the One we worship or serve is “the Lord who is great and awesome” (Neh 4:14). That includes an appropriate “trembling”. This is not about fear, but about reverence. Acknowledging the majesty of Him Whom we may worship or serve will keep us from a frivolous, arrogant attitude toward Him.

The last verse contains a gracious invitation and an earnest warning (verse 12). In order to worship or serve the LORD in a way that is pleasing to Him, it is necessary for man to be in the right relationship with the Son. With this, the whole life of any human being stands or falls. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father either (Jn 5:23b), no matter what he may claim about his own worship or service to God. To honor God means to honor the Son. Therefore, in conclusion, the call is to do homage to [literally: kiss] the Son, that is, to bow before Him in reverence (cf. 1Sam 10:1; 1Kgs 19:18; Hos 13:2; Lk 7:38,44-45) and be reconciled to Him.

The flip side is the kindling of His wrath. His wrath hangs menacingly over any man who is in “the way” and lives for himself without regard to the authority of the Son. Those who do not kiss the Son perish by the kindling of the Son’s wrath. The wrath kindling “soon” means a rapid end of the man who has not kissed Him. “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29).

The psalm ends with the word “blessed”, the same word with which Psalm 1 begins. This “blessed” is offered to all who have not yet kissed the Son. It is a final invitation. In it a safe refuge from God’s wrath is offered. That refuge is none other than He Who exercises judgment. He is also the One Who protects everyone from judgment who takes refuge in Him. He rejects no one who comes to Him with sincere repentance and confession of his sins.

Prophetically, this verse is also an introduction to the following psalms, Psalms 3-7. Before the violence of the great tribulation erupts over the heads of the believing remnant, it is proclaimed here where salvation is to be found: only with the LORD. We can compare this to the ark being built

as a means of salvation before and in view of the coming flood. The ark is a picture of Christ and the flood is a picture of the great tribulation.

Psalm 3

Introduction

Psalm 1 describes the features of Christ in the faithful remnant of God's people, the faithful part that trusts in God and is faithful to His Word. In Psalm 2 we see the Messiah and the firm counsel of God to make Him, the born King, His Son, King over His possession, the ends of the earth. God will surely fulfill that counsel. It is not yet the time to carry it out. Psalm 2 also shows that the Lord Jesus is rejected by His people and the nations when He comes to earth. That situation is still present now.

Christ has no place on earth now. He is now in heaven and is there the object of the hatred of the nations. That time lasts until He returns to earth. He is still the Rejected. As a result, all who belong to Him are also rejected and find themselves in the circumstances described in Psalms 3-7. In those psalms we see the remnant rejected by their own people and by the nations, but in the midst of those circumstances trust in God.

In Psalm 2, the nations still rage and reject God's authority. Psalms 3-7 show us in David's experience the suffering and oppression of the faithful remnant. They undergo these because of the hostility of the wicked, until Christ comes as King to redeem them to bring them into His kingdom. We also see in the experiences of David the sufferings of Christ because of righteousness.

Psalm 3 shows the trust that believers have in God while they are in a hopeless condition, surrounded by countless enemies. In this psalm, it is especially about enemies who belong to their own people, even to their own house. Their fellow citizens and housemates will prove to be their bitterest enemies (cf. Mt 10:36).

Psalm 3 can be called "a morning song", which is derived from verse 5, where David says: "I awoke." It shows the confidence of the believing remnant that, in the midst of danger, can still sleep peacefully because the LORD keeps them (cf. Acts 12:3-6). In a general sense, this psalm is an encouragement to every believer who is in a hopeless situation. In a spe-

cial sense, and first of all, it is so for those who are going through the great tribulation, that is, the faithful remnant.

Psalm 3 is the first of fourteen psalms that refer in the heading to an episode in David's life (Psa 3:1; 7:1; 18:1; 30:1; 34:1; 51:1; 52:1; 54:1; 56:1; 57:1; 59:1; 60:1; 63:1; 142:1). It is also the first psalm in which the word *selah* occurs.

Psa 3:1-2 | The Seriousness of the Situation

1 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!

Many are rising up against me.

2 Many are saying of my soul,

"There is no deliverance for him in God". Selah.

This psalm is "a Psalm of David" (verse 1a). It is the first psalm of a collection of psalms that mention David as the poet in the heading. See under Introduction 'The writers of Psalms'.

The Holy Spirit also mentions in one sentence the situation David is in when he writes the psalm. He wrote it "when he fled from Absalom his son". David is a type of the Lord Jesus. We see him here as the rejected king who is persecuted by his son Absalom, who is a type of the antichrist. We find in the psalms that follow the feelings of David and of those who are his faithful followers. We see in these psalms the position of the remnant in the great tribulation because their Messiah has been rejected.

A number of psalms mention in the heading that David wrote them when he is fleeing from Saul when Saul is in power. This psalm is an exception, for David composed it when he himself is in power, but is fleeing from his son Absalom who wants to seize power. The history is described in 2 Samuel 15-16 (2Sam 15:1-37; 16:15-23). It is recommended to read those chapters to know the historical background. Absalom is used by God in His governmental ways to bring His judgment on David's family because of his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (2Sam 11:3-4,15-17; 12:1-12). Prophetically, the coming of antichrist is the result of the rejection and crucifixion of Christ (cf. Jn 5:43).

There is little that a man suffers from more than when his son rebels against him. We hear the anguish of it in the words of David when he says of his son from whom he is fleeing: "Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life" (2Sam 16:11a). David does not resist the coup, but flees. In this psalm, he shows us his inner self, what his feelings are while he flees. He makes us share his distress, how it affects him what people say about him and how he goes with it to the LORD. He also tells us that he goes to the LORD with all his needs and finds rest with Him in this tough time.

We can also think of the Lord Jesus when David flees from Absalom. David passes over the brook Kidron when he flees (2Sam 15:23). The Lord Jesus also passes it (Jn 18:1). With Him, however, it is not because He flees, for He walks the way that His Father points out to Him. However, His people also rebel against Him and reject Him.

Prophetically, this psalm will be fulfilled when the faithful remnant of Israel will be persecuted in the future by their earthly brethren, their compatriots, led by the antichrist.

David addresses himself directly to the "LORD" (verse 1b). When the adversaries have increased, God is the first thought of faith. Every believer who wants to serve the Lord faithfully has many adversaries (cf. 1Cor 16:9). Faith turns to Him because it trusts in Him. When in faith we place God between us and what frightens us, things go well. We often become restless because we measure problems by our strengths. When we see that He is concerned with our cause, we can have peace in our hearts.

David faces a large number of opponents (2Sam 15:12-13). The thought of multitude is emphasized in these verses by using the words "increased" and "many" (twice) three times. In Hebrew, "increased" and "many" are the same word. The idea is that there is "much enemy" and that they are rapidly increasing in number. "Rising up" means rapidly increasing (2Sam 15:12).

In addition to the threat posed by the increasing number of enemies, there are also the remarks of the enemy with which they want to rob him of all confidence in God (verse 2). These are not remarks of a few, as in the case of Simei (2Sam 16:7-8), but of "many". Massively they say that he does not

have to count on the help of God. This biting derision deeply affects the believer who is in need. Such a thing has an additional discouraging effect.

Above all, the Lord Jesus has experienced this biting derision when He hung on the cross. They cried out to Him: “HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE [Him] now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM” (Mt 27:43).

From what David says to God, the situation in which he finds himself becomes clear: firstly, there are many adversaries, secondly, they are increasing in number, and thirdly, they are becoming increasingly overconfident, they become from silent opponents to noisy opponents. David does not close his eyes to reality. However, this does not bring him to panic, but to the LORD. He submits the situation to Him.

The word *selah* at the end of verse 2 – and at the end of verse 4 and verse 8 – is a musical sign and means: pause. To the reader, it means: quiet contemplation. It occurs about 70 times throughout the book of Psalms.

Psa 3:3-4 | The Lord Answers

*3 But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
4 I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
And He answered me from His holy mountain. Selah.*

The word “but” (verse 3) indicates that a contrast with the preceding follows, in which the attitude of the wicked is described. Here David is again a clear type of the Lord Jesus in Whom we also see this contrast. After David has made known his distress with God in the previous verses, he now speaks of his trust in God.

David confesses that the LORD is a shield about him (cf. Gen 15:1; Deu 33:29). God not only protects him, God *is* his protection. The shield speaks of the LORD’s protection as the great King. He provides this protection by virtue of His covenant with Abraham and Israel.

We can draw a comparison here to “the shield of faith”, with which we “will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil [one]” (Eph 6:16). The words spoken against David are as arrows (Psa 64:3). However, they cannot do their evil work because the shield of faith renders them

harmless. There is also a difference: A shield protects only the front of the person, but God protects on all sides.

God is also his “glory”. All the prestige he has received as king comes from Him. This is at the same time the guarantee that God will certainly not forsake him. His head, bowed under reproach and sorrow (2Sam 15:30a), is lifted up by God. It also means that he will be restored to his exalted position of king (cf. Gen 40:13; 2Kgs 25:27). After humiliation comes exaltation (1Pet 5:6).

Trust does not make one indifferent or passive, but calls out to God. We read that David prayed on his flight: “O LORD, I pray, make the counsel of Ahithophel foolishness” (2Sam 15:31). He also attributes the answer to that prayer – for which Hushai was called in by him (2Sam 15:32-34) – to God. Hushai could never have achieved the desired result if God had not directed everything. Trust in God is the assurance that God answers, even though He may use people for that answer.

God answers “from His holy mountain”, which is the mountain over which He has anointed His King (Psa 2:6). When God answers a prayer, it is always because of the majesty and reign of His Son. When our prayers are answered, their purpose is to establish the reign of Christ in our lives.

Psa 3:5-6 | Rest in God

5 I lay down and slept;

I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people

Who have set themselves against me round about.

When God has come between us and our problems, there is rest and peace (verse 5). David’s troubled mind has calmed down because he has told God everything and has seen that God is there for him. This allows him to lie down and sleep peacefully. When he awakes after the refreshment of sleep, he is not overcome by distress again, but the LORD is present with His support. During his sleep, the LORD sustained him and he was not assailed. In Hebrew, the verb “sustains” makes it clear that the experience of God’s faithfulness in the night is the basis of his confidence in the future.

The number of enemies has not been reduced (verse 6). The word “ten thousands” in Hebrew is related to the word “many” in verses 1-2. He is aware that they “have set themselves against” him “round about”. Yet he does not become afraid of them again. The circumstances have not changed, he faces that too, but he himself has come to inner peace because he has given everything into the hands of God. Where God is, fear gives way.

Psa 3:7-8 | Salvation and Blessing

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!

For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;

You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.

8 Salvation belongs to the LORD;

Your blessing [be] upon Your people! Selah.

After David has given everything into the hands of God and there is no longer any fear of the multitude of enemies, all those enemies have yet to be defeated (verse 8). The victory is yet to be achieved. For that, David does not go into battle himself. Having found rest in God, he also expects salvation from God. He asks God to arise against the enemies surrounding him. The arising of the LORD means that He comes into action to judge (Psa 7:6; 9:19).

Only God can deliver him. Therefore, he calls upon God to arise and (literally) smite the enemies on the cheek and shatter the teeth of the wicked. Smiting the cheek is an act of humiliation (Job 16:10; 1Kgs 22:24; Mic 5:1b). The shattering of the teeth reminds one of the enemies as wild animals. The enemies are disarmed, rendered powerless, just as wild animals are deprived of their tearing power when their teeth are shattered (cf. Psa 58:6).

The enemies have said that David has no deliverance in God (verse 2). Here he says that salvation, rescue, deliverance is from the LORD and from Him alone. We hear the same thing from the mouth of Jonah (Jona 2:9). Salvation is a sure thing and therefore the blessing attached to salvation is also sure. Because salvation comes from the LORD, salvation also goes far beyond just his personal salvation: “Your blessing [be] upon Your

people.” The blessing of God that results from God’s salvation extends to the whole people of God.

Psalm 4

Introduction

It is possible that Psalm 4 is directly related to Psalm 3 in terms of circumstances. In Psalm 4, David seems to express feelings he has when he is fleeing from his son Absalom (Psa 3:1a).

Psalm 3 can be called a morning prayer (Psa 3:5). This is also above Psalm 3 in the NASB. Psalm 4, as is put above this psalm by the NASB, can be called an evening prayer (Psa 4:4,8). It describes the situation in which it is getting darker and darker for the believing remnant. The oppression is increasing. Nevertheless, they continue to put their trust in the LORD.

That these two psalms belong together is evident not only from the subject – morning prayer and evening prayer – but also from corresponding words used in both psalms, such as “many are saying”, “lie”, and “sleep.

Psa 4:1 | God of My Righteousness

1 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

You have relieved me in my distress;

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

In this psalm, David shares his personal experiences that he has had with his enemies and with his God. He does so in a way that others can also benefit from it. In fact, he has composed this psalm “for the choir director” (verse 1a). As a result of this, what he communicates in this psalm can be sung by others who recognize such experiences in their own lives. The wording in which David expresses his feelings here can be used by others to express their feelings in a God-pleasing way.

We can also see in the choir director a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who in the church starts in us the singing of the song of praise to the glory of God (Heb 2:12). The song is a great gift from God. A song of praise is a special way of singing about God in response to what He has revealed about Himself.

Singing this psalm is also meant to be done “on” or accompanied by “stringed instruments”. Although it is not a psalm of praise, but more a prayer, the support of stringed instruments is prescribed. Even a prayer of distress has something sweet in it. We may know that even our lamentations are melodious music to God because in them we focus on Him and address ourselves to Him. He loves to hear our supplications.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David appeals to God in his distress (verse 1b). He knows that he is righteous before God. That is his pleading ground before God, Who he calls here “God of my righteousness”. God is his righteous God. He knows that his case will be judged by God righteously. He can say that with confidence because he has a good conscience, because he lives righteously. His heart does not condemn him and therefore he has boldness to draw near to God as his righteous God (1Jn 3:21).

He does not ask God to justify him, but to deliver him from his enemies as the God of his righteousness. The enemies who surround him enclose him, they oppress him. But through his prayer, the distress disappeared and he is relieved. God has relieved him.

David asks God to answer him because he is righteous, that is, he is not aware of any sin in his life that would make answering him impossible. That is not the only ground for an answer. Immediately afterwards, he appeals to the grace of God to listen to his prayer. There is no posturing or exercise of compulsion in his prayer for an answer. He is aware that he deserves nothing and depends on grace for an answer. Grace is the experience of God’s favor on the basis of His faithfulness, without any input from man.

Psa 4:2-5 | But Know ...

*2 O sons of men, how long will my honor become a reproach?
[How long] will you love what is worthless and aim at deception? Selah.*

*3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself;
The LORD hears when I call to Him.*

*4 Tremble, and do not sin;
Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*

*5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And trust in the LORD.*

In these verses, David addresses the “sons of men” (verse 2). With the sons of men are meant men of renown, people with a prominent position in life. They are the aristocrats, the upper class of society, the nobility. They derive the meaning of their existence from their high social position. For them David is a failed king, a man with a humble attitude and therefore does not correspond to their idea of a powerful leader. They drag his honor or glory, which has been granted to him by God as His anointed king (Psa 3:3), through the mud. David is aware of this and addresses them about it.

There is impatience in his voice when he tells them ‘how long’ they will “love what is “worthless”. Since honor has been given to him by God, their effort to disgrace his honor is “worthless”, ‘empty’, and therefore pointless. He speaks to them of loving what is worthless because they are working diligently for something that is nothing. In addition, they “aim at deception”, meaning that they consult idols to carry out their ungodly plans.

The foolishness of their living in emptiness and deception is further underlined in verse 3. They must realize that the only thing God reckons with is “the godly man” He has “set apart ... for Himself”. The value and weight of each human life is determined by God according to the esteem which such a person holds for His godly man.

The basis of the faithful remnant’s confidence – and of ours as well – is that God has set apart a godly man, a pious or gracious man, someone on whom God’s pleasure rests. This is primarily about David himself, the man whom God has set apart as a godly man to rule over His people. Beyond David we see the great Son of David, Jesus Christ, the Godly Man of God, His Messiah.

Every man, and especially the man of renown who thinks so highly of himself and so contemptuously of God’s Godly Man, must know Who is the Man on Whom God’s special pleasure rests. Every appeal made to God He answers only in relation with Him. This awareness gives the believing remnant confidence that God will hear when they cry out to Him in faith.

David knows that God hears him when he calls to Him on the basis of the fact that he has been set apart by God. He knows that there is no merit in himself. He is set apart because Christ is set apart. Likewise, we may know that we are chosen by God because the Lord Jesus is the Chosen One (Isa 42:1; Mt 12:18; Lk 23:35). We are chosen in Him (Eph 1:4). David is God's godly man because His great Son is God's Godly Man.

The relationship to God's godly man must be in order for God's blessing to come. Whoever rejects God's choice calls down God's anger upon himself. That is why David tells the sons of men, the men of renown, to "tremble" (verse 4). They should realize that they will perish if they do not kiss the Son (Psa 2:12). The exhortation "tremble" means that they should become inwardly restless about their attitude toward God. It should cause them to reflect on their lives instead of continuing to sin.

The first line of verse 4 is quoted by Paul in the letter to the Ephesians (Eph 4:26). He does so from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, to prove that there is justified anger [the word tremble means tremble with anger or fear]. In doing so, he points out at the same time that in case of a justified anger there should not be a sinful reaction. In the case of the sons of men to whom David speaks, it is about a wrong attitude. This is evident from what follows.

He admonishes them to speak in their hearts when they are lying on their beds. At night, man can contemplate his life. There is nothing to distract him then. The big mouth he opens to others during the day is then silent. "Be silent" implies the command to stop arguing in order to continue living without God.

When opposition to God is given up, David comes up with the recommendation to "offer sacrifices of righteousness" (verse 5). Through this, man expresses that he needs a sacrifice to come to terms with God. It means the realization that an innocent animal must die in his place.

These are sacrifices of righteousness, that is, sacrifices that are offered to God because He is entitled to them. They are sacrifices made with a devoted heart and in accordance with the righteous demands of God. He determines what sacrifices a person must come up with. It means that a man is

accepted by Him only on the basis of the sacrifice of His Son. This is as the Lord Jesus said: “No one comes to the Father but through Me” (Jn 14:6b). In drawing near to God, the inner attitude toward God is also important. This is what David points out in the second line of verse 5. It comes down to trusting God. This trusting in Him has two aspects. God wants us to trust that He has accepted the sacrifice brought by His Son. God also wants us to trust that He accepts every person who comes to Him on the basis of the sacrifice of His Son.

Psa 4:6-8 | Light, Gladness, Peace and Safety

6 Many are saying, “Who will show us [any] good?”

Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD!

7 You have put gladness in my heart,

More than when their grain and new wine abound.

8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep,

For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

In these verses, David addresses the LORD. He answers the question posed by “many” (verse 6), which are the adversaries (Psa 3:1-2). Their question is who will show them any good. The question is a reproach from “many”, by which is meant the apostate mass of God’s people. They lack prosperity and wealth in their lives and resent God and His anointed King for it. This attitude stems from the fact that they persist in their evil ways and do not take to heart the testimony of the faithful remnant.

For David, the good thing is that God lifts up the light of His countenance “upon us”, that is, upon himself and his people (cf. Num 6:24-26). This is opposed to hiding one’s face, which results in dismay (Psa 30:7b; Deu 32:20). David personally experienced that the joy of the light of God’s countenance is a greater blessing than the temporary blessings of what people call “the good” (verse 7).

The good that people want, they find in “their grain and new wine”. If only they have that they have what they want, but without being truly satisfied. They think only of here and now. Tomorrow they want something else and more. The good for these people is the reign of Absalom (2Sam 15:4-6), and prophetically it is the reign of the antichrist and the beast.

David realizes that those temporary blessings can be taken away, while life in the light of God's face is an eternal delight (cf. Hab 3:17-19). The joy he has in his heart is God's gift to him. This is not an imagined, manufactured joy, but real joy. Circumstances no longer worry him, his many enemies with their mockeries are no longer a threat. God fills his heart. Then there is no room anymore for worry and threat. There is peace and safety because God cares and protects.

He can both lie down and sleep peacefully because the LORD not only protects but makes him dwell in safety, that is, he is completely at ease with God (verse 8). There is not only absence of enemies and enmity, but also the presence of inner peace. This situation of peace and safety is what God will work out for His people in the realm of peace, but is already present in the heart when it becomes night.

Psalm 5

Introduction

Psalm 5 is a night prayer. The situation for the remnant is getting worse because the antichrist, the man of bloodshed and deceit (verse 6), has come to power. Also, it is a morning prayer because the psalmist submits his concerns to the LORD in the morning (verse 3).

In this psalm, the remnant expresses confidence that the LORD will overthrow the government of the antichrist (verses 1b-7). They then pray for guidance in dark days (verses 8-9) and the extermination of the followers of the antichrist (verse 10).

Psa 5:1-3 | Prayer for Help

1 For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David.

Give ear to my words, O LORD,

Consider my groaning.

2 Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,

For to You I pray.

3 In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;

In the morning I will order [my prayer] to You and [eagerly] watch.

For “for the choir director” see at Psalm 4:1.

Unlike Psalm 4, which is “on stringed instruments” (Psa 4:1a), this psalm is suitable to be sung accompanied by “flute”. A flute, unlike a trumpet for example, is suited to evoke, display or accompany certain emotions. This can be joy (Isa 30:29; Eze 28:13; Mt 11:17), but it can also be sorrow (Jer 48:36; Mt 9:23). The flute seems to be the appropriate instrument here because it is precisely this instrument that can render and accompany the groaning of which David speaks in verse 1b.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David addresses the LORD directly with “words” and “groaning” (verse 1b), with a “cry for help” and “prayer” (verse 2). He asks Him to give “ear”

to the “words” with which he cries out to Him (verse 1b). He is in distress, as evidenced by his urgent appeal that God gives “ear” to his “words”, and “considers” his “groaning”.

He wants to speak to God about his distress. Therefore he approaches Him in prayer. After all, there is no one else with whom he can or wants to speak about this. He also asks the LORD to pay attention to his groaning. Groaning can be done inaudibly. The burdened soul then has no words, but asks God to pay attention to it anyway.

God can reach our deepest feelings, He knows them. If we groan because we have no words to express what bothers us, He knows what we want to say. It reaches Him. We may know that the Holy Spirit gives words to our sighs (Rom 8:26).

Again, David emphatically asks God to heed his voice when he cries out (verse 2). He addresses God in the awareness of the personal relationship he has with Him. He calls Him “my King and my God”. He calls the LORD here both King and God. In Psalm 2 he calls the Son of God King (Psa 2:6-7). This indicates that the Son, Who is King, is Himself God. He is “the King of the ages” (1Tim 1:17). God is always King, even then when His anointed king, David, has been removed from the throne and someone who has no right to it has taken his seat on that throne.

Having expressed his personal relationship to God in verse 2, in verse 3 he no longer asks if the LORD will listen (verse 1b), but expresses the certainty that the LORD will. In the morning, God hears his voice. Morning is the time when the daily morning burnt offering is brought (Exo 29:39). This reminds us that we may draw near to God on the basis of the sacrifice of His Son.

David does not pray occasionally, but “in the morning”, that is, every morning. As soon as he is awake, he seeks God in prayer. This is an important example for us. It is good, as soon as we are awake, to turn first to God, that our first words be to and for Him. In our foolishness we often seek Him last, only when we see no other way out.

David also says that he “orders” his prayer to God. The verb “order” is also used for arranging or ordering the wood and parts of the sacrifice on

the altar (Gen 22:9; Lev 1:7). This gives his morning prayer the character of a morning burnt offering (cf. Psa 141:2).

After his prayer, he looks forward to God's answer (cf. Mic 7:7; Hab 2:1). This demonstrates his trust in Him. That trust is also echoed in the words "for to You I pray" at the end of verse 2. By this he is saying that he prays to the LORD as the one true God. He prays only to Him and not to anyone else.

These words are the motivation for him to pray. It means that he bases his request on the faithfulness of God to His covenant and promise. Our prayer is based on the faithfulness of God (1Jn 1:9) to the work of Christ on the cross, that is, on the basis of the blood of the new covenant.

Psa 5:4-6 | What God Hates and Abhors

4 For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness;

No evil dwells with You.

5 The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes;

You hate all who do iniquity.

6 You destroy those who speak falsehood;

The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.

Through his fellowship with God in prayer and his expectant anticipation of its answer, the psalmist also sees how God thinks about the wicked and their various forms of wickedness. The use of the words "not", "no", and again "not" in verses 4-5 makes it clear that God cannot have fellowship with evil. Those who have fellowship with God share in His feelings about evil (cf. 1Cor 13:6).

David begins to say that God is not a God Who takes pleasure in wickedness (verse 4). Sin does not give joy, but disturbs every joy and renders it impossible as long as sin is not confessed and refrained from.

"No evil" that is the one who practices evil, may have the thought that he is very religious. With the evil-doer we can think of Absalom, and of him of whom he is a picture, the antichrist. He may assume that he has a right to be in God's presence, but there is no question of that. He will not "dwell" there. God and evil do not go together. In the question, "for what

partnership have righteousness and lawlessness?" (2Cor 6:14) lies the answer.

In verse 5, David names a whole category of people whom he refers to as the "boastful". They may imagine themselves to be wise and clever, but in reality they are insolent fools because they do not take God into account. They do not "stand" before God's eyes. They have no support or hold anywhere when they are judged, but fall over. The entire crowd that captures the Lord Jesus is forced to fall down before Him when He merely utters His name "I am" (Jn 18:6).

God "hates", "destroys" and "abhors" (verses 5-6) the wicked. He "hates all who do iniquity" (cf. Heb 1:9a). God is love, yes, but never does His love come at the expense of His justice. His love is evidenced by His patience and the gift of His Son to everyone who believes in Him. Those who reject that offer of grace fall into the hands of the living God. And that is terrible (Heb 10:31). He hates not only sin, but also sinners who persist in evil. Sinners are judged according to their works, and because of their works they are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:12-14).

Also "those who speak falsehood" are put to death by God. God is the God of truth. Liars are not in fellowship with Him. They follow the father of lies the devil (Jn 8:44a). When we think of "the man of bloodshed and deceit", we can think again first of all of Absalom. He is a follower of the devil, who is "a murderer from beginning" and "speaks a lie" (Jn 8:44b). It also applies to the man in whom the devil reveals himself fully, "the man of lawlessness ... the son of destruction", which is the antichrist (2Thes 2:3).

'Bloodshed and deceit' are the two main characteristics of the devil and the antichrist. 'Bloodshed' indicates violence, murder. 'Deceit' points to lies, deception, lust. We find them both when sin enters the world. The first sin is satan deceiving Eve through lies and lust (Gen 3:1-7). The second sin is that of violence, Cain's murder of Abel (Gen 4:8). All sins can be traced back to one of these two characteristics (cf. Gen 6:11).

Psa 5:7 | Fellowship With God in His House

*7 But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house,
At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You.*

While the evildoer, the fools, all who do injustice, the liars, and the man of bloodshed and violence are put to death (verse 6), David expresses the certainty that he will enter God's house (verse 7). At that point, that is still the tabernacle. His assailants want to get him out of the way. "But" they count outside God, Who will bring him back into His house. He is outside of Jerusalem, but he will be in God's house again. He knows this because even though he is outside of Jerusalem, he is still in God's presence in prayer.

He is also aware that entering God's house rests solely on God's "abundant lovingkindness" and not on the basis of anything excellent in himself (cf. 2Sam 15:25). The Hebrew word for lovingkindness, Adonai, means God's faithfulness to His covenant. God's lovingkindness to us is on the basis of His faithfulness to the blood of the new covenant, which is the blood of Christ.

When David is in God's house, he realizes that God's house is a holy place. He also realizes that bowing in fear of God, that is, with reverence and awe, is the only appropriate attitude toward Him.

Psa 5:8-10 | Prayer for Guidance

8 O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes;

Make Your way straight before me.

9 There is nothing reliable in what they say;

Their inward part is destruction [itself].

Their throat is an open grave;

They flatter with their tongue.

10 Hold them guilty, O God;

By their own devices let them fall!

In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out,

For they are rebellious against You.

David has prayed his prayer for help and he is confident of the answer. Yet the assailants who surround him are still present in full measure and strength. To know how to deal with them, he asks for the LORD's guidance in verse 8. He does this in an impressive way, in a way that is an example for us to follow.

First, he asks that the LORD lead him in *His* righteousness. With that he asks for instruction in the ordinances of God, to keep them. If he heeds them, those ordinances will keep him in the way God has determined for him and in which He will provide justice for him. He does not come to God with a self-conceived plan to ask His blessing on it. He only wants to walk in the righteousness, the justice, of God. He asks God to make the way straight before him, so he will not stumble or go down a winding road or take a side way.

It is not the attitude and actions of his attackers that determine his tactics, but God and His righteousness. He asks this “because of” his “foes”. If God leads him in His righteousness, it will be a testimony to his attackers and will not be attributed to his own clever actions. They will therefore have no occasion to rejoice in his falling into sin.

What he asks in view of his foes relates primarily to what they say (verse 9). David speaks at length about this. He points to “their inward part”, “their throat”, and “their tongue”. His foes do not control him, but they do talk a lot about him. The evil of the tongue is often even more to be feared than violent acts. The slander campaign is running at full speed.

In what they say, “there is nothing reliable”. In “their inward part”, their heart, is “destruction”, that is what they are after, that is what they think up. What comes out of “their throat” is lethal. “An open grave” is a grave prepared for a dead person to be laid in (cf. Jer 5:16). These pictures can only be recognized by those who live in fellowship with God. It is all hidden in “their tongue”, their smoothed tongue, with which they flatter unsuspecting listeners in order to drag them along to the destruction of death.

This description of the wicked is quoted by Paul in the letter to the Romans. Indeed, what David says of them here applies to every human being. It is one of the quotations by which Paul makes it clear that no man is righteous (Rom 3:13).

David, and in him the believing remnant in the end time, appeals to God to hold his attackers guilty (verse 10). On the basis of the declaration of guilt, he asks God to “let them fall” and do so “by their own devices”. The meaning is that they are brought down by their own devices. Their devices are causing their own fall (cf. Job 18:7; Hos 11:6).

Their devices have led them to “the multitude of their transgressions”. Man’s thinking leads him to nothing but committing sins. Therefore, God must thrust them out of His presence. Thus, He had to “thrust” Adam and Eve “out” of paradise because of their transgression of His commandment (Gen 3:24).

David mentions the ground for condemnation and the exercise of judgment: “For they are rebellious against You.” They are rebellious and reluctant. He is not asking for God’s condemnation and judgment because they treat him, David, so defamatory, but because they profoundly fail to acknowledge God’s authority. In Psalm 4 he has tried to reach the hearts of the rebellious people (Psa 4:2-5). Now that this proves futile, only judgment remains. David does not himself exercise vengeance on the rebellious people, but hands it over to God (cf. Rom 12:19; 2Tim 4:14).

The cry for vengeance in verse 10 is typical of Psalms. This is appropriate for God’s earthly people. In the future, when the church has been caught up, the cry for vengeance on the wicked is heard from the mouths of believers (Rev 6:10). However, just as here with David, they are asking God to do it; they are not asking for vengeance themselves. They are not asking for vengeance because they are revengeful, but because they long for justice to take its course.

For us, members of the New Testament church, asking for vengeance is not appropriate. Nor did the Lord Jesus exercise vengeance during His life on earth. He rebuked His disciples, when they wanted fire to come down from heaven, and explained to them the real purpose of His coming to earth (Lk 9:54-56). He shows us to pray for our enemies (Lk 23:34). Stephen understood this and prayed for forgiveness for his murderers (Acts 7:60).

The faithful remnant of Israel, for whom the blessings are earthly, will possess the earth and enjoy all the blessings God has promised His earthly people. To enjoy that blessing in peace and rest, it is necessary that His people be delivered from the violent and deceitful men. That will happen through the judgment that Christ brings on those enemies. The New Testament believers of the church are delivered from their enemies in another way: they are taken away from the earth, where violent men reign, and go to heaven.

Psa 5:11-12 | Those Who Love the Name

*11 But let all who take refuge in You be glad,
Let them ever sing for joy;
And may You shelter them,
That those who love Your name may exult in You.
12 For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD,
You surround him with favor as with a shield.*

In verse 11, David, as the king of his people, speaks to God about “all who take refuge in You”. He asks for them if God will make them glad by the exercise of His righteousness in the extermination of the wicked. It concerns those who follow him in his rejection and share in his reproach. Those who seek protection from God thereby indicate that they “love” the “name” of the LORD (cf. Pro 18:10). The “name” points to the covenant. To “love” His “name” means that they seek protection on the basis of the covenant.

Trusting God and loving Him go together. Love trusts in protection. Whoever loves the Name, loves the Person because of His features, because of all that He is and does. The Name is everything in which He reveals Himself to man, what He shows to man in His features of Himself.

David asks God to allow those who trust and love Him and therefore seek protection from Him to share in exuberant joy. He speaks of being “glad”, “ever sing for joy”, and “exult in You”. This is a huge contrast to the judgment he asked for the disobedient in verse 10.

What David asks for his faithful followers, he asks on the basis of what he knows of God. This is evident from the word “for” (verse 12). By this he is saying that God is undeniably so. It is He “who blesses the righteous man”. God has great pleasure in everyone who lives as a righteous person.

This righteous may be surrounded by enemies, but they cannot do anything to him, because God surrounds him “with favor as with a shield”. Whoever wants to harm the righteous will have to penetrate that shield. Any attempt to do so is futile and doomed to failure, for it is the shield of God.

Psalm 6

Introduction

Psalm 6 is a penitence psalm, the first of the seven penitence psalms found in Psalms (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). This psalm describes the exercises of soul brought about by the afflictions in Psalms 3-5. With that now comes the awareness that the distress not only comes from the enemy, but from the LORD Himself. And that brings the psalmist, David, to penitence. That is why this penitence psalm is sung in a low, somber voice. It can be compared to what Joseph works with his brothers by his way of dealing with them (Genesis 42-44).

David's deep soul stirrings and struggles here, however, are not the result of a distress caused by sinners around him who are seeking his life. It is a distress that stems from the awareness that, seen in God's light, he himself is a sinner. This need presses so heavily upon him that he feels as if he is about to collapse. He experiences his need physically, in his bones, and in his soul, through the awareness of who he is toward the LORD. Added to that is the scorn of the adversaries.

These are two sides of the same matter. One side is that the faithful believers live in the midst of the apostates. They live in those circumstances to the glory of God and know that He is on their side. That evokes enmity and persecution from the haters of God. In that awareness, they bring their enemies, who so oppress them, before God. God hates those workers of iniquity and so they ask that He overthrows them. They point out to God the violence and mendacity of their persecutors and wish Him to judge them. This is what David, and in the end time the faithful remnant of Israel, speaks to God about in Psalm 5 (Psa 5:5-6,10).

The other side is the inner distress that the faithful believer has, which is the result of the awareness of his own sinful nature. We see that here in Psalm 6, where David is speaking of himself. At the same time, we also hear here prophetically the faithful remnant of Israel in the future. A faithful believer knows that in himself he is no better than the haters of God. He

himself has been one of them in the past (cf. Tit 3:3). And also as a believer he knows that he will come to sin if he does not keep himself dead to sin and forgets that he depends on grace.

We see both sides in Isaiah, for example. In Isaiah 5, Isaiah speaks six times “woe” over various sins of God’s people (Isa 5:8,11,18,20,21,22). In Isaiah 6, Isaiah speaks the “woe” for the seventh time, but this time over himself. This happens when he comes face to face with the glory of the LORD (Isa 6:1-5).

The two types of distress result in different perceptions of one’s relationship to God. For the distress caused by the surrounding enemies, David seeks and experiences support from God. For the inner distress, the distress of his conscience, which is caused by the awareness of sins, he experiences God’s anger. He also goes to God with the need because of his sins, however, not to seek support and protection, but to acknowledge his guilt and to beg for mercy. Sin that is acknowledged does not drive away from God, but drives toward Him, for only with Him is forgiveness.

Psalm 6 gives the deep experience of a believer who is aware of who he is in himself. God wants His own – and that goes for the New Testament believer as much as for the Old Testament believer! – to be deeply aware of this. The deeper someone becomes aware of this, the more thankful he will be for his forgiveness. As a result, love for and dedication to God and the Lord Jesus will increase. At the same time, the testimony of forgiveness will gain tremendous power, regardless of the reaction of the environment to it. This is not about God’s work *for* us, but *in* us.

Psa 6:1-3 | Prayer for Grace and Healing

1 For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-string lyre.

A Psalm of David.

*O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your wrath.*

*2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I [am] pining away;
Heal me, O LORD, for my bones are dismayed.*

*3 And my soul is greatly dismayed;
But You, O LORD—how long?*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “with stringed instruments” see at Psalm 4:1.

Here it is added that it is sung accompanied by “an eight-string lyre”. This addition occurs in Psalms only here and in the heading of Psalm 12 (Psa 12:1a). The word “eight” is used in music to indicate playing an octave lower and has also been translated ‘octave harps’ (1Chr 15:21, footnote by ‘lyre’).

We can compare this to the low bass voice in a polyphonic song. The bass voice matches well with this melancholic song. In this psalm we hear the deep, low voice of someone who is struggling inwardly because of his own sinfulness. He feels God’s powerful hand on him (1Pet 5:6).

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1

The distress expressed in this psalm applies not only to David’s experience but also to that of the remnant in the end time. The tribulation of the remnant will be severe. As mentioned, this is not only because of the enemies around them, but also because their conscience tells them that they are oppressed by God because of their sins. That is why David speaks about it – and so will the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time – that the LORD, the God of the covenant, rebukes him (verse 1b). However, this does not alienate and drive him away from God, but rather he clings to Him as a result.

David does not deny that he deserves to be rebuked and to be chastened. He is not asking whether God will not rebuke and not chasten him, but if God will not do it in His anger and in His wrath. If God poured out His full anger and wrath on him, nothing would be left of him (cf. Jer 10:24). He is deeply impressed by the holiness and righteousness of God and acknowledges that he cannot stand before Him if He “should mark iniquities” (Psa 130:3).

All David can do is beg God to be gracious to him (verse 2). There is no right to which he could appeal. By virtue of the covenant, God should rebuke him, yet he asks for mercy. He is totally weakened and on the verge of death. He is sick and there is no strength in his bones to move, let alone walk. His body is decrepit and powerless. He begs God for mercy and

healing. Everything must come from Him. From Him the chastening has come. Only He can also take it away (Psa 39:10). Therefore, in his hopeless situation, he has placed his hope in Him.

Not only is his body affected by the discipline, but his soul also suffers greatly (verse 3). A person can sometimes endure much physical suffering, but when the soul succumbs, the strength to endure the suffering is gone. David realizes that he has no power to save himself from misery and that he has no right that God would save him. He is without strength and without right.

All that remains is to keep looking forward to God's salvation in spite of everything. We hear this in the second line of verse 3. Through the despair we hear that he expects his distress of conscience to come to an end. Only, how long will it take? He puts that question to Him Who alone can give the answer.

Psa 6:4-7 | The Call to the LORD to Return

*4 Return, O LORD, rescue my soul;
Save me because of Your lovingkindness.
5 For there is no mention of You in death;
In Sheol who will give You thanks?
6 I am weary with my sighing;
Every night I make my bed swim,
I dissolve my couch with my tears.
7 My eye has wasted away with grief;
It has become old because of all my adversaries.*

He calls on the LORD to return to him, to no longer turn away from him (verse 4). He longs for the rescue of his soul, for he is greatly dismayed, as he has just said in verse 3. There is nothing in himself that he could refer to as a ground for his rescue. When the LORD rescues and saves him, the only ground for that is His "lovingkindness". The word "lovingkindness" is again the translation of the Hebrew word Adonai, which means that God is righteous and is faithful to His covenant for that very reason. That is why David appeals to it. His rescue and salvation will be a testimony of God's goodness. For that He will be glorified.

The latter will not happen if He does not rescue and save him, but allows him to perish (verse 5). When David dies, there is no testimony of God's lovingkindness, no remembrance of Him and no thanksgiving to Him (Psa 30:9; Isa 38:18). In death and in Sheol, deathly silence reigns (Psa 115:17). Surely that is not God's intention with David, is it? Surely He wants Him to be remembered and given thanks, isn't it (cf. Isa 38:19-20)?

We see here the Old Testament believer's limited knowledge of the state of the hereafter. Through the full revelation of Christ we know that a believer who dies is with the Lord Jesus in paradise (Lk 23:43). He is at home with the Lord (2Cor 5:8) and enjoys His presence (Phil 1:23). Man is fully aware of his situation after death (Lk 16:25). It is a conscious state. The teaching of so-called "soul sleep" is contrary to what Scripture teaches.

David is weary of his sighing, of his inner struggle (verse 6). He cannot sleep, for he can only cry, all night long. His sorrow is deep. His bed and his resting place, places where he should rest, are soaking wet with his tears. In Psalm 3, he can sleep peacefully while surrounded by numerous enemies (Psa 3:5-6). Now that his conscience torments him because of his sins, he struggles and does not come to rest.

His "eye has wasted away with grief" (cf. Job 17:7) and "become old" because of all his adversaries (verse 7). His eyes, because of his deep sorrow, no longer have the sharp sight on God (cf. Psa 38:10b). He grieves over his sins. He has become old in his gaze because of the opponents who painfully remind him of his sins. His conscience is overwhelmed by this. He has come to an end with himself. This is at the same time the turning point, as the last verses of this psalm show.

Psa 6:8-10 | David Regained His Confidence

*8 Depart from me, all you who do iniquity,
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.*

*9 The LORD has heard my supplication,
The LORD receives my prayer.*

*10 All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed;
They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.*

David is convinced that the LORD – three times he mentions His Name in verses 8-9 – has answered his prayer of verse 4. From this faith he speaks to his opponents. By grace, the LORD has heard David’s “the voice of ... weeping” (verse 8b) and received his prayer (verse 9b). Now He is going to intervene (verse 10).

After his profound confession in the previous verses, David speaks in verse 8 to “all you who do iniquity”. These are the people God has used to discipline Him. When God has accomplished His purpose with His discipline, He can tell them to leave him alone. David is not saying this in a superior manner, but in the awareness that “the LORD has heard the voice of” his “weeping”.

It can be compared to the boldness with which Peter says to the men of Israel that they have denied Christ, even though he himself had previously done so. Peter, however, wept bitter tears of repentance over it. He has received forgiveness on the basis of his confession (1Jn 1:9). As a result, he can say this without hesitation and without posturing. This is also true of the believing remnant of Israel. After they have repented and separated themselves from the sins of the people, they have boldness to point out to the people their sins.

We can and should point to people their sins, even if they are sins we have done ourselves. We point out people’s sins not because we are better, but because they can be confessed and forgiven, just as we have confessed them and they have been forgiven us (cf. Tit 3:3-6).

In verse 9, David turns to himself. He knows that the LORD has heard his “supplication”. He has begged for mercy and healing (verse 2). Supplication is intense and sincere prayer from a sorrow that can only be taken away by God. Those who go to God in this way can confidently say: “The LORD receives my prayer.”

The effects of David’s confidence in the answer to his prayer and the LORD’s forgiveness are also seen in the reaction of the enemies (verse 10). They will be ashamed. They thought God was against David, but He turns out to be for him. As a result, they will be greatly dismayed. Instead of attacking him again they recoil. They no longer have to deal with David, but

with the great and awesome God Who is not against David, but for him. In a moment their enmity changes to shame.

This will happen to all the enemies who will attack God's people in the future. They will be used to judge the apostate people and purge the faithful remnant. When God has accomplished His purpose with His people through that discipline, all hostile nations will be ashamed, for they will see that God is not against, but for His people.

Even in the lives of believers, it can seem that God is against them. Their enemies mock them. But there will come a time when the roles will be reversed. Then the persecutors will be ashamed and the persecuted will rejoice. The oppressors will be oppressed, while the oppressed will have rest (2Thes 1:6-7).

Psalm 7

Introduction

In Psalm 7, David, and with him the God-fearing Jew in the end time, when everything is jet black because of the rule of the antichrist, looks forward to God's judgment on the wicked. He shares in God's feelings about evil and expects this judgment to come. We, Christians, also expect this judgment. We know that it is righteous and that it is coming.

However, there is a difference. The God-fearing Jew looks forward to the judgment on the wicked because this judgment delivers him from his enemies who oppress him. The Christian or New Testament believer also suffers through wickedness, but endures the suffering. He suffers for and with Christ to subsequently be glorified together with Him afterwards. He does not look forward to Christ's coming in judgment, but to Christ's coming to take him up to Himself.

Psa 7:1-2 | Prayer for God's Intervention

1 A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.

*O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge;
Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me,*

*2 Or he will tear my soul like a lion,
Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver.*

Psalm 7 is "of David" (verse 1a). The psalm is called a "Shiggaion". The word occurs one more time, in Habakkuk, but in the plural, "Shigionoth" (Hab 3:1). Habakkuk speaks of "according to Shigionoth", from which we can infer that it is a music term. The term seems to indicate a song sung in great excitement, with rapidly changing emotions. This is what we see in this psalm.

Like in the heading of Psalm 3, we find in the heading of this psalm its reason (Psa 3:1a). David sang this song "to the LORD concerning [or: concerning the words of] Cush, a Benjamite". Who Cush – means 'black' – was,

we do not know. Because he is a Benjaminite, it is obvious to connect him with Saul, who is also from the tribe of Benjamin, perhaps a relative, but in any case a kindred spirit.

Cush's words, the song reveals, contained gross accusations that deeply affected David. Possibly Cush has slandered David with Saul (1Sam 24:10). David in his distress seeks refuge with the LORD and brings the burden of his heart to Him in a song. He expresses his confidence in God's righteousness (cf. 1Pet 2:23), enabling him to conclude the psalm with a song of praise to God's righteousness (verse 17).

David's response to the slander of Cush is the only correct one: he takes refuge in Him Whom he calls "LORD my God" (verse 1b). This God is his refuge and protection. With Him he feels secure. He does this again and again. Never does he knock on the door of God, Who is faithful, in vain, when he is in need.

We may do this too. God brings us into situations that lead us to seek our refuge in Him. What a great blessing it is that we can take refuge in God and that we can tell Him everything that concerns us.

David asks God to save him from all his persecutors and to deliver him. His persecutors want to seize and kill him. Therefore, he asks for salvation from them. Salvation has more to do with the circumstances that oppress him and from which he is saved by the judgment of the persecutors. Deliverance refers more to what happens to him when salvation comes: he is rescued from the distress, by being pulled out of the oppression and brought to safety.

The need is huge. David compares his persecutors to a lion (verse 2). The lion is a picture of Satan, who is out to devour the faithful (1Pet 5:8). David acknowledges his powerlessness in the face of his powerful enemies who want to tear his soul, his life. He envisions himself being mercilessly dragged away by them and no one standing up for him. In so doing, he explains why he takes refuge in his God.

Psa 7:3-5 | Declaration of Innocence

*3 O LORD my God, if I have done this,
If there is injustice in my hands,*

*4 If I have rewarded evil to my friend,
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,
5 Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake [it];
And let him trample my life down to the ground
And lay my glory in the dust. Selah.*

In verse 1b he addressed God as “LORD my God” and he does so again in verse 3. Now he wants to focus God’s attention on his innocence. There is a lot of slander being spread around about him. Nabal once called him a “servant ... breaking away from his master” (1Sam 25:10). There have been more such totally unjustified accusations. Absalom, for example, has suggested that you should not be with David but with him to get your justice (2Sam 15:3-4). That has also done its pernicious work in people’s minds.

Of all the allegations, nothing is true. David pleads in a penetrating and convincing way that he is innocent. He lists some things that show what he is accused of (verse 4). The first is that injustice would be in his hands. Indeed, he has sinned. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and he had Uriah killed. But he has confessed that and he is undergoing the punishment that God has imposed on it. Therefore, there is no ground for accusation, neither by evil speakers nor by his own conscience.

Another accusation is that he has rewarded evil to his friend [friend is literally: to him who was at peace with him] (cf. Psa 41:9; Jer 38:22). But it is precisely the other way around. Someone who made his life difficult for no reason, he saved from distress. If any of the accusation were true, yes, let God give the enemy a free hand.

David says that the enemy, in case he were guilty, may do with him what he intends (verse 5). Let him successfully “pursue” him and “overtake” him and seize him. His life he may “trample ... down to the ground”, that is, he may kill him in a vile manner (cf. 2Kgs 7:17). He may also lay his glory or honor, which is all that has given his life value and meaning, in the dust, that is, he may shower him with disgrace even after his death.

David is here also a picture of the believing remnant who have confessed their share of the people of Israel’s sin – the rejection of Christ and the acceptance of the antichrist (Jn 5:43). This brings the remnant to self-exam-

ination and the question to God: “Search me, O God, and know my heart” (Psa 139:23a).

Psa 7:6-9 | Demand for Vindication

6 Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;

Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries,

And arouse Yourself for me; You have appointed judgment.

7 Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You,

And over them return on high.

8 The LORD judges the peoples;

Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me.

9 O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous;

For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.

Because all the accusations are false, David asks the LORD to arise now and stand up for him (verse 6). It is the picture of a court hearing. The LORD must now arise as the Chief Judge. Let Him do that in His anger. David knows that the LORD is angry about false accusations. Then let Him show this by lifting up Himself in His full stature against the rage of his adversaries.

He, David, is His chosen king, isn't he? Let the LORD then not keep Himself asleep, but awake for his sake. Surely He cannot look upon this unrighteousness with impunity, can He? After all, He Himself has “appointed judgment”! Then He must judge and act in his favor. Hence his request to the LORD, which he repeats in all kinds of tones, to “arise”: “lift up Yourself” and “arouse Yourself”.

David holds out to God that He lets “the assembly of the peoples encompass” Him (verse 7). By this he is saying that the peoples will be present at His trial and then see how God judges and acts. They will see that the supreme Judge has ruled against the accusers who have sued David in vain. Then He will take a seat “on high” above them and will declare the accusers guilty. Thus the LORD will “judge the peoples” (verse 8). After all, the judgment that He has appointed applies to the peoples as well.

Now the point is that God will do justice to David. David boldly asks for that because he knows he is “righteous”. He has done nothing against God nor against people that gives his persecutors the right to hunt him down like that. There is nothing wrong in his motives either. He has examined himself, with the result that he can say without any posturing that his “integrity” is in him.

On this basis he calls upon God to put an end to “the evil of the wicked” (verse 9). As for himself, “the righteous”, he appeals to God to establish him. His exclamation “righteous God” expresses full conviction. God is “the righteous judge” (2Tim 4:8), the just God, Who knows the difference between the wicked and the just.

After all, He tries “hearts and minds”. “Minds” is literally “kidneys”, figurative for inner man. Heart and kidneys refer to the most inner of man (Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). In a spiritual sense, it refers to the hidden deliberations of the heart and the conscience. As David says, God knows the deepest motivations of both the wicked and the righteous.

Psa 7:10-13 | God Is a Righteous Judge

*10 My shield is with God,
Who saves the upright in heart.
11 God is a righteous judge,
And a God who has indignation every day.
12 If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword;
He has bent His bow and made it ready.
13 He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons;
He makes His arrows fiery shafts.*

In these verses, David has come to rest. He has grown in his faith and can say now, without a shadow of doubt, that God is standing up for him. His “shield”, that is, his protection, “is with God” (verse 10). Of this he is certain. God is the God “who saves the upright in heart”. And he, David, is such an upright in heart. Therefore, he counts on God to save him.

“God is a righteous judge” (verse 11), which He shows and makes heard every day in the preaching of the gospel. His indignation or wrath is on every man who disobeys the Son (Jn 3:36). The wrath of God is public to

everyone who wants to see it. Those who keep their eyes closed, those who “do not repent” (verse 12), have themselves to blame when God actually pours out His indignation on them.

God is not mocked. He sharpens His sword to judge. He also bends His bow, makes it ready and aims it at those who deserve His judgment. In doing so, there is no room for error; He hits only the wicked. No righteous person is hit by it. He has prepared for Himself His sword and His arrows, His “deadly weapons”, which He makes fiery shafts (verse 13).

Psa 7:14-16 | The Antichrist

*14 Behold, he travails with wickedness,
And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood.
15 He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,
And has fallen into the hole which he made.
16 His mischief will return upon his own head,
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.*

In these verses the wicked is spoken of in the singular. Here we are talking about the personification of evil, about the man of sin, the man in whom sin takes shape in its fullness. We recognize this person in the antichrist. He is filled with evil, there is not a trace of goodness in him. The evil done by him is expressed in him like a woman who is pregnant, travails and gives birth to a child (verse 14).

The antichrist is out to catch others in the snare of his lie. It is compared to digging a pit for someone to catch him in it (verse 15). But the pit he has dug will be his own grave. He will fall into it and perish. Thus he receives retribution for the evil he has done to others. Examples of this are Saul and Haman, both of whom are pictures of the antichrist. Saul wanted to kill David by means of the Philistines and was himself killed by them (1Sam 18:17; 31:1-6). Haman is hanged on the gallows he had erected for Mordecai (Est 7:9-10).

In verse 16, David expresses the same thought in other words (cf. Pro 26:27). The trouble the antichrist inflicts on others “will return upon his own head” (cf. Jdg 9:56-57). It works like a boomerang. This also applies to the violence he has committed, for “his violence will descend upon his

own pate". How that will happen, David leaves to God (1Sam 26:10). We see here the principle of the government of God: "Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Gal 6:7b).

Psa 7:17 | Singing Praise to the LORD Most High

*17 I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.*

David has now grown so much in his trust in the LORD that he "gives thanks" to Him "according to His righteousness". Thus, the remnant begins to sing praises before the enemy is actually destroyed (cf. 2Chr 20:21-24; Acts 16:25-26). During his prayer, he has grown more and more in the awareness that God is a righteous Judge. In His righteousness, He punishes the wicked and saves and protects the righteous. His despair has turned to firm confidence, which leads him to a song of praise to God's justice.

The hope of the righteous is that God will eventually remove all evil from creation. He will do that through His Christ. John testifies to this when he says of the Lord Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn 1:29). This will be started in the realm of peace. The full result will be seen and enjoyed when there is a new heaven and a new earth and eternity has begun.

David sings praise "to the name of the LORD Most High". Here, for the first time, the name "Most High" appears in Psalms. This name of God is particularly associated with the realm of peace. We can derive this from the first time this name appears in the Bible. It occurs in a history that is a picture of the realm of peace.

It concerns Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek after he delivered Lot and before he meets the king of Sodom (Gen 14:17-22). Melchizedek is called "a priest of God Most High". He blesses Abraham "of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth" and praises "God Most High". Immediately thereafter, when Abraham meets the king of Sodom, who wants to bargain with him, Abraham swears "to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth".

The name "Most High" says that God is exalted above all people and the whole of creation. This will be seen openly in the realm of peace, when He

will put all things under the feet of the Son of Man. The Lord Jesus, as the true Melchizedek, will then bring blessing upon the earth. In the following psalm, David sings of that situation.

Psalm 8

Introduction

Psalm 8 is the second messianic psalm after Psalm 2. This is evident from its quotation in Hebrews 2, which makes it clear that this psalm is about the Lord Jesus. Psalm 8 is the first song of praise in Psalms. This psalm is the only one addressed to God alone. This is remarkable because it is about the true Man, the Son of Man, Who came to glorify God, but only after He fell into the earth like the grain of wheat and died (Jn 12:24).

There is a similarity and a difference between Psalm 8 and Psalm 2. The similarity is that both psalms are about the glory of the Lord Jesus. The difference is that Psalm 2 is about the Lord Jesus as King on Zion, where He reigns as the Son of God, the Messiah, over Israel (Jn 1:49) and from there also over the nations. He comes first for Israel as “servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises [given] to the fathers” (Rom 15:8).

Psalm 8 speaks about the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man Who rules over all that is created. He has a Name above all names. He is not *in* heaven, but *above* heaven. He transcends everything. For this He had to suffer and die as the Son of Man and rise from the dead. We find the announcement of this by the Lord Jesus Himself three times in the Gospels (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).

Psalm 8 is what is sometimes called an ‘envelope psalm’ because it begins and ends with the same phrase: “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth” (Psa 8:1b,9). This emphasizes the fact that the glorification of God will take place through the Son of Man Who died and rose again. The Lord Jesus came as the second Man and the last Adam to fulfill God’s purpose in creating man, namely, the glorification of God. Christ is the true Adam.

Psa 8:1-2 | How Majestic Is God’s Name

| 1 For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, our Lord,
 How majestic is Your name in all the earth,
 Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!
 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength
 Because of Your adversaries,
 To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

Then follows an indication that has not occurred before: it is a psalm “on the Gittith”. This phrase occurs three times in Psalms (Psa 8:1; 81:1; 84:1). The meaning of this word is related to a derivation of it, the Hebrew word *gat*, which means wine press. This makes it seem that it is a “wine press song”.

The wine press is a symbol of judgment and of joy. We can see in this, first of all, a reference to the suffering of Christ Himself. He drank the cup of the wine of God’s anger for all who believe in Him. In the second place, it is a prophetic reference to the judgment on the wicked. Wine, besides being a picture of wrath, is a picture of the joy that is the result of tribulation through judgment (Jer 48:33; Isa 63:3; Rev 14:20; 19:1-5,15).

To make the wine, the grapes must be pressed. Similarly, the joy and glorification of God come only through suffering. It will be a joy when the wicked are judged and the Messiah will reign over Israel and the entire earth.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David speaks to the “LORD, our Lord” (verse 1b). LORD, Yahweh, is the name of God in His relationship with man and especially with His people. Lord, Adonai, indicates His sovereign rule over all created things. David, and in him the believing remnant, sees the majesty of God’s Name “in all the earth”. The whole earth is one great revelation of that Name. This will be the case when the Lord Jesus has cleansed the earth by judgment and establishes the realm of peace.

At the same time, David realizes that the splendor of the LORD is “above the heavens”. His splendor transcends all that is created, whether it is the visible or the invisible part of it. David sees only the created and only a

small part of it, the part he can perceive with his eyes. By faith he knows that God displays His splendor everywhere, in countless more places than he can see around him, but also much higher than the created sky. God transcends His creation immeasurably.

Man, who lives separated from God, does not see this because he does not acknowledge God, although God makes His eternal power and Divine nature known in creation (Rom 1:19-20). But what is hidden from the wise and intelligent of the world because their eyes are blinded by “the god of this age”, satan (2Cor 4:4), God has revealed to little children (verse 3; Mt 11:25).

What is said of “the mouth of infants and nursing babes” applies to the believing remnant. As infants and nursing babes, they are utterly defenseless in the face of adversaries, enemies, and vindictive people. But their mouths open to praise God. This display of weakness and ignorance according to human standards is a foundation of strength. God has laid that foundation to establish on it His honor and glory.

When the Lord Jesus quotes this verse from Psalm 8, He does so from the Septuagint, saying: “OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABIES YOU HAVE PREPARED PRAISE FOR YOURSELF” (Mt 21:16) instead of “You have established strength”. In praising God – and the Lord Jesus – His power and greatness are sung. It is God’s method to shame through the mouths of infants and nursing babes, the weak, the things which are strong (1Cor 1:27). David tells God that this is how He works “because of Your adversaries”. In doing so, God is muzzling the mouths of “the enemy and the vengeful”. These are mainly and primarily the wicked of the people and then also the enemies from outside.

The Lord Jesus quotes this verse to silence His opponents, the chief priests and scribes (Mt 21:15-16). Those fools reveal their opposition to Him by pointing out to Him the ‘unheard of’ that children praise Him in the temple with the words “hosanna to the Son of David” (Mt 21:15; cf. Psa 118:25-26). The Lord then holds up to them this verse. In doing so, He says reproachfully to them whether they have “never read” that verse in Psalm 8. They will have read it often enough, but always without understanding its true meaning.

Not understanding something is not bad. Not *wanting* to understand something is really bad (cf. Isa 6:9-10). Such is the case with the chief priests and the scribes. Their unwillingness blinds them to the fact that this verse demonstrates that the Lord Jesus is the LORD, Yahweh, Himself. The children express this loudly.

Psa 8:3-8 | What Is Man?

3 *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;*
4 *What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him?*
5 *Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!*
6 *You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,*
7 *All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,*
8 *The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.*

After the contrast between infants and nursing babes on the one hand and the adversaries on the other, more contrasts follow from verse 3 onward. In verse 3 David speaks of the mighty heavens and in verse 4 he speaks of the smallness of mortal man. He speaks about “Your heavens”. They are God’s heavens because He made them and is the Owner of them. He sees “the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars”. The mention of God’s fingers suggests that He has been at work as a skilled artist.

He has also “ordained” all the celestial bodies, He gave them their place. All celestial bodies do not find themselves in the place where they are by chance, but have been given that place by God. Therefore there is harmony in the universe. Everything is in the right proportion to each other. The celestial bodies are the silent witnesses of God’s majesty, creative power and power of maintenance, which keeps them in their place and in their orbit. Here we have one of the many indications that the theory of evolution is a theory of lies. God has given everything its place in the sky, not by evolution, but by the work of His fingers. It is not a process, but an act.

Deeply impressed by the immeasurable universe with its countless stars, David speaks in amazement about the fact that God is thinking of that puny, mortal “man” (verse 4; cf. Job 35:5). Job asks the same question, but as an accusation, from the perspective of the suffering God brings upon him (Job 7:17). ‘Man’ is the translation of the Hebrew word *enosh*, which means weak, mortal man. That is what man became after the Fall. *Enosh* therefore is the sinful man. This does not apply to the Lord Jesus.

David is also amazed that God cares for “the son of man”. “Son of man” is the translation of the Hebrew words *ben adam*, which mean “son of Adam”. This emphasizes that he was made from the dust of the earth, and also without the ulterior motive of sin. What makes him so valuable to God that He, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, does not forget him, but takes care of him and shows His favor again and again? After all, man in his mortality and weakness is an insignificant creature in the midst of God’s imposing, overwhelming works of creation (cf. Psa 144:3).

After his astonishment at the significance that man has for God despite his smallness, David speaks of the relationship between man and the angels (verse 5). Compared to the angels, man is made by God “a little lower” than they are [“God” should read as “angels” cf. Psa 97:7b). Man is head of creation and God has subjected everything to him (Gen 1:26,28). Thus God has crowned him with glory and majesty!

This is amazing. As a creature, man does not possess the power and agility of angels. He is also confined to the earth, whereas angels are in heaven and can come to earth. Yet God has not set an angel as the ruler of creation, but that weak, limited man.

What attraction can there be in that puny man that God take thought of him? The answer to that question is: Look at the Lord Jesus, “the Son of Man”, Who is now in glory, crowned by God with glory and honor. In Him we see how God really thinks about man. He is the true Son of Adam (Lk 3:23-24,38). In Him we see the glory and honor of man.

He is the Son of Man (singular) and not the Son of Men (plural). This difference is important. For He is the Son of one human being, Mary, and not the Son of two men, Joseph and Mary. We humans are all born of two human beings – of a father and a mother – so we are all “sons of men”

(Eph 3:5). The Lord Jesus by His birth is the Son of Mary in whom He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35).

That David by the Spirit speaks of Christ we see in Hebrews 2 where these verses of Psalm 8 are quoted and explained. Because of its importance, we quote the entire section:

“For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying, “What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him? “You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands; You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, [namely,] Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone” (Heb 2:5-9).

Verse 6 of Psalm 8 goes beyond the first Adam about to the last Adam (1Cor 15:45,47). “You have put all things in subjection under his feet”, indicates the complete lordship of the Lord Jesus over creation, as the quotation in Hebrews 2 makes clear. ‘All’ is also really all and allows no exception. It includes all things in heaven and on earth, every part of the created universe. Wherever we look in the universe, there is nothing to be found that is not subjected to Him.

Of that general dominion, nothing can be seen today. We see much misery and sorrow. This is because man, through sin, has given up and lost dominion. That dominion is now in the hands of satan (Lk 4:6), who since the Fall has been “the god of this age” (2Cor 4:4) and “the ruler of this world” (Jn 12:31). The curse rests on creation. Peaceful animals have become predators and the earth’s soil has begun to bring forth thorns and thistles.

It will not always remain so. To see how it will be, we must look up. There we see “Jesus” and indeed “crowned with glory and honor”. God has given Him that place of honor as a reward for His work on the cross. Because of this suffering of death, the Lord Jesus was “made a little [or: a short time] lower than the angels”. He, Who is the Creator of the angels and

therefore their Master, was, though for a short time of only three days, still during that time, lower than the angels. His humiliation knows no limits and therefore neither does His exaltation. We do not yet see everything subjected to Him, but in faith we do see Him to Whom everything will be publicly subjected.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews is concerned with raising our eyes upward to Him. And to see Him is also to see His work that He has done on earth at God's behest. Where the first man failed so grossly and irreparably, the second Man has come to acquire the full right to creation. He acquired that right by glorifying God in the same area where the first man failed.

All things put "under his feet" (verse 6), that is, the feet of the first man, concerns especially the animal kingdom (verse 7; cf. Gen 1:26). He rules over the tame animals, "all sheep and oxen". These animals serve him. He also rules over the wild animals, "the beasts of the field". He is able to capture and tame them or render them harmless (cf. Jam 3:7). He also rules over the animals of the air, "the birds of the heavens" (verse 8). The same is true of the animals in the water, "the fish of the sea" (cf. Gen 9:2). The fish pass "through the paths of the seas". They are not human paths. Yet man manages to catch the fish.

That everything is put under man's feet is applied to the Lord Jesus three times in the New Testament (Heb 2:8; 1Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22). There we also see that there are two exceptions. The first exception is God, for God has subjected everything to Him: "But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him" (1Cor 15:27b).

The second exception is the church, for it is joined to Christ as a body to a head: "And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:22-23). That the Lord Jesus reigns over creation together with His church we see pictured in the rule Adam and Eve receive together over creation (Gen 1:27-28).

Psa 8:9 | How Majestic Is God's Name!

*9 O LORD, our Lord,
How majestic is Your name in all the earth!*

The psalm concludes in this verse with the same words with which it begins in verse 1. David has, what he says in the opening verse, clarified in the following verses. As a result, we have understood why David begins with this and has involved us in his admiration for God's Name. This will be fully fulfilled in the realm of peace.

For us it has an even deeper dimension. We do not yet see everything subjected to Him, but we see Him to Whom everything will be subjected. In addition, we are united with Him, the Son of Man, and will share in His reign in the realm of peace. In that realm His dominion is not only over all that is on the earth, but also over all that is in the heavens (Eph 1:10). For us, His Name is already majestic in our hearts and lives, while outwardly nothing of His dominion is visible yet.

Psalm 9

Introduction

We have in Psalm 9, which together with Psalm 10 forms a unit, a special stylistic form in the poetry of the Hebrew Psalms, called acrostic. In this, the first word of each verse, or group of verses, begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, called *alephbeth* in Hebrew. The Psalms written in the form of an acrostic are: Psalms 9-10; 25; 34; 37; 111; 112; 119; 145.

The first psalm is Psalm 9 to which Psalm 10 belongs directly because Psalm 10 continues the alphabetical sequence of Psalm 9. Also, Psalm 10 lacks a heading, which is unusual for book 1 of Psalms (Psalms 1-41). This means that the heading of Psalm 9 applies to Psalms 9-10 together.

However, the alphabetical sequence of these two psalms is not compelling, for some letters are missing, being one letter in Psalm 9 and six letters in Psalm 10. Further consideration of this shows that the letters are missing where the antichrist, the man of sin, becomes manifest. Six in the Bible is the number of man.

The psalm shows us the governmental ways of God in the life of the oppressed faithful remnant (Psa 10:18) in “times of trouble” (Psa 9:9; 10:1). This involves primarily enemies from without in Psalm 9, and enemies from within in Psalm 10. The way of God when there are enemies is to first bring praise to Him (verses 1b-2; cf. 2Chr 20:21). After all, the fight is the LORD’s; it is His fight.

Psa 9:1-6 | Praise to God, the Righteous Judge

1 For the choir director; on Muth-labben [i.e. Death to the son]. A Psalm of David.

I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart;

I will tell of all Your wonders.

2 I will be glad and exult in You;

I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

3 When my enemies turn back,

*They stumble and perish before You.
 4 For You have maintained my just cause;
 You have sat on the throne judging righteously.
 5 You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked;
 You have blotted out their name forever and ever.
 6 The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins,
 And You have uprooted the cities;
 The very memory of them has perished.*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The addition “on Muth-labben” which means ‘Death to the son’ is found only in the heading of this psalm. Several explanations of this expression have been given, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to give the correct explanation.

There is, however, one explanation that appeals to us. That is that by ‘Death to the son’ is meant the death of “the man of lawlessness ... the son of destruction” (2Thes 2:3) or the antichrist. This person plays the leading role in evil in this psalm and the next – and in many other psalms. He is the embodiment of lawlessness, which is expressed in the name ‘the man of lawlessness’.

The thought of his death also connects well with the previous psalm, Psalm 8, where the realm of peace is described. The establishment of the realm of peace means the death of the antichrist, ‘the son of destruction’. God proves that He is the righteous Judge by killing this person. This gives the God-fearing, who have suffered greatly from him, the occasion for a song of praise, which is heard through David in this psalm. The ‘Death to the son’ is the melody of this psalm by which the words which are sung are carried.

For “a Psalm of David”, see Psalm 3:1.

After a climax in Psalm 8, the thread with Psalm 7 is picked up. Psalm 7 ends with a song of praise about and to the LORD Most High. That is repeated here in verses 1b-2. David begins the psalm by giving thanks to the LORD (verse 1b). He does this with all his heart. There is nothing else in his heart but thanksgiving to God.

Next, he says to God that he will tell of all His wonders. Wonders are literally “extraordinary things”, all acts of God that produce astonishment and awe. It is a term more often used in Psalms to describe God’s works, which are numerous. These are primarily wonders of deliverance through judgment on enemies. He testifies to others of what God has done for him. Thus he first gives to God what is due to Him. Then follows the testimony to the outside world, so that they too will begin to ask for Him.

Even more than the wonders of deliverance, about which he *tells*, David is *glad* and *exults* in the Deliverer (verse 2). He jumps up with joy because of Him. To His Name he sings praise. The LORD is the “Most High”. He is exalted above everything and everyone. One who realizes this in faith can sing in spite of enemies who surround him. As noted earlier, the name “Most High” is God’s name in the realm of peace. David sees here, as it were, the full result of deliverance.’

In verses 3-4, David speaks of the reason for his joy. Both verses begin with a reasoning word. The first is “when” and then the description follows what happened to the enemies (verse 3). David is mindful of God’s successive dealings with his enemies. There is a climax – for the enemies an anticlimax – in it. It all happens “before You”, that is, it is His work.

In a vivid description, the defeat of the enemies is depicted; we see it happen:

1. God has caused his enemies to “turn back”.
2. Then they do not flee and escape, but “stumble”.
3. Finally, we see their end: they “perish” before God.

The word “for” makes it clear that the enemies perished because God has maintained David’s just cause (verse 4). God, by killing the enemies, justifies David. David has defeated his enemies, but he knows that it is not he, but God who has dealt with his enemies. God has enabled him to do that. Therefore, for that, all credit is due to Him.

David served God faithfully. Because He is the righteous Judge, Who is “judging righteously”, He stood up for David. He always stands up for those who suffer because of their faithfulness to Him. This is not always

immediately apparent. Sometimes it even seems like the opposite, but it will become visible when He takes His seat on His throne.

Because God is the righteous Judge, Who cannot do other than judge righteously, He rebukes “the nations” (cf. Mt 25:31-33) and destroys “the wicked” – singular, the antichrist (verse 5). The nations share in the fate of the antichrist because they have followed him and helped in carrying out his evil plans. Nothing remains of them; the eradication is radical.

Even their names – those of the nations and that of the antichrist – are blotted out, not for a shorter or longer period, but “forever and ever”. As in verse 3, here we have a climax for faith that is an anticlimax for unbelief: rebuked, destroyed and blotted out.

Verse 5 begins with the letter *gimel* and verse 6 begins with the letter *he*. The letter *daleth* is skipped. This has to do here with the mention of “the wicked” in verse 5 and the “enemy” in verse 6. By both is meant the antichrist who is out to disrupt God’s governmental ways.

In verse 6 David says defiantly to the enemy, the antichrist, where does he now stand with all his exploits of which he has always boasted? He has done nothing but cause ruin, uproot cities and making life impossible for countless people. The testimony “destruction and misery are in their paths” (Rom 3:16) applies to him in particular. When he is put to death, there is an end forever to his destruction as well as to the uprooting of cities. The memory of his devastation has perished along with his destruction.

We can apply this to everything modern man boasts of. He strains to make the world more livable, that is, to bend it to his will, just for his own pleasure. The effect of his efforts is to make the world more and more uninhabitable. The trail of destruction that is in his paths becomes deeper and deeper. Not even a memory of him remains, no matter how much people may praise him and “immortalize” his name.

One of the greatest symbols of glorification of man is the Hollywood Walk of Fame with names of entertainment industry celebrities admired by countless people. When God takes His seat on the throne, He wipes out all those names and their memory of them. They disappear forever and ever. They are never thought of again, let alone longed for again.

Psa 9:7-12 | The LORD Is a Stronghold

*7 But the LORD abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment,
8 And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.
9 The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of trouble;
10 And those who know Your name will put their trust in You,
For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.
11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion;
Declare among the peoples His deeds.
12 For He who requires blood remembers them;
He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.*

Opposite to the temporary and destructive nature of the work of the anti-christ described in the previous verses is the eternal throne of the LORD (verse 7). On that throne He sits “forever”. There will never be a time when another will sit on that throne, as is always the case with thrones on earth. Sitting on His throne, He will “judge the world in righteousness” and “execute judgment for the peoples with equity” (verse 8).

David applies the truth of verses 7-8 to the needy of God’s people. While God’s throne is a judgment throne for the nations, God Himself is “a stronghold for the oppressed ... in times of trouble” (verse 9). In “the oppressed” we see the faithful remnant, while with the “times of trouble” the great tribulation is meant.

God stands up for the oppressed, for those who are deprived of all rights and who are unjustly treated. He takes their trial upon Himself. He is their safety and protection. They know His Name and know that He is completely trustworthy (verse 10). They experienced this when they sought Him in times of trouble. Then He did not forsake them.

It is therefore understandable that David calls them to “sing praises to the LORD who dwells in Zion” and to “declare among the peoples His deeds” (verse 11). The word “for” with which verse 12 begins indicates the reason that follows for the call of verse 11. God is the righteous Judge. They may

know, and be encouraged by this, that He “requires blood” and “remembers them”.

That “He ... remembers them” does not mean that He suddenly remembers that there is yet a retribution to be made. He has not forgotten “the cry of the afflicted”. He has never forgotten what His own have suffered and by whom suffering has been brought upon them. Their cry for help has never died away for Him even though enemies have silenced the voice. The fact that He remembers them means that He judges the time has come to act and to retaliate.

Psa 9:13-14 | Prayer and Promise

*13 Be gracious to me, O LORD;
See my affliction from those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death,
14 That I may tell of all Your praises,
That in the gates of the daughter of Zion
I may rejoice in Your salvation.*

David has sung in faith in the previous verses of the result of God’s exercise of justice in his favor. In verse 13 he speaks of the actual circumstances. The enemies have not yet been eradicated. They are making his life difficult. He supplicates for God’s grace, because he is miserable. This misery is caused by those who hate him and who continue to persecute him. He feels that he is before “the gates of death”, that is, in the power of death. In faith he expresses that God will “lift him up” from it, deliver him from it.

The Lord Jesus speaks of the “gates of Hades” as an expression of the power of death (Mt 16:18). He does so in the context of the first communication to people ever about the church, which He calls “My church”, which He says He “will build”. That building began on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4) and continues until the church is raptured.

The church includes all those who, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus, are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13). Those who are members of the church of God remain so, even though they have died. The power of death, or the gates of Hades, cannot change that.

For David, his deliverance from the power of death is one of all God's praises, which are all His praiseworthy deeds, deeds worthy of praise (verse 14). In faith in God's deliverance "from the gates of death", he speaks of being "in the gates of the daughter of Zion", that is Jerusalem as the city will be in the realm of peace.

God has then fulfilled His purpose with that city. The gates of the city symbolize the power of God. The city is a monument of God's power. God by His power has delivered the city from all its enemies, giving it His salvation. All who live in the city will rejoice in what God has done to the city. He acted in favor of her.

Psa 9:15-18 | Judgment on the Nations

*15 The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made;
In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught.*

*16 The LORD has made Himself known;
He has executed judgment.*

In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. Higgaiion Selah.

*17 The wicked will return to Sheol,
[Even] all the nations who forget God.*

*18 For the needy will not always be forgotten,
Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.*

These verses give a prophetic description of the judgment on the nations. They describe events that still have to take place as if they have already taken place. The nations have wanted to raze the city to the ground, they have wanted to make the city a pit, filled with corpses of the inhabitants (verse 15). Through the judgments of the righteous Judge, the roles have been reversed. The nations have perished and have sunk down in the pit they have made for Jerusalem. In their march toward Jerusalem, their feet became caught in the net which they had hid for Jerusalem.

This happened because the LORD stood up for His people and turned against their enemies. He intervened in judgment and made Himself known in that way (verse 16). He becomes known by executing judgment. When "the wicked" – singular, we can think of the antichrist – becomes snared in the work of his own hands, it shows that God executes judg-

ment. The words “higgaion, selah” indicate that while the music is playing softly (higgaion), a moment of quiet reflection (selah) on God’s justice is required.

After reflecting on God’s justice, David resumes speaking about the fate of the wicked (verse 17). He adds some serious words as a warning to the wicked. All the nations are returning to their place of origin. They come out of the realm of the dead, Sheol, and return there. Sheol – called Hades in the New Testament – is the place where the spirits of deceased unbelievers are.

That they return to the realm of the dead does not mean that the realm of the dead is their place of origin in a literal sense, but that the content of their lives has its origin there. They have manifested nothing but hatred toward God and His people. This is what characterizes the realm of the dead, where the unbelievers are. In their lives they have never been in touch with God. They have deliberately forgotten Him, eliminated Him in their thinking, not allowed Him any interference in their lives. They will always be forgotten by God.

In contrast, the needy will not always be forgotten (verse 18). God is thinking of him (cf. verse 12). Therefore, the hope of the afflicted does not perish forever. No needy and afflicted who places his hope in God does so in vain. God hears and will answer and deliver.

Psa 9:19-20 | Call to God to Arise

19 Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail;

Let the nations be judged before You.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD;

Let the nations know that they are but men. Selah.

In verse 19, David, and in him the faithful remnant, appeals to God to prevent man – Hebrew *enosh*, which is weak, mortal man – from making himself strong against the God-fearing. The so powerful antichrist, the beast coming up out of the earth (Rev 13:11-18), who is supported by the beast coming up out of the sea (Rev 13:1-10), is here referred to as *enosh*, weak and mortal. Therefore, let the LORD arise. Even the nations are made up of nothing but weak, mortal people.

When the LORD exalts Himself in His majesty, His impressive stature will put fear into their hearts (verse 20). Then they will shrivel up and know that God is the strong God and that they themselves are nothing but “men”, weak, mortal men who are powerless against Him.

Psalm 10

Introduction

Psalm 10 continues as an acrostic where Psalm 9 ends. Psalm 9 ends with the letter *kaph* and Psalm 10 continues in verse 1 with the letter *lamedh*. Just as in Psalm 9, where we read about the wicked (Psa 9:5), after which a letter is skipped, *daleth*, here we also read about the wicked and six letters are skipped. Psalm 10 does not continue with the next letter, *qoph*, until in verse 12 and then continues with the acrostic.

Verses 2-11 are not part of the acrostic. As mentioned, six letters are skipped. The number 6 is the number of man; 666 is the number of the man of sin, the antichrist (Rev 13:18). The antichrist is a person. He is the future, false king of Israel. He is wicked in the sense that he declares of himself that he is God. He is not an atheist, someone who denies the existence of God. On the contrary. The word *anti* means both *instead of* and *against*. The name antichrist means instead of Christ and against Christ.

He is the masterpiece of satan through whom satan tempts man to trust not in God but in him. At first he succeeds. He manages to enchant the mass of unbelieving Jews through signs and false wonders. This brings great trials to the believing remnant. Just as Cain could not endure Abel, the wicked does not endure the God-fearing.

Psalm 10 writes of the believer's difficulty with God's governmental ways when he sees that the wicked are seemingly doing well (cf. Psa 73:2-3,16-17). The question receives no theological answer, but is answered by pointing to God's care for His own (verse 14).

Psalm 10:1 | Why Does God Not Intervene?

1 *Why do You stand afar off, O LORD?*

Why do You hide [Yourself] in times of trouble?

The psalm begins with a cry of anguish to God. The psalmist is in distress; he cries out to the LORD. Where is He, now that he needs Him so much? He exists, the psalmist knows that, but He is not near him, he does not

experience His presence. The LORD stands afar off and makes no move to come to his aid (cf. Isa 49:14).

He asks the LORD why He hides Himself, just when he needs Him so much, when he is “in times of trouble”. In the next few verses he describes why he is in distress. There he describes a relentless enemy who pursues him relentlessly. Yet that enemy is not his real need; his major need is that God hides Himself.

Psa 10:2-11 | What the Wicked Thinks, Does, and Says

*2 In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted;
Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.*

*3 For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire,
And the greedy man curses [and] spurns the LORD.*

*4 The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek [Him].
All his thoughts are, "There is no God."*

*5 His ways prosper at all times;
Your judgments are on high, out of his sight;
As for all his adversaries, he snorts at them.*

*6 He says to himself, "I will not be moved;
Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity."*

*7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.*

*8 He sits in the lurking places of the villages;
In the hiding places he kills the innocent;
His eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate.*

*9 He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair;
He lurks to catch the afflicted;
He catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.*

*10 He crouches, he bows down,
And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones.*

*11 He says to himself, "God has forgotten;
He has hidden His face; He will never see it."*

In these verses, the psalmist tells why he cries out to the LORD in his troubles in verse 1. He wrestles with his faith, his faith is in conflict with what he sees. In these verses he gives a detailed description of the wicked

in whom we again clearly recognize the antichrist. The antichrist is the wicked who has no regard for God. He lives in pure pride in rebellion against Him.

The wicked shows his hatred of God by “hotly” pursuing the God-fearing “afflicted” (verse 2). “Hotly” means burning, a burning zeal to kill the God-fearing. He is helped in this by his followers. This is evident from the second line of verse 2. The psalmist cries out to God “to let them be caught in the plots which they have devised”. The followers of the antichrist are animated by the same demonic spirit and devise the same demonic plans. Further on, in verses 8-10, the execution of those cunning plans is vividly described.

His murderous and predatory ways are “his heart’s desire” (verse 3). He behaves as if he were God (2Thes 2:4b). Without any shame, he boasts of his sins. He “blesses the greedy man” as it also can be translated. The greedy man is the one who behaves like him. In contrast, he “curses [and] spurns the LORD”. He not only does not care about God, but deliberately turns against Him and deliberately speaks evil of Him. In the eyes of people he may be a good ruler, someone who does his best to make people’s lives more pleasant, but it is all pretense.

The wicked is very much pleased with himself. In the haughtiness of his countenance and in his arrogance he believes that any seeking of God or any examination of what is good is unnecessary (verse 4). He himself determines what is good. He is his own standard. In his thoughts, “all his thoughts”, there is no room for God. He blasphemes God and banishes Him from his thinking.

That there is no room for God in his thoughts, seems to bring success on his ways, because they prosper at all times (verse 5). But those who live without God, those who do not involve Him in their lives, can only cause pain and sorrow for others. There is no thought of the well-being of others.

The wicked denies that he is accountable to God. As a result, he claims, he has a free pass to force his neighbor to accept his scheme. If his neighbor does not, he will remove him, as Cain did to Abel. God’s judgment is far above him, far from him, and it does not interest him at all. He puts it off

(cf. Amos 6:3). “He snorts” at “all his adversaries”, those who disagree with him, he does not tolerate them in his presence and gets rid of them.

There is not the slightest modesty or uncertainty with him about his actions. In his heart resides the greatest prideful self-assurance that he will not be moved (verse 6). Here, in his haughtiness, he appropriates a privilege that God has purposed for the righteous (Psa 15:5; 16:8; 21:7; 112:6). He sees himself surviving the generations and living on in prosperity, un-touchable from misfortune. In his conceit and pride, he thinks: “I will not be in adversity.”

The language his mouth spews out reflects what is in his heart and in his mind (verse 7). He does not curse, deceive and oppress just once in a while and is not crafty in his speaking just once in a while, but his mouth is full of it. There is no room for anything else. The smallest bit of truth is foreign to him. “Under his tongue”, which is also his weapon, “is mischief and wickedness”. His words conceal his real intentions. There is nothing sincere in him.

In verses 8-10, the psalmist describes the wicked as a lion lying in ambush to ambush and devour his prey. His prey is called “the innocent”, “the unfortunate” (verse 8), “the afflicted” (verse 9 [2x]) and again “the unfortunate” (verse 10). They are no match for the mighty lion with his strong claws. The wicked targets those who live righteously before God and therefore brings his hatred upon them.

Because God does not intervene directly, the wicked believes he can continue to do evil (verse 11; cf. Ecc 8:11). He sees God’s patience as impotence. In his foolishness, he believes that God is forgetful and acts as if He does not care, that He even “will never see” evil.

Psa 10:12-15 | Request for Action From God

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Your hand.

Do not forget the afflicted.

13 Why has the wicked spurned God?

He has said to himself, “You will not require [it].”

14 You have seen [it], for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand.

*The unfortunate commits [himself] to You;
 You have been the helper of the orphan.
 15 Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer,
 Seek out his wickedness until You find none.*

The question of verse 1 “why ..., O LORD?” turns into an urgent call for immediate intervention in verse 12 and verse 15. In between these two verses, the psalmist passes on his reflections and soul-exercises in verses 13-14.

Although it seems that the wicked is right and God does not care about evil, the psalmist calls to the “LORD” (verse 12). To whom else should he go? After all, there is no one who can deal adequately with evil but Him, there is no one else who can stand up for “the afflicted” (plural here!). He is the Only One. Let Him stand up and raise His hand to strike down the wicked. Then it will be clear that He does not forget the afflicted, which now seems to be so.

The psalmist does not understand why God allows the wicked to spurn Him (verse 13). If He then forgets the afflicted, surely He cannot remain passive in hearing the blasphemies the wicked utter about Him? The wicked can apparently say with impunity in his heart that God will not require accountability. Why does God not intervene?

Then the psalmist suddenly comes to a halt in the expressions of his incomprehension of God’s silence (verse 14). It is different. God is not absent and unmoved, nor has He hidden Himself. This is how the afflicted has experienced it for a while because of the fierce and haughty pursuit by the wicked (verse 2). But suddenly he realizes that God really does see what the wicked does to the afflicted!

Now that dawns on him, it is also suddenly clear to him: God wants to take into His hand “mischief and vexation” that are done to the afflicted. This is a tremendously comforting and calming discovery after all the despairing questions. Always, before and also now, it has been shown that the unfortunate (or: poor) relies on Him, and that He is a Helper of the orphan. The orphan is one who is without any natural support in life, but who can count on God’s help.

Now that the light has broken through in his heart and mind, the afflicted continues his request to God to intervene (verse 15). He prays that God will break the arm – a picture of strength – of the wicked and evildoer, that is, make it powerless. It is not a desperate, in despair prayed prayer, but a prayer prayed in conviction.

The wicked may say in his heart that God does not demand an account (verses 11,13), but God will certainly demand an account from him “for his wickedness”. God will judge that wickedness, so that there will be nothing left of it and the afflicted will not be plagued by it any more. Judgment on the wickedness of the wicked means the final deliverance of the afflicted.

Psa 10:16-18 | The LORD Vindicates

16 The LORD is King forever and ever;

Nations have perished from His land.

17 O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble;

You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear

18 To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,

So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.

All doubt is gone. The wicked will be judged. Confidence in God is back. The false king, the antichrist, is dead; long live the great King, the LORD! The psalmist sings it out that “the LORD is King forever and ever” (verse 16). This is fully true in the realm of peace. Then the nations will be gone from His land. All evil will have been judged and satan bound for a thousand years.

In that time it will be seen that He has “heard the desire of the humble” (verse 17). They will possess the land from which all the lawless have been removed (Mt 5:5; 13:41-42). With that prospect, God strengthens the hearts of the humble. He listens to them when they make known to Him their distress in which they are now. That His ear will heed them is an encouraging statement that shows that He is attentive to their cries for help.

The LORD will vindicate the defenseless orphan and the disenfranchised oppressed (verse 18). He will stand up for them and cause them to inherit the blessing. He has the last word and not “that man who is of the earth” who still causes so much terror. That the wicked is referred to as “that man

who is of the earth” – “man” is *enosh*, that is weak, mortal man – makes it clear how incredibly insignificant he is and that the sphere of his life is limited to the earth.

Time and again in the book of Revelation such people are spoken of as “those who dwell on the earth” (Rev 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,14; 14:6; 17:8). The wicked is an “earthling”, one who sticks to the earth with heart and soul and has no connections to heaven whatsoever. After God’s intervention, it is over and done with him and his violence.

What is true for the believing psalmist and the believing remnant of Israel in the end time and in the realm of peace, is also true for faith now. The believer may know that the Lord reigns, even if it is not yet publicly visible. He does not forget His own even now and is the Helper of the defenseless who are connected with Him through faith. Although there is no outward peace yet, the believer can go his way on earth with the peace of God in his heart knowing that the Lord reigns.

Psalm 11

Introduction

The historical background is not known. It is probably the time when David is being persecuted by Saul (1Sam 26:3,20). The content of the psalm shows that David – or the faithful remnant, or the believer – is in great trouble because wicked men are preying on him. In that distress, his trust in God is tested by the advice he is given to flee. We see how David responds to that counsel and holds fast to his trust in God. He trusts that God will eventually destroy the wicked, who are hated by Him, and save the righteous, whom He loves.

Prophetically, we see the time when antichrist has come to power (Psalm 10) and is persecuting the faithful remnant of Israel. As a result, they are forced to flee from Israel (Mt 24:15-16). This faithful remnant seeks refuge in the LORD (verse 1) and considers this persecution a trial (verse 5a) of which the end is certain (verses 5b-7).

Psa 11:1-2 | The Refuge Is the LORD

1 For the choir director. [A Psalm] of David.

In the LORD I take refuge;

How can you say to my soul, "Flee [as] a bird to your mountain;

2 For, behold, the wicked bend the bow,

They make ready their arrow upon the string

To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “[a Psalm] of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David begins by testifying to simple trust in the LORD as the One in Whom he “takes refuge” (verse 1b). This is the introduction to and starting point of this psalm. He takes refuge in the LORD. He gives this testimony in response to the counsel he received to flee to the mountains.

His testimony is at the same time a reproach to the counselor or counselors. "Say to my soul" (cf. verse 5b) seems to indicate that a strong appeal is made to him to convince him that it is far better to flee. He is, he is told insistently, no more than a bird that is hunted (1Sam 26:20) and that will surely be caught one day if it does not find a good hiding place.

David rejects this advice without hesitation, almost indignantly. He does not flee to the mountains, but to the LORD (Psa 121:1-2). After all, the safety that the LORD provides as a refuge is so many times better than the safety that the mountains provide. Mountains are often a good shelter in times of danger (cf. Jdg 6:2; 1Sam 13:6; 26:20). Because they say "your" mountain – "your" being plural – we can assume that the advice is given not only to David, but also to all who are with him.

In verse 2, the counselors motivate their advice. For the wicked are out to kill "the upright in heart" (cf. Psa 10:8). Their actions are pictorially described. They have laid their arrows upon the string, ready to be shot. We can think here of physical persecution, through which the remnant will suffer greatly.

We can also think of a spiritual activity: their tongue is bent like "the bow" and their words are like "arrows upon the string" (cf. Psa 37:14). The time to act is chosen with care. They act "in darkness", in an insidious way. Thus the wicked whisper their slanderous words in veiled terms. They do not fight with an open mind. That is always the case with slander and blasphemy. It is pervasive, there are many listening ears, and yet it is difficult to discover where it comes from. The wicked are deceitful and full of evil.

Psa 11:3-4 | The Throne of the LORD

*3 If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?"*

*4 The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.*

The word "if" has the meaning and power of saying that there is no doubt whatsoever (verse 3). There is no doubt that the foundations will be overthrown if the rightful king does not rule, but is persecuted. By the foundations we can think of justice and righteousness, the laws that God has

issued that should govern public life (cf. Psa 82:5). They are the foundations of society. If those foundations are eroded, the house of society will eventually collapse and become a ruin.

We see this today in the society around us. When God's rights and laws are no longer obeyed, when He is no longer taken into account, the chaos in which society now finds itself is created. What should the righteous do if that is the situation? Can he do anything? Can he undertake something to turn the tide? No and yes.

No, he cannot rebuild the collapsed house. Yes, he can look up in faith, beyond his counselors and enemies, to the LORD (verse 4). He "is in His holy temple" (cf. Hab 2:20a), in heaven, where His throne stands. In Isaiah, God says: "Heaven is My throne" (Isa 66:1). That He is in His "holy" temple means that He is separated from all turmoil on earth. His "throne" implies that He rules and has authority to judge. He and His throne can be shaken by nothing. Nothing is able to disturb His peace or thwart His plans with the world.

On earth the foundations can be destroyed, but that is impossible with "the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). It is to that city that the believer looks. He realizes that the true government sits in heaven, untouchable from all the turmoil of the earth. The government over the earth is exercised from the throne in heaven, although man thinks that he himself is in control.

He Who is in His holy temple and governs everything from His throne in heaven acts in His government with perfect knowledge of man. Although it may seem that He does nothing, that He is absent, nothing escapes Him. He is not indifferent to what happens on earth, but fully involved in all that "the children of men", righteous and wicked, do on earth.

His eyes observe all the doings of men. With "His eyelids" He fathoms everything, even the most deeply hidden motives, for "all things are open and laid bare" to Him (Heb 4:13). Nothing is hidden from Him "who sees [what is done] in secret" (Mt 6:4,6,18). His eyes are "like a flame of fire" (Rev 1:14). He sees right through us.

Psa 11:5-7 | The LORD Is Righteous

*5 The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

*6 Upon the wicked He will rain snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.*

*7 For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness;
The upright will behold His face.*

David is not guided by the difficult circumstances and the well-meant or ill-meant counsel of men, but by the LORD, of Whom he knows that He tests the righteous (verse 5). He himself is such a righteous person who is being tested.

The verb “to test” means to test metals to determine their content and purity. The process of testing also works purification. Testing indicates the activity of the blacksmith who is engaged in the inspection and purification of gold or silver (cf. Jer 6:27-30; 9:7; Mal 3:2-4). The LORD tests the genuineness of faith, not to kill the believer, but to make the faith purer through it, so that it will be focused only on Him.

Thus, the believing remnant will come to repentance in the time of the great tribulation. We see an example of the beginning of the purification process in Joseph’s brothers when they repent in prison (Gen 42:15-22). Once this process is completed by Joseph, he is able to reveal himself to them (Gen 45:1).

Just as God knows who is righteous and tests such a person, He also knows who is wicked [according to the Dutch Bible Translation the sentence reads as follows: “but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates]. His soul, that is, His whole Being, all that is in Him, hates the wicked (cf. verse 2). A special form of wickedness is violence, of which David here and the believer in general are the targets (cf. Rev 13:7). Those who love violence, as evidenced by the persecution of God’s people, are a special object of God’s hatred. Hatred is not merely an attitude, but involves action.

God brings upon the wicked the only judgment appropriate for them (verse 6). He will “rain snares” upon them. The word “snares” points to anything that happens to a person that causes him to lose dominion over his life and become a captive of someone or something. God will seize the

wicked just as a hunter renders a wild animal harmless by letting it run into a snare.

That the snares come upon them like rain indicates that the means by which they are ensnared in their actions are abundant. It is impossible to escape them. Prophetically, this is about the judgment through the Assyrian, the king of the North, on the apostate Israel under the antichrist, the wicked one par excellence.

God will bring the same judgment of “fire and brimstone” on the antichrist and his wicked followers that He also brought on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24; cf. Rev 9:17-18). Sodom and Gomorrah illustrate the utmost wickedness. The judgment on them illustrates the way God will punish all future wickedness (cf. Deu 29:22-23; Rev 14:10). Just as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, so all the wicked will be put to death.

The “burning wind” is devastating. The beauty of the vegetation changes instantly to withered plants (Gen 41:6; Isa 21:1; 40:7-8; Jer 4:11-13). The wicked will be like the flowers of the field that are seen today and gone tomorrow. This “will be the portion of their cup”. By this is meant the cup of the wrath of God which they will have to drink (Psa 75:8; Isa 51:17; Eze 23:31-33; Mt 26:39).

The LORD deals with the wicked in this way, “for” He “is righteous” (verse 7). The wicked will experience that when He judges them. The righteous experience it through His appreciation of their “righteousness” or their “righteous deeds”. He loves their deeds. This is in contrast to His hatred that He has for the wicked and those who love violence.

“The upright” are not removed from before Him, as happens to the wicked. On the contrary, they will “behold His face” which looks at them full of love. He knows the dangers in the midst of which they find themselves and is in it with them. Seeing Him in the midst of difficulties is a great comfort and strengthening of faith. Beholding His face means enjoying fellowship with Him, now and later in the world to come (cf. Mt 5:8).

This is David’s response to the advice given to him in verse 1 that he should flee from danger. God is his Defender and he firmly trusts in His protection. The wicked have to fear everything, the righteous have to fear nothing. The wicked are never safe, the righteous are always safe. The

righteous or God-fearing in Ezekiel 9 are given a mark on their foreheads (Eze 9:4). The righteous or God-fearing in Revelation 9 are given the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev 9:4).

Psalm 12

Introduction

Psalm 12 can be seen as a continuation of Psalm 11 in terms of content. In Psalm 11 the foundations are destroyed because of the coming of the antichrist (Psa 11:3). In Psalm 12 the faithful are disappeared because of the persecution by the antichrist during the great tribulation (Psa 12:1b).

In both psalms the believer seeks his help from God. In Psalm 11, the believer trusts in the *government* of God, that He governs everything from His heavenly throne (Psa 11:4). In Psalm 12, the believer trusts in the *words* of God, that He makes all things true that He says (Psa 12:6).

In Psalm 11, the believer has to deal with the false *deeds* of the wicked and in Psalm 12 with the false, untrustworthy *words* of the wicked. In Psalm 11 the believer puts his trust (generally) in the LORD, the faithful God, and in Psalm 12 (specifically) in the trustworthy Word of God.

The division of the psalm is simple. It consists of two parts:

1. Verses 2-5 deal with the unreliability of the words of the godly.
2. Verses 6-8 deal with the trustworthiness of the words of God and the Word of God.

Psa 12:1 | The Godly Man Ceases to Be

*1 For the choir director; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David.
Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases to be,
For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “upon an eight-stringed lyre” see at Psalm 6:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David immediately begins the psalm with a cry for help (verse 1b). He cries out to God to bring salvation. He feels all alone. There is no godly man left to find (cf. Mic 7:2a; Hos 4:1). No one wants to show him kindness,

and those who could do it – for they are there (cf. 1Kgs 19:18) – he cannot reach. Therefore, his God is his only refuge.

In Psalm 10 and Psalm 11 believers are killed covertly (Psa 10:8-10; Psa 11:2), in Psalm 12 it happens openly. As a result, David – he is a type of the believing remnant – feels lonely, as does Elijah later (1Kgs 19:10b,14b). It is as if he is the only one left (cf. Mt 24:22). Psalm 12 is a deepening and worsening of the condition of Psalm 10 and Psalm 11. Unlike Elijah, David does not give up, but takes refuge in the LORD!

Also, “the faithful” to the LORD and His Word “disappear from among the sons of men”. When the godly man ceases to be, the faithful people disappear with them. Faithfulness, or truthfulness, is being reliable, someone you can rely on; it excludes all hypocrisy.

We can apply this verse to the time of the antichrist, the time of the great apostasy, the apostasy of the faith. In this time we live. The revelation of the man of sin is yet to come. That will happen when the church is caught up (2Thes 2:1-3). However, the spirit of antichrist is already present and busy with its pernicious work of undermining the faith of many (1Jn 4:1).

Psa 12:2-4 | The Words of Men

*2 They speak falsehood to one another;
With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak.
3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
The tongue that speaks great things;
4 Who have said, “With our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”*

The wicked disobey God with their tongue (cf. Isa 57:4a). They falsify and distort the truth (verse 3). They are out for power and want to pull it toward themselves by flattery, that is, lavishing others with insincere, cunning compliments. Everything may be said, the end justifies the means. Their lips drip with hypocrisy (Pro 26:24-25). The source of their false words is their heart, for it is “a double heart”, literally “heart and heart”. Their heart is different from the impression they give by their words. They mean something completely different. What is being said here we see with Absalom (2Sam 15:1-6).

David cries out to the LORD and utters a curse wish to put an end to this awful hypocrisy (verse 3). He wants their lips to be silenced and in a radical way: by cutting off those flattering lips, so that they can never be used again. The same is true of their “tongue that speaks great things” (cf. Dan 7:8; Rev 13:5). “The tongue that speaks great things” is above all the tongue of the antichrist (Dan 11:36a). Their tongue, over which roaring language rolls out, must be silenced and never be able to be used again.

That the tongue is a powerful tool for subduing people (verse 4), history shows. Many have been deceived by the roaring, but also sometimes soft, spawning language of power-hungry people. The fancy-sounding promises to make life better have brought people under their spell. That in doing so God and His authority are rejected, they applaud. All that coercion of the Bible, they have to get rid of it.

Freedom of speech is the highest good. You should be able to mock and ridicule anything and anyone. God and Christ, of course, have to suffer particularly in this matter. It must be possible to publish the filthiest, dirtiest drawings and the most debauched texts. “Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?” Man makes up his own mind what he does or does not say. The portrayal of the wicked reaches a low point here and should, as it were, prompt God to intervene now.

That words are not harmless or without value is what the Lord Jesus teaches us. He says: “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt 12:36-37).

Psa 12:5-6 | The Words of the LORD

5 “Because of the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy,

Now I will arise”, says the LORD; “I will set him in the safety for which he longs.”

6 The words of the LORD are pure words;

As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

The torrent of ungodly words is now cut off and silenced by the sudden action of the LORD. He begins to speak. He responds to “the devastation of the afflicted, because of the groaning of the needy” (verse 5). He hears their cry (cf. Exo 2:24) and arises. When He arises and lifts up Himself and exalts Himself (Isa 33:10), it is to judge evil and deliver His people. The wicked are humbled and blown away, and His people He sets in the safety for which they long.

The God-fearing’s assurance that God will intervene is in “the words of the LORD” (verse 6). He has promised to stand up for His own, and what He says, He does. His words are promises; you can trust them. The Old Testament is full of promises that are “yes” in Christ and “amen” through Him (2Cor 1:20). Here He acts by speaking (cf. Psa 2:5). In doing so, He terrifies the wicked.

If we are wise, we will hold to this, no matter what may happen. The Word of God, what He says, is the unshakable foundation of our trust (cf. Mt 7:24). We may find ourselves in circumstances that challenge our faith. God uses those circumstances to free us from trusting in ourselves. In return, He wants to teach us to rely on every word that comes from His mouth. As a result, we will live for certain (Mt 4:4).

God’s words “are pure words”. They are without any ulterior motive, completely pure, without any mixture, true and trustworthy. God’s words are as pure as silver that has been “refined seven times”, that is to say, perfectly refined. Any falsity or hypocrisy is absent. They are words without the deceit, flattery, and duplicity of which the words of the wicked are steeped. This is what David spoke of in verses 2-4. The words of God are the greatest contrast imaginable with that.

The words of the LORD are “tried in the furnace of earth” (Darby Translation). The purification is not meant to make it purer, but to show that it is perfectly pure. There has been and is attempted to eradicate the Word of God by burning Bibles. The Word has endured. There has been and is attempted to make the Word of God implausible by Bible criticism. The Word has demonstrated the absurdity of criticism and has proven to withstand all criticism. Philosophy and science have tried to show that God’s Word is not the truth, for example, by supposedly proving that the world

came into being through evolution. God's Word mocks them openly, for man without God is a blind man who also steps and gropes around in the dark.

The Word has been in every conceivable "furnace of earth" and has come out each time as pure as it went in. The believer has experienced it as a fully reliable Word. In the heat of the trial and the temptations that can accompany it, it has been clearly proven that no teaching of Scripture and no promise has suffered in the slightest through the trial and challenge.

Psa 12:7-8 | Protection From the Wicked

*7 You, O LORD, will keep them;
You will preserve him from this generation forever.
8 The wicked strut about on every side
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.*

In response to the assurance of God's words, David ends his cry for salvation of verse 1b with the assurance of God's keeping (verse 7). Just as he put his trust in God earlier (Psa 11:1), he now puts his trust in His Word. He does not say this only with regard to himself, but sees the truth of this for "them", that is, all God-fearing people. Regardless of the circumstance of life, the children of God are sure of the special protection of their Father in heaven.

The wicked can turn the world upside down, but God preserves His own "from this generation". Here the wicked have not yet been eradicated, they are still going on, but the righteous have learned to put their trust in God (Psalm 11) and in His words (Psalm 12; Acts 20:32). "This generation" are David's contemporaries, but it also has the meaning of an "unbelieving and perverted generation" or an "evil and adulterous generation" that is present throughout the ages (Pro 30:11-14; Mt 17:17; 12:39). God's preservation and protection do not apply occasionally or for a defined period of time, but are "forever" (cf. Jn 17:12).

God's preservation is a reality, even though the wicked strut about on every side trying to wipe out the God-fearing (verse 8). They strut about on every side as if they are lord and master everywhere. While "the faithful disappear from among the sons of men" (verse 1b), "vileness is exalted

among the sons of men". The lowest and most worthless among the wicked have gained a position of power with flattery and their elbows, including going over dead bodies.

We recognize them in politicians who say in unctuous voices that it is a good thing to murder children in the mother's womb and to give the elderly people the opportunity to commit suicide. These politicians are elected by the people and have the mandate of all who voted for them. They are hoisted on the shield to impose these nicely packaged, debauched things on the entire nation.

It is truly a psalm to be sung accompanied with "an eight-stringed lyre" (verse 1a), that is, in a low voice. The developments that David has described give the 'choir members', who recognize themselves in this, every reason to do so.

Psalm 13

Introduction

In Psalm 11 and Psalm 12, the psalmist has put his trust in God and His words in the midst of severe tribulation. Yet, as the tribulation begins to grow long, doubt begins to gnaw at his heart. Psalm 13 shows us the inner struggle of the believing remnant when the tribulation lasts (too) long in their experience. Four times we hear the desperate cry: How long? It is comparable to the doubt of John the baptist in prison (Mt 11:2-3), and the doubt of Elijah when Jezebel threatens to kill him (1Kgs 19:1-4). Thus, in the great tribulation, the believing remnant will struggle with the failure of God's intervention.

Yet the result of this struggle is not despair, but renewed trust in God on the basis of His covenant faithfulness (verse 5). The word "lovingkindness" – Hebrew Adonai – means the covenant faithfulness of the LORD. We see in the letter to the Hebrews that His covenantal faithfulness is based on the accomplished work of the Mediator of the new covenant on the cross of Calvary. The Mediator brought the blood of the new covenant into the inner sanctuary.

Psalm 13 can be divided into three sections:

1. A desperate cry for help: four times "how long?" (verses 1b-2).
2. A threefold prayer: consider, answer, enlighten my eyes! (verses 3-4).
3. Finally, a song of confidence (verses 5-6), similar to the singing of Jehoshaphat and the people while facing a multitude of enemies (2Chr 20:22), and of Paul and Silas while thrown into prison (Acts 16:25).

Psa 13:1-2 | Complaint: How long?

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever?

How long will You hide Your face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,

*[Having] sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

Four times in these two verses, David asks the question, “how long?” (verse 1b). The questions come from a soul that is in great distress and has been in it for quite some time, when there seems to be no end. He yearns for salvation, for the end of his misery. It is therefore not just asking a question, but wrestling in doubt, almost despair, with a question (cf. Mt 11:2-3).

The depth of the distress is expressed in the four repetitions of the word ‘how long’. His question is not “why”, but “how long”. He holds that another era will come. But how long will this era be delayed? Can he hold on for so long?

The first “how long” question (verse 1b) is not about his enemies. Those he mentions last. He begins with God as the cause of the distress in which he finds himself. It is with him as with Job, who also does not say that satan has taken, but “the LORD has given and the LORD has taken” (Job 1:21b). His worst struggle is that God has forgotten him, or at least that is the way he experiences it. How long will He do that? And, he exclaims, will God do that “forever”, constantly, will He never think of him again?

God does not seem to think of him anymore (cf. Isa 49:14). This is the greatest distress that can torment a believer. When you are forgotten, when no one asks about you, the thought occurs to you that you are not of interest, that you do not count. This is already true when people don’t notice you. It’s completely the case when you have the feeling that God doesn’t care about you anymore.

The second “how long” question David asks because God has disappeared from his field of vision. He knows God exists, but God does not show Himself. God may have forgotten him, but he has not forgotten God. Then he discovers to his dismay that God is untraceable. David is desperately searching for Him, but He has hidden Himself. This increases his loneliness and despair.

That God hides His face, that is, Himself, in a time of need, is the curse of the covenant (cf. Psa 10:1; 22:1). It is the reverse of the priestly blessing in Numbers 6 (Num 6:24-26). It is a question of how God can withhold His covenant faithfulness, His lovingkindness, from him. David speaks here as the voice of the remnant.

He makes all kinds of plans in his soul, he deliberates how to get through his misery now that he apparently cannot appeal to God (verse 2). He pines his thoughts about it how long he will endure, while God is the great Absent One and he can discover nothing of Him. It causes an incessant sorrow in his heart, deep inside, that he feels “all the day”, or day in, day out.

And then there are his enemies who exalt themselves over him. They are at the edge of his existence, constantly surrounding him. Now that God, Who is in the center of his existence, has withdrawn from him, the enemies press on him all the more strongly. As already noted, it is only now that he speaks of his enemies, after first expressing his greatest concern that God does not show Himself.

Psa 13:3-4 | Supplication

*3 Consider [and] answer me, O LORD my God;
Enlighten my eyes, or I will sleep the [sleep of] death,
4 And my enemy will say, “I have overcome him”,
[And] my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.*

David has presented his “how long” questions to God in the previous verses. Now he addresses God with three short words, “consider ... answer ... enlighten”. They are in the imperative, but are uttered as supplications (verse 3).

The question “consider” connects to his question “how long” God will forget him (verse 1b). The question means: “Be merciful to me, have mercy on me” (cf. Isa 63:15). He asks God to notice him, the supplicant, and not to pass him by as if he did not exist.

The question “answer” is connected to the question “how long” God will still hide Himself (verse 1c). With this he asks God to please respond to his cry for help and to take away the distress of his soul.

Finally, David asks the LORD to enlighten his eyes. To enlighten the eyes means to receive God's blessings through which he will again receive strength to go forward (cf. 1Sam 14:27). His eyes are now dull with sorrow and hopelessness. He longs for light in his darkness, for a ray of hope.

The darkness does not even have to disappear, if only he has light to find his way that is now so hidden from him because God hides Himself. If his eyes are not enlightened by giving him some hope of salvation, he will die. What David says in his prayer indicates how serious the situation is, how desperate he feels.

"Sleep the [sleep of] death" means that he loses his trust in God, whereby the enemy will then gain complete victory. In verse 4, David makes this argument. Surely God must be sensitive to this. It connects to what he said about his enemies in verse 2. The argument is that surely God will not allow the enemies to boast of a victory over him. Surely he will not give his enemies a reason to rejoice over the abandonment of his trust in God. David here ties his fate to the honor of God (cf. Num 14:15-16).

He appeals to God's intervention in view of the reaction of his enemy and adversaries. If God does not intervene in his favor, the enemies will boast that they have conquered him. They will express their joy over it when he staggers. Surely God cannot allow this to happen. After all, His honor is at stake here, isn't it?

Psa 13:5-6 | Confidence and Joy

5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;

My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

6 I will sing to the LORD,

Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

After making his distress known to the LORD (verses 1b-2) and pleading with the LORD to come to his aid (verses 3-4), David comes to rest. "I" (verse 5) has emphasis in Hebrew. After struggling with his doubt in his life of prayer, David achieves victory by trusting and looking to God's lovingkindness. His confidence in God's lovingkindness, that is, his trust that God remains faithful to His covenant, is back. He knows that God will

show him His lovingkindness and help him. That awareness causes joy in his heart. He expresses his joy by singing to the LORD.

The occasion is that “He has dealt bountifully with me” and has turned everything around for the better (verse 6). The phrase “has dealt bountifully” has the meaning of ‘treated with abundant blessing and goodness’. God is not good just a little bit, but full of goodness to His own. The enemies rejoice at God’s apparent absence and lack of care for His own, but the psalmist is certain that the God-fearing will ultimately rejoice in God’s salvation. The word “salvation” has the meaning of an ample redemption. It is not just that the enemy has been vanquished, but he has been totally eliminated.

We see here what we find in many psalms, that they begin with a lament and end with a song of praise. We see the order: complaint (verses 1b-2), prayer (verses 3-4) and expression of confidence in a song of praise (verses 5-6). The complaint about being forgotten by God thus turns into a song of thanksgiving for God’s experienced goodness.

Psalm 14

Introduction

Now that wickedness has reached its nadir under the leadership of the antichrist, we find in this psalm the description of the wickedness of the people. It is a foolish (verse 1) and totally deviated (verse 3) people, both in word (verses 1-3) and in deed (verses 4-6). Seeing so much wickedness, the faithful remnant seeks refuge in the LORD alone (verse 7).

This psalm is almost identical to Psalm 53. In Psalm 53, the name LORD, the God of the covenant, is replaced with the name God, making the form of address more distant. The ending of that psalm is also different.

Psa 14:1 | The Fool

1 For the choir director. [A Psalm] of David.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God".

They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;

There is no one who does good.

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "[a Psalm] of David" see at Psalm 3:1.

"The fool" (verse 1b) – Hebrew *nabal* – is not the ignorant or the unbeliever, the atheist, but the wicked who deliberately excludes God. He hates and despises the LORD (Psa 74:18,22). It is not just about his thinking, it is deeply rooted in his inner being and visible in his actions (Isa 32:6a). He does so "in his heart", the center of his existence. All his actions flow from it and make it clear that he ignores the existence of God.

The thought that there is no God does not mean so much the denying the existence of God, which is what the atheist does. The fool is one who *pretends* as if there is no God (Lk 12:16-20; Zep 1:12). For him, "in his heart" – meaning this is his conviction – He is not present, because He does not assert Himself. He does not show Himself, therefore there is no God. The fool denies that he is accountable to God and that Divine judgment will

follow. His life is all about himself. He acts entirely according to his own judgment, without taking God into account in the slightest. He totally ignores Him.

If God is not taken into account, it also has harmful consequences for the fool's environment. There is an inseparable and undeniable connection between religious decay and social decay. One who excludes God becomes a disaster for his fellow men.

In three lines David describes the actions of the wicked. In doing so, he switches from the singular, "the fool", to the plural, "they". The one fool has become a great company of fools. It is common in Hebrew, that the fool is often a designation for a group of people who act foolishly. Prophetically we see here the antichrist and the unbelieving mass of the people who follow him.

The first characteristic of fools is, "they are corrupt" (cf. Deu 4:16; Isa 1:4). Their actions are rotten and create an atmosphere that causes decay and calls down God's judgment. It is the same word "corrupt" as in Genesis 6, where it is mentioned as the reason for the flood (Gen 6:12). The less awareness of God a person has, the lower the standards and values he holds.

Second, "they have committed abominable deeds". Their deeds are abominable to God. They are in connection with idols, which are also called "abominations". Their deeds are abhorrent and reprehensible and arouse abhorrence (cf. Eze 16:49-52).

Third, fools are characterized by a total lack of doing good. There is no godliness, that is, no fear or reverence for God. If that is not present, there can be no doing good. Doing good is not present in any member of this group of fools who count themselves among God's people. There is truly "no one who does good". There is an abundance of destruction and abomination present, while not the slightest bit of doing good can arise in them.

People may think they are doing good if they donate some of their wealth to charities. They don't do that because God tells them to, because they don't care about Him, but for a good feeling. The determining factor, however, is not what people see as "doing good", but what God judges as "doing good" (cf. Isa 64:6).

The conclusion that there is no one who does good makes all human charity valueless. This is hard to swallow for all those who give and all those who work so hard for any good cause. If it is not done out of obedience to God, it is sin, because “everything that is not done by faith is sin” (Rom 14:23).

Psa 14:2-3 | How the LORD Sees the Sons of Men

*2 The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men
To see if there are any who understand,
Who seek after God.*

*3 They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.*

God has looked down from heaven on His creation and His creatures, the sons of men (verse 2). That was already true in Genesis 6 and Genesis 11 (Gen 6:5; 11:5), but here it is the people of Israel! He has been a Witness to all their actions.

He has looked around and examined “to see if there are any who understand”. The understanding one – Hebrew *maskil* (Dan 12:3) – is the counterpart of the fool. The understanding or wise person is not only one with understanding, but also one who acts in accord with his understanding of the nature and revelation of God. It is one who seeks after God.

God must observe that “they have all turned aside” from Him and thus from the source of blessing (verse 3). They have left His will and way and have gone astray from Him, or apostatized, as the words “turned aside” can also be translated. They have cut the connection with Him and “together they have become corrupt”. The word “together” points to a collective expulsion of God. It is as if the totality of humanity has made an agreement to banish God from their thinking and to encourage one another to disregard Him.

Willingly and knowingly “they have become corrupt”, indicating that something is no longer healthy or has become stinky and must be discarded. The word “corrupt” originally has the meaning of ‘souring’ of milk. People who ignore God sour themselves and sour all with whom they come into contact, even if they are constantly playing the comedian. What

is soured can not be consumed. It is unbearable. Most of all, it's about what they are to God. He looks down from heaven and sees how soured they are, so that He can do nothing more with them than cast them away.

David has already said in verse 1 that "there is no one who does good". In verse 3, he says it for the second time, emphasizing this conclusion strongly by adding that there is "not even one".

Paul quotes these verses in Romans 3 to show that all men, all humanity, including the Jews, "are under sin" (Rom 3:9,13-18).

Psa 14:4-6 | Men Are Wicked

*4 Do all the workers of wickedness not know,
Who eat up my people [as] they eat bread,
[And] do not call upon the Lord?*

*5 There they are in great dread,
For God is with the righteous generation.*

*6 You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted,
But the LORD is his refuge.*

David wonders in doubt if fools then completely lack knowledge (verse 4). Will the wicked never learn? He is amazed that "all the workers of wickedness" are feasting on his people, the people over whom he is king to protect and care for them. But the fools have the upper hand now that David seems to be on the run. They see in David's subjects an opportunity for profit. Instead of calling upon the Lord, they feast on the possessions of their defenseless fellow citizens. They do not call upon the Lord because they do not want to acknowledge Him in their hearts.

However, their tyranny will come to an end. They will be seized with great dread when they are suddenly confronted with the fact that God is on the side of His people, "the righteous generation" (verse 5). It may seem that they put to shame "the counsel of the afflicted" by thwarting and exploiting him in every way. But the LORD is the "refuge" of the afflicted (verse 6). With Him he is safe. No matter what the fools in their wickedness do to the afflicted, the afflicted has what the fool does not have, and that is protection and security.

An example is Naboth who is killed by the wicked Ahab and the even more wicked Jezebel. Naboth does not want to sell his inheritance to Ahab because he has received this land from the LORD (1Kgs 21:1-3). The counsel of this 'afflicted' seems to have been put to shame because he is murdered (1Kgs 21:8-15). But the LORD has been his refuge. That He is not only for this life, but above all after this life. Naboth will get everything back in the resurrection. Then the fools will be put to shame.

Psa 14:7 | The Hope of the Righteous

*7 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores His captive people,
Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad*

David's sigh and exclamation, "Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!", is quoted by Paul in Romans 11. He quotes this verse to prove that all Israel will be saved when "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in", as he first argued (Rom 11:25b). The quote that immediately follows is not a sigh as here in the psalm, but a certainty. He quotes: "The Deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom 11:26).

Paul makes known in Romans 11 the mystery (Rom 11:25a) that Israel has been rejected by God, but will also be accepted again by God. This then concerns a remnant. Because the fools, that is the unbelieving mass, have all been judged, this remnant is "all Israel". With this 'new' Israel, God continues after the "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom 11:25b).

This last expression means that the Christian testimony on earth has fulfilled the time of its testimony, has reached its end. God has had to cut it off because it has not remained in His goodness (Rom 11:22). After that, Israel will again become the object of His public love.

That the deliverance or the Deliverer comes *from* Zion to redeem His people, that is, the believing remnant who have repented, means that He will come first *to* Zion (Isa 59:20). That will happen at His second coming, which is His return to earth. Then He will have let "His captive people" return from the scattering, and all the people, the two and the ten tribes, will be under one King and one Shepherd in the land (Eze 37:21-25). He has brought a turn in their fate.

A pre-fulfillment, which is only partial and also temporary, is the return from exile in Babylon, also with mainly Israelites from the two tribes (Ezra 1:1-5). The final fulfillment will occur in the realm of peace. In Psalm 15 we are given a description of the features of those who will partake of it.

The psalm concludes with the joy of "Jacob" and the gladness of "Israel". Jacob means "heels holder" (Gen 25:26). It is the name of weakness and deviation that have characterized the patriarch Jacob, while at the same time there has been a longing for the blessing of God. That shows his entire history. In this regard we may consider that God calls Himself "the God of Jacob" just when He is about to deliver His people from the bondage of Egypt (Exo 3:6,15; 4:5). This name of God also appears several times in Psalms (Psa 20:1b; 46:7,11; 75:9; 81:1b,4; 94:7; 114:7; 146:5).

Israel means "prince of God" (Gen 32:28). Jacob received this name from God after his struggle with Him. In that struggle he begged for the blessing. Whoever begs for the blessing is in God's eyes His prince. It is the name that expresses the value of God for such a person. Jacob is the name of practice, Israel is the name of position before God. That Jacob rejoices shows that even in enjoying full redemption and blessing, there will always be the awareness that it is undeserved, and bestowed by mere grace. That Israel is glad shows that God is above all weakness and has made of Jacob an Israel.

Psalm 15

Introduction

Psalm 15, like Psalm 1, is a wisdom psalm, a psalm of instruction for the believing remnant. This instruction is given to the people by the wise ones of the people (Dan 11:33a), by which the people come to understand what their time is about and especially Who it is about, that is the Messiah.

Psalm 15 is the flip side of Psalm 14. In Psalm 16 David speaks of the Person Who is the complete opposite of the fool of Psalm 14 and has fulfilled all the conditions of Psalm 15.

Psa 15:1 | The Question

1 A Psalm of David.

O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?

Who may dwell on Your holy hill?

For “A Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

It is the first psalm in which there is no further specification, as there is in previous psalms of which he is mentioned as poet.

The severe persecution by the wicked (Psa 12:1-6; 14:4) raises the question of who can be kept to enter the realm of peace. Psalm 15 answers the question. He shows us the spiritual features of the faithful remnant who will enter the realm of peace.

There are some indications that presuppose a connection with the preceding psalm. There David speaks of the fool who says in his heart that there is no God (Psa 14:1). Here he speaks of one who “speaks truth in his heart” (verse 2). There he says that there is no one who does good and seeks after God. Here he asks God who can abide and dwell with Him (verse 1b), that is, enter the realm of peace to be with Him there.

The twofold question “who” does not refer to the *identity* of the person, but to the *kind* of person, to his characteristics (cf. Psa 24:3; Isa 33:14-16; Rev 5:2). The question refers to “abiding” in God’s “tent” and “dwelling

on" God's "holy hill". The word "abide" – Hebrew *yagur* – means to abide as a stranger. The question freely translated means: who can come to Him as a guest?

This means that it is not about approaching God only incidentally, on a special occasion, but about being with Him constantly for the enjoyment of fellowship with Him. It is about having access to God at all times. This is the part of the righteous in the realm of peace. He may abide in the house of God, the temple of God on Mount Zion. This is not the part of the evil-doer (Psa 5:5).

David poses this question to the "LORD". He knows that only the LORD determines the conditions for abiding with Him and that it is not up to him to do so. This is very different from what many people do, even today. They decide for themselves how to approach God, if they even think He exists at all.

Two words are used for the dwelling place of God: "Your tent" and "Your holy hill". "Tent" is the translation of the word for "tabernacle". David placed the tabernacle on Mount Zion, God's "holy mountain" (2Sam 6:1-19). He will have thought of that, but without referring to it here. In the tabernacle, in fact, no one, not even the priests and not even the high priest, can abide there all the time. God Himself is called "a dwelling place" for His people by Moses in his blessing for the twelve tribes (Deu 33:27a; cf. Isa 8:14).

God dwells on His holy hill. This is Mount Zion, the mountain over which God has said that He has anointed His King (Psa 2:6). Now we see that He not only has anointed His King there, but also dwells there. We see here the connection between dwelling and reigning. He dwells where He rules, and He rules where He dwells. Both dwelling and ruling take place in 'holiness'. In that holy place all the righteous will also dwell with Him in the realm of peace. They possess through the new birth (Jn 3:3,5) the features He gives in the following verses. They will dwell with Him and reign with Him, for they are holy, as He is holy (Lev 11:45; 1Pet 1:15-16).

Psa 15:2-5 | The Answer

| *2 He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,*

*And speaks truth in his heart.
 3 He does not slander with his tongue,
 Nor does evil to his neighbor,
 Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;
 4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
 But who honors those who fear the LORD;
 He swears to his own hurt and does not change;
 5 He does not put out his money at interest,
 Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
 He who does these things will never be shaken.*

The answer to the 'who-question' in verse 1 is the description of someone in whom some positive features are present and some negative features are lacking. First come three positive features (verse 2). First, whoever wants to abide with God, whoever wants to be with Him to have fellowship with Him, is someone "who walks with integrity". In the heart of such a person is the sincere mind to live honestly and faithfully before God and men (Gen 17:1).

The second positive feature of such a person is that he "works righteousness". This feature indicates that he gives each one to what he is entitled. To work righteousness is to act according to what is right before God. God is righteous in all His actions. He always gives everyone what each person deserves. This is true in both reward and punishment.

Someone who can dwell with God is, thirdly, someone "speaks truth in his heart". He can be trusted in what he says, for it comes from a pure and clean heart, a heart in which there is no deceit (cf. Jn 1:47). His heart, the center of his being, controls his words. His words and his heart are in harmony with each other.

In summary, we see in the three features mentioned

1. a walk that is focused on God, which manifests itself in
2. deeds and
3. words.

These features meet the expectations of God and people.

Then, in verse 3, three negative features are mentioned, things that are lacking in someone who is at home with God. The first feature can be connected to the third positive feature. He who speaks the truth in his heart will not slander with his tongue. The Hebrew word for slander means to go around and spread negative talk. In our time, this happens very quickly via smartphone and internet. He will not gossip, throw mud or drag others through the mud. In the words of the apostle James, there is no spring in such a person that “sends out from the same opening [both] fresh and bitter [water]” (Jam 3:11).

Secondly, he is one who “does no evil to his neighbor”. The word for neighbor here – Hebrew *rea* – means fellow man. The word “friend” has a similar meaning. The feature of a believer is therefore recognizable here in that he does not participate in slander and acts justly with his fellow man. This is one of the conditions for being able to serve and worship the Lord.

Also “against his friend” the righteous will “not take up a reproach”. He will not put him in a bad light. He covers the neighbor’s evil with love (cf. Rom 13:10). Even if it is true, he will not speak of it to others. If colleagues or other people speak defamatory words about their neighbor – the modern “mobbing”, which is the intentional hurting of others – he will not participate in it.

All these things he does not do out of respect for his fellow man. This respect comes from his fear of God (cf. Gen 42:18). He loves his neighbor as himself (Lev 19:18; Mt 22:39-40). This does not mean that he is naive and also loves what is objectionable. There is no question of that, for in his “eyes a reprobate is despised” (verse 4). He distinguishes between “the reprobate” and “those who fear the LORD”.

The “reprobate” is the wicked, one who is rejected by God because of his stubborn rebellion against Him, with Whom he does not wish to reckon. It is someone who willfully lives in sin and persists in it. Such a person he despises, while he “honors” those who fear the LORD. To despise is not to disdain, but to keep a distance from sin by keeping a distance from those who persist in living in sin and love to do so. We see this difference in Abraham’s dealings with the king of Sodom on the one hand and with Melchizedek on the other (Gen 14:17-24).

Those who dwell with the LORD are not led by what they see. The wicked can have great influence and those who fear the LORD can be a nobody. The righteous judges someone from God's presence. He thereby shows that he has the Divine nature, for that is how God also looks at people (1Sam 2:30b).

He keeps his word and does what he has promised. Even if he "swears to his own hurt", he will "not change" his oath. Even then, he will do what he has pledged to do. That is how completely reliable he is in what he has said (cf. Ecc 5:4-6; Mt 5:37). It does not mean that he made an oath without thinking. It is about the fact that he has consciously committed himself to an act which he knows will cause harm to himself but benefit another.

This, like all that is mentioned as features of the righteous, is especially true of the Lord Jesus. He takes upon Himself the obligation to do God's will when He says to God: "Behold, I have come to do Your will" (Heb 10:9). And He kept His word at the cost of His life. This resulted in many being saved from eternal death through Him (Heb 10:10).

If a neighbor is so impoverished that he must borrow, the righteous will lend money to his neighbor, but without charging interest (verse 5). We must keep in mind that otherwise the impoverished person will be forced to sell himself or his children as slaves in order to pay the debts (Lev 25:39; Neh 5:5). According to the law, an Israelite may not profit from the financial distress into which a fellow Israelite has fallen through misfortune. Lending to a poor person at interest is forbidden because it will place the poor person even deeper in debt (Exo 22:25-27; Lev 25:35-36; Deu 23:19).

He is also incorruptible. "A bribe against the innocent" is the payment for the crime of concealing or distorting the truth. Thus, a judge or witness can be bribed to the detriment of the poor (cf. Isa 1:23). Such conduct is strictly forbidden in the law (Exo 23:8; Deu 16:19). The prophets have time and again strongly condemned the practice of bribery to bend the law (Isa 1:23; 5:23; Amos 5:12; cf. Pro 15:27; 17:8,23).

For us New Testament believers, the answer to the 'who-question' is of an entirely different nature. This has to do with the fact that the dwelling place of God is not a geographically determined place, but a place that

has spiritual features (cf. Jn 4:20-24). Everyone who has new life is “in the household of God, which is the church of the living God” (1Tim 3:15b).

Believers are to behave in it according to the precepts God has given for it, for it is His house (1Tim 3:15a). All who are in it are “fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household” (Eph 2:19). They may continually live in and enjoy fellowship with God. To truly enjoy that fellowship, they must have part with Him, that is, be cleansed by the washing with the water of God’s Word (Jn 13:8b,10; Eph 5:26).

In verse 5c is the answer to the question posed in verse 1. The answer we expect is that the person who “does these things”, that is, the things mentioned in verses 2-5b, may dwell with God to draw near to Him. This answer is obvious in any case, because that is what the question in verse 1 is about. However, the answer is worded differently and appears to be out of place. Whoever does the things mentioned “will never be shaken” (cf. Lk 6:48).

Yet it is a striking answer, which implies even more than just dwelling with God. Dwelling with God is subject to attacks, but the promise is that the attackers from without will never achieve any success. Likewise, inwardly he will never be overcome by doubt or cause to wander away from God’s dwelling of his own accord.

The “things” done or not done consist of three positive things in verse 2, three negative things in verse 3, two positive things in verse 4 and two negative things in verse 5, a total of ten things. This recalls the law of the *ten* commandments, noting that it is a test of heart and conduct. Gross sins like murder and adultery are not mentioned.

The point of referring to the law is that only obedience to the commandments of God allows access to God’s sanctuary to dwell there. We must also remember that this is not about formal obedience to His commandments. God is not satisfied with mere outward tribute. He desires total dedication to Him throughout life in all its aspects. This is possible only when the heart is focused on Him.

Never has any man been able to fulfill all the conditions of God. No man can keep the law, for the law is an unbearable yoke (Acts 15:10). God’s conditions can only be fulfilled through the new life. This comes about in the

realm of peace. Into it enter all those who have acknowledged to be guilty of the death of the Messiah.

When they see Him Whom they have pierced, they will mourn over Him (Zec 12:10-14). In response, God will give His law in their innermost being and write it in their hearts (Jer 31:33-34). As a result, they will be able to obey Him wholeheartedly. Thus He will have fellowship with them continually in His dwelling on Zion.

The teaching that this psalm contains for Old Testament believers has its counterpart for us New Testament believers in the first letter of John. We are called children of God because we are born of God. Because we are born of God, we possess His nature. His nature is light and love (1Jn 1:5; 4:8,16). The evidence that we possess God's nature is shown by obedience, which is practicing righteousness, and loving God and the brethren (1Jn 2:3-10). Those who are characterized by this are in God's presence and live in fellowship with Him. This remains so forever.

Psalm 16

Introduction

In Psalm 14, God does not see anyone who does good. In Psalm 15, the question arises whether there is anyone who can dwell with God, someone who meets the conditions for it, that is, someone who does good. In Psalm 16 we see that there is Someone. We also see that there are the saints, the God-fearing who are on earth, that is the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time. These saints are connected with the true David, the Messiah. Each saint possesses His features.

Psalm 16 describes the individual believer who lives in fellowship with God. That is perfectly the case with that one Man: Christ. That this psalm is specifically about Him, we can see from what both Peter and Paul say in a speech which is recorded in the book of Acts.

Peter speaks of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and therefore quotes from this psalm as an explanation (Acts 2:25-31). He does not make an application of the psalm to the Lord Jesus, as if it were about someone else, but says emphatically "David says of Him" (Acts 2:25), meaning that he is speaking of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, the psalm is not primarily about David, but about the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:30-31a). Paul similarly refers to this psalm when he speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 13:35-37).

This psalm, therefore, connects beautifully as the third messianic psalm to the previous two messianic psalms, Psalm 2 and Psalm 8. Psalm 2 speaks of the birth of the Lord Jesus (Psa 2:7). Psalm 8 speaks of His humiliation and death (Psa 8:5b-6a). Psalm 16 speaks of His resurrection.

Psalm 16 has two topics: faith trust (verses 1-4,7-8) and experience of faith and its blessing (verses 5-6,9-11). In terms of content, it corresponds to Psalm 23, for that psalm too is about faith trust. Through suffering, the inner trust in God is revealed. In Psalm 17 we see that through the same suffering the outward attitude toward people is revealed.

Psa 16:1 | Prayer for Preservation

1 *A Mikhtam of David.*

Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.

The psalm is not called “a psalm” but “a Mikhtam” (verse 1a). This expression occurs here for the first time and further in Psalms 56-60, six times in all. It is the translation of the Hebrew word *miktam*. Some say its meaning is derived from a word for “gold”, which has led to the translation “a golden gem”, as in the Dutch translation we use.

Also this psalm is “of David”. Since David speaks here as a prophet (Acts 2:29-31), we hear the Lord Jesus speaking in Him during His life on earth.

The first word of the psalm is a prayer to God for preservation (verse 1b). The pleading ground for this is that the poet takes refuge in Him. This is in perfection and always true of the Lord Jesus (Heb 2:13a), Whom we see and hear speaking through David as Man on earth. On earth He called upon God’s preservation. Every believer may do the same by imitating Him. As Man, the Lord Jesus has had to deal with all the temptations that a human being may have to face. Thus He has suffered hunger and thirst and has been weary.

The Lord Jesus has always been the eternal God. That has not changed at His coming to earth. God cannot cease to be God. The Son became Man in order to be able to lead people to salvation, to be the Guide of those whom He redeemed through His work.

As Man, He is equal to us, “[yet] without sin” (Heb 4:15). He knows from experience what it means to go through a hostile world. As Man, this has led Him to a constant prayer for preservation. His only refuge on earth is His God. In this He is an impressive example for us and for all His own in all times. He shows how someone is truly man, man as intended by God.

This prayer for preservation will also be the prayer of the believing remnant in the midst of wicked people in the great tribulation.

Psa 16:2-3 | You Are My Lord

2 *I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord;*

I have no good besides You.”

*3 As for the saints who are in the earth,
They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.*

In verse 2, David continues to speak of his relationship with his God. As mentioned, David is first and foremost a type of Christ. As Man, Christ confesses the LORD (Yahweh) as the Lord (Adonai), that is Sovereign Lord or Commander. He shows that as Man He subjected Himself to the Lord (Adonai) and became the obedient Servant (Phil 2:6-8). He did everything that God said to Him. This submission He expressed once, at His coming into the world (Heb 10:5-7), and this determined His entire path on earth.

This is also the feature of the believing remnant in the future. They want nothing but to do the will of God. It is also the feature of everyone who comes to repentance in our time, the time of the church on earth. We see this in Paul, who immediately after his conversion asks: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10).

The meaning of the second line of verse 2 is: "I have nothing in this world that I possess but You. There is nothing that gives me happiness but You alone." What David says is again fully true of the Lord Jesus and is also the confession of the believing remnant. The Lord Jesus says here that the Father is everything to Him. His life on earth has been marked by His relationship with His Father. He has done everything with and for Him.

God expects of all the redeemed that they confess this with their hearts, both with regard to Him and to the Lord Jesus. The Son must "have first place in everything" (Col 1:18). He is entitled to our "first love" (Rev 2:4), which is our total love.

The sentence, begun in verse 2, adds something in verse 3. The Lord Jesus says in verse 2 that He has no good beside God. In verse 3 He adds that He finds all His delight in "the saints who are in the earth". After His love for God follows inextricably His love for the believers (cf. Pro 8:31b).

"The saints" are not the holy angels, for they are in heaven. Angels are sometimes called "holy angels", but they are nowhere called "saints". Nor are they the saints of the church, for the church belongs to heaven according to its position and is already in heaven in Christ (Eph 1:3).

“The saints” are the faithful remnant of Israel, God’s earthly people. Upon them are the eyes of the LORD (Psa 101:6). They consecrate themselves to God and sanctify themselves for Him, following Christ, Who does the same. These saints are also called “the majestic ones” or better, “the glorious ones”. The “saints” are the “glorious ones” because they are connected to the Glorious One, Christ. For us, God sees us in the glory of Christ which we have received from and in Him (Jn 17:22; cf. Eph 1:6).

Christ is united with these saints. With them He occupies the same position before God, as it is written: “For both He who sanctifies [that is Christ] and those who are sanctified [that is the saints, the believers] are all from one” (Heb 2:11). Of the saints Christ says here: “In whom is all my delight.” We see this expressed in a remarkable way when He lets Himself be baptized by John the baptist. By letting Himself be baptized, He makes Himself one with His own (cf. Pro 8:31b).

In being baptized, Christ joins those who, “as they confessed their sins”, were baptized by John (Mt 3:5-6,13-16). That He does join them, but at the same time is far above them, is evident from what the Father says to all present immediately after His baptism: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Mt 3:17). The Father makes it clear that in the midst of them He is the unique Son of God. He has no sins to confess, for He is the Sinless One.

We see here the illustration of what God’s Word says to us New Testament believers about loving God and loving those who belong to Him. Those who say they love God will also love God’s people. Those two aspects are inseparable in the new nature of the believer (1Jn 5:1-2). You are lying if you say you love God, while you hate your brother.

Psa 16:4 | No Homage to Idols

*4 The sorrows of those who have bartered for another [god] will be multiplied;
I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
Nor will I take their names upon my lips.*

In this verse, David speaks of the multiplication of “the sorrows of those who have bartered for another [god]”. Who does not find his only good in God and therefore also does not have fellowship with believers, is funda-

mentally focused on idols. He will follow those idols gives an abundance of time and effort to them. This applies to the apostate mass of God's people in the future.

In the time of the Lord Jesus, these are the Pharisees and the scribes who only seek their own honor. They are their own idol. Applied to our time, we see it in the honoring of movie stars, athletes, appearance, wealth or whatever someone has idolatrous admiration for. The sorrows that befalls someone who worships other gods, he causes himself (cf. 1Tim 6:9-10).

For David, and also for the saints, the faithful remnant, it is clear. He pays no attention to it whatsoever. A drink offering is an offering poured over the main offering. In Israelite worship service it is an offering of wine (cf. 2Tim 4:6). Here it is an offering of blood, that is, it is an idolatrous sacrifice. Sacrifices to idols, even in the slightest form of them, he will never bring (cf. Mt 4:9-10). David does not even take the names of the idols upon his lips because to mention them would already mean to give too much honor to them. He ignores them completely.

In the end time, the unbelieving mass of the Jewish people will worship the antichrist and fall into idolatry (Jn 5:43; Mt 12:43-45). This will be seen by the mark of the beast which they have had put on their right hand or on their forehead. The faithful, the saints, will not even take the name of the beast and other idols upon their lips to pronounce it (cf. Exo 20:3-5; 23:13; Hos 2:17; Zec 13:2). Their faithfulness to God will bring them the hatred and persecution of the antichrist.

If we want to be faithful to God and not participate in any of the myriad forms of modern idolatry, especially those that come from the prevailing materialism, we will experience the same (2Tim 3:12).

Psa 16:5-6 | My Portion

*5 The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You support my lot.
6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.*

In these verses the great contrast with the idolaters follows. David speaks first of the LORD Himself (verse 5) and then of all that he has received

(verse 6). He – and every God-fearing one of the believing remnant in the future – distances himself in the clearest way from every idol because in the LORD Himself he has everything that fills his heart.

An idol, any idol, receives no attention, not even in the slightest degree such as uttering its name. His undivided attention goes to the LORD, Who is his only portion. We see this also with the Levites, of whom the LORD is also their only portion (Deu 10:9; 18:1-2; Jos 13:33; Eze 44:28). The expression is also used for the allotted portion of a sacrificial animal (Lev 6:17).

The LORD is also his cup, which speaks of all the blessings he receives as fulfillment of all the promises made to him. Through this he is encouraged, refreshed and supported. The cup may speak of the many blessings that have been given to him, but what he is saying is that *the LORD* is his cup. He is not primarily concerned with the gift, but with the Giver.

In this David is an example for us as well. We can apply that to our spiritual blessings. It will bring us into great admiration for the Giver of them. The Giver of the blessings is always much greater than the blessings. That leads to worship.

That the LORD is his only portion and his cup, he does not see as his own merit, but as assigned to him by “the lot”, that is, determined by God (cf. Jn 15:16a). Joshua used the lot to divide the land among the tribes who did not yet have an inheritance. In this way, the portion for each tribe was determined by God (Jos 18:6).

David also says that God “supports” the portion allotted to him. This is an unshakable assurance that he will receive it. This is in sharp contrast to what the fools possess. All of that will be lost to them, perhaps already during their lifetime and in any case at their death.

In verse 1, David asks if God will preserve him. In verse 5, he says that God will support or preserve what has been assigned to him. The same is true for us and the inheritance given to us. By virtue of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the inheritance is reserved or preserved for us in the heavens, while we ourselves are protected or preserved by the power of God for the inheritance (1Pet 1:3-5).

After the allotment of the inheritance by lot, there is the measuring of it with “lines” (cf. Amos 7:17; Zec 2:1). This demarcates the inheritance from the inheritances of others and allows the inheritance to be viewed. This brings to delight in the loveliness of the inheritance, which is expressed by jubilant exclaiming: “Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.” The blessings are overwhelming because the LORD is the inheritance. This means that the God-fearing person shares in all that is of God.

If we apply this to the Lord Jesus, His inheritance consists of all that He created. He receives this inheritance by virtue of His work on the cross, where He redeemed the inheritance for God (Rev 5:1-9).

Psa 16:7-8 | Council and Support

*7 I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.
8 I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

Here begins the second half of the psalm which, like the first half, begins with a declaration of faith. By now, the confidence of faith has become so certain that David can begin this second half with blessing or praising the LORD (verse 7). He praises God for counseling him. He leads him by His counsel as he goes through the land by day.

We also see this in perfection with the Lord Jesus. Because He let Himself to be led by the counsel of God, He is, for example, at the right time at the well of Jacob to meet a woman there and offer her the Gift of God (Jn 4:4-10). God is the ever-Present in His life. He lived on earth in close fellowship with Him. God calls Him “My Associate” (Zec 13:7). Never was there a moment when He took His eyes off Him.

David is not only open to the counsel of God during the day, but also at night. Even then he reflects on the teaching the LORD gives him by which he receives insight to discern what matters. In the night his mind – literally kidneys, figurative for inner man – instructs him. Kidneys refer to the inner self, the inside of man, where wisdom resides (Job 38:36). They symbolize wisdom to be able to discern what is useful and what is useless

or even harmful. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to give insight and to be able to discern God's will.

The kidneys in the body are a special purification system. They excrete in the body what is not good and retain what is good. This is wisdom. In the spiritual sense, they represent the purity of inner feelings. The Lord Jesus is completely pure in His deepest, most inner feelings. This is evident when He listens to His God in the night. Everything in Him is focused on God.

In His contemplation, He constantly has His eye fixed on the LORD His God (verse 8). We see this throughout the way He goes about which we read in the Gospels (Jn 14:31). This is an important indication for us. If we are engaged in God's Word in order to receive from it counsel and instruction for the way we should go, we will only come to know that way if in doing so we always look to the Lord Jesus.

David put the LORD "continually before" him. For us, it is important to always look to the Lord Jesus. By doing so we will get to know Him better which will make us go our way on earth with all the more confidence. Through this we will also see that He is at our right hand. The right hand represents strength. He gives us the strength to walk to the glory of God and ensures with His strength that we will not be shaken.

The right hand also represents the place of honor. The Lord Jesus always gave God the place of honor, the highest place in His life. For us, that God is at our right hand means that we give Him the place of honor, the highest place in our lives. That dependence gives unprecedented joy in the heart and preservation of the body, even when the body is in death. We hear that in the closing verses of this psalm.

Psa 16:9-11 | The Path of Life

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;

My flesh also will dwell securely.

10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;

Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

11 You will make known to me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

| *In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

The word “therefore” indicates a conclusion based on the foregoing (verse 9). David has acknowledged God as his sovereign Lord, Adonai, and resorted to Him (verses 1-2). While rejecting all idolatry, he experienced the goodness of God (verses 3-8).

“Therefore” his heart is glad and his glory rejoices (cf. Lk 10:21; Heb 12:2). His “heart” is the center of his existence. From there his life is governed. His heart is in constant fellowship with God. The word “glory” has the meaning of all the value of his inner being, all his feelings for God. He also feels secure as far as his “flesh” is concerned. “My heart”, “my glory”, and “my flesh” constitute the whole man, as the New Testament speaks of “spirit and soul and body” (1Thes 5:23).

Peter, in his speech in Acts 2, quotes this verse as Scripture proof for the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25-31). This is not a concoction of the authors of this commentary, but it is the commentary of Scripture, inspired by the Holy Spirit, on what is contained in this psalm. That is why it is necessary to quote the verses from Acts 2 here.

David writes this psalm ten centuries earlier than the time of Peter’s speech. He writes in the I-form. Yet he cannot write about himself. After all, he has died, been buried, and, when Peter quotes this scripture, still has not risen. David, then, is here a prophet writing about Another, the Lord Jesus.

No one but the Lord Jesus went His way without for a moment taking His eye off God, His Father. He always saw God, His Father, before Him. Always He also knew Him beside Him (Jn 8:29). His fellowship with His God gave Him joy in His heart, which He expressed with His mouth, even in the time of His rejection (Mt 11:25).

Through His fellowship with His God, He had hope with regard to rest for His body. He knew that He would die the sinner’s death, but He faced that death with the Father before and beside Him, looking forward to the joy that would come afterwards (Heb 12:2).

He knew that God would not abandon His soul to Sheol (verse 10). By Sheol is not meant the grave. By a grave we mean a place in which the body of a dead person is laid. The Hebrew word *sheol* does not refer to the

body, but to the soul. Sheol is the place where the souls of the dead go immediately after death, the realm of the dead. In Peter's quote, taken from the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – we read the word *hades*, the Greek translation of *sheol* (Acts 2:27).

Next, the quote says that God will not “abandon” Christ's soul to Hades, i.e. to the realm of the dead. Christ was “the Holy One” of God Who lived in perfect faithfulness to the covenant as God's godly man to His glory. He suffered the pains of death in His soul in the three hours of darkness on the cross under God's judgment for all who believe in Him. After His death, His soul went to paradise (Lk 23:43). Every unbeliever will suffer in Hades and finally eternally in hell.

After Christ died, He was laid in a tomb, but His body did not “undergo decay”. That is, His body was not affected by the decay of death. Even in His death, He was “the Holy One” of God. Therefore, after a short stay in the tomb – “a short time” (Heb 2:9) – He was raised. As a result of His work, the New Testament believer knows that his spirit and soul are with the Lord immediately after his death (2Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23), while his body is in the grave. His body will again emerge from the grave at the coming of the Lord Jesus for His own, but renewed, and be united with his spirit and soul (1Thes 4:16; 1Cor 15:52).

After hearing Christ speak in the quotation of His death and the special preservation therein by God, we next hear how He speaks of life and joy (verse 11). Here He speaks of His resurrection. This is life and joy after He has passed through death. After the resurrection, ways of life are opened and revealed. Life in the resurrection is a life of joy, it is life with the eye fixed on the face of God. In the spiritual sense, this applies today to every believer who keeps his eye fixed on Christ. Such a person always walks on the way of life, even though it may lead through death.

This path of life is made known by God to the Lord Jesus and thereby to His own. The path of life is always the path through death. God raises from the dead. He is the origin of that path, for He is life, He is the living God, life is only in Him. It is not so much the path that leads to life as the path on which life is enjoyed. It is the path marked by life (cf. Psa 25:9-10).

Life in the full sense of the word and joy belong together. On the path of life is “fullness of joy” because it is a path in the “presence” of God, indicating His constant presence. Only on that path, only in a life of fellowship with Him, there is fullness of joy. This is the case both in this life and in the life after this life.

This is also the case with the “pleasures” that are in His “right hand”. They are there “forever”. By “pleasures” is meant a vast array of pleasant things that will gladden our hearts again and again, without interruption. There is not a moment when this is not so. Both in the present and in the future, He is able – the right hand speaks of power – to give those pleasures to all who are associated with Him in the world of resurrection. His presence and His right hand represent His Person and His deeds, what He gives and what He does.

Psalm 17

Introduction

Psalm 17, like Psalm 16, is about David, whereby he is clearly a picture of the Lord Jesus. He is also a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel. Psalm 16 is about his inner, intimate, confidential and personal relationship with his God. This has been revealed through suffering, just as happens with pure gold that has been tested by fire.

We see this in perfection in the Lord Jesus in Whom through all suffering His complete trust in His God became visible. We see in His suffering Who God is to Him. In this He is an example for every believer, both now for us who belong to the church and for the faithful remnant in the future.

In Psalm 17 we see the pressure that is being exerted on David from outside. The same thing applies to the believing remnant and also to the Lord Jesus. Through that pressure, a sincere heart is revealed as one that is completely devoted to God. In the case of the Lord Jesus we recognize this in the description of Him in the Gospels.

Here it is more about the circumstances that are characterized by enemies surrounding the righteous. This is also what the faithful remnant will experience in the end time. We see in this psalm the Lord Jesus connected with the believing remnant. His experiences are shared by them. What He has experienced, they will, to some extent, experience. He is with them in the Spirit. In this psalm He teaches His own to trust in God as the God of the resurrection, the God Who will soon come to save them.

We can divide this psalm into three parts:

1. Verses 1-5 are the basis of David's prayer. In it he speaks of his righteousness; he expresses his uprightness.
2. Verses 6-12 deal with oppression by the enemy. This section begins with a prayer followed by a description of the enemy.
3. Finally, verses 13-15. This section again begins with a prayer. David asks for destruction of the enemy and his deliverance. The enemy, both of Da-

vid and of the Lord Jesus and the faithful remnant in the future, is the unbelieving part of the people. This unbelieving part, the apostate multitude, with the antichrist at its head, is supported by the restored Roman Empire, the European Union, or the beast coming out of the sea spoken of in Revelation 13 (Rev 13:1-10).

We find the essence of this prayer of David in the middle of the psalm, in verse 8: “Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings.”

Psa 17:1-2 | Prayer for Justice

1 A Prayer of David.

Hear a just cause, O LORD, give heed to my cry;

Give ear to my prayer, which is not from deceitful lips.

2 Let my judgment come forth from Your presence;

Let Your eyes look with equity.

This psalm is “of David” (verse 1a). The psalm is called “a prayer”, which we also hear from beginning to end. Three other psalms of David are likewise so named (Psa 86:1; 102:1; 142:1) and further only the one psalm of Moses (Psa 90:1).

David calls the LORD’s attention with three powerful statements: “hear”, “give heed”, and “give ear to” (verse 1b). The matter at hand is “a just cause”. The word “cause” is not in the original and has been added. It is therefore possible to read the text this way: “Hear the right [strictly: righteousness]” (Darby Translation). ‘Hear’ also means ‘deal’. ‘Righteousness’ implies ‘according to Your covenant and/or Your promises’.

David is not speaking of others, but of himself. It may seem that he is trying to defend himself, but he is not. A just cause is only just if that cause is so judged by God. David is not concerned with restoring honor to himself or to assert himself, but with the honor of God which is at stake here.

This is about injustice in the world and among the people of God. David prays to the righteous Judge for justice. In verse 15 he expresses his confidence that he will see God’s face in righteousness, which means that God will act and deliver in righteousness.

He sees his cause as God's cause. Therefore, he urgently asks God to hear him. He speaks of his "crying" to God. He cries out aloud, for his soul is in distress (Psa 106:44; 142:6). What he wants to say he calls "my prayer", indicating that he comes to God as a supplicant.

He adds that his prayer "is not from deceitful lips". This is not posturing, but indicates that he approaches God with a clear conscience to present his cause to Him. It is the prayer of a righteous person (cf. Jam 5:16b), that is, of one who stands upright before God. He can approach God freely because there are no things in his life that are contrary to God's holiness and because he is upright in his heart (1Jn 3:21).

The point is not that he is sinless, but that he does not walk around with sins that he has not confessed. He has integrity and is sincerely devoted to the LORD. What he says is consistent with what is in his heart and also evident in his actions (Psa 66:18). David also demonstrates this in verses 3-5.

He wants the LORD to confirm his innocence on the basis of righteous judgment with a judicial decision. To do this, he appeals to God's "presence" (verse 2), that is, to God's presence in his life. After all, God's eyes "look with equity", that is, He sees the right things and judges them according to what is consistent with law and justice. He will then see that according to truth and justice there is no sin in the sense of deceit or hypocrisy present with him. Then his justice can go out from God's presence so that his adversaries are gagged.

Psa 17:3-5 | A Righteous Prays

*3 You have tried my heart;
You have visited [me] by night;
You have tested me and You find nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.
4 As for the deeds of men, by the word of Your lips
I have kept from the paths of the violent.
5 My steps have held fast to Your paths.
My feet have not slipped.*

In these verses, David places himself before God and submits his inner self and his actions to Him. He draws God's attention to what He knows

about him. He testifies to his righteousness. In doing so, he gives his own assessment of what is in him and the deeds he has done and the ways he has gone. He can say that there is nothing that accuses him.

In verse 3, David speaks of three methods that God has used to see what is in his heart: God has “tried” him, “visited” him, and “tested” him. It is also possible to translate these three verbs in imperative: “Test my heart, search it by night, test me” (cf. Psa 139:23). The result of the examination is certain: “You find nothing” or “You will find nothing”.

Having *tried* the heart is to examine it to see if it is pure in its motives. God has *visited* him at night, when he is alone and, as it were, face to face with God, when nothing distracts him. That is also the most appropriate opportunity to confront him with a sin if there were one. His whole person has been *tested*, which refers more to the circumstances that serve as a testing environment in which he is living.

David knows that the injustice done to him by wicked people has no ground whatsoever. God has also observed this with him, for He has found nothing after thorough examination. Therefore, he has the firm confidence that God’s assessment of his righteous case that he submits to Him will be in accordance with it.

The meaning of the last part of the verse – “I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress” – is that nothing more and nothing else has come out of his mouth than what he has thought. It implies that his thoughts and his words, by which he makes his thoughts known, are in complete harmony. He does not use his words to hide his true thoughts. He has no wrong, hidden thoughts. This is often the case with people, but not with David.

This too we see in perfection and always with the Lord Jesus, in Whom every word He speaks expresses exactly what He thinks. He is what He says (Jn 8:25). This is how it should be with every believer.

After David has spoken of his inner self, he then speaks of his actions (verse 4). In this, too, God will not be able to discover anything that could make his righteous cause a failure. David speaks of “the deeds of men”. It is not about sinful deeds, but about man’s general doings, his daily activities. In this he has been obedient to “the word of Your lips”, which is the Word of God.

That has kept him from going “the paths of the violent [literally: of the burglar or transgressor]”. The paths of the violent are the paths of the devil who is the violent, the burglar and transgressor. It is not so much about a path of violence but about a forbidden path, a path of disobedience, as a burglar goes. It is a path that causes harm others. People who live without God live for the devil and go his way. It is the path of “destruction and misery” (Rom 3:16). Only obedience to God’s Word keeps us from this. The Lord Jesus is the perfect example in this.

By being obedient to the word of God’s lips, David has held fast to the paths of God (verse 5). He has gone the way that God has gone before him. He has put his feet in His footsteps. As a result, his feet have not slipped. The way we go, we go step by step. God’s Word is a lamp to our feet, meaning that God’s Word gives light for every step we have to take. God’s Word is also a light to our path, which is the entire way we travel, with our eye fixed on the final goal (Psa 119:105).

Psa 17:6-9 | Prayer for Protection

*6 I have called upon You, for You will answer me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech.
7 Wondrously show Your lovingkindness,
O Savior of those who take refuge at Your right hand
From those who rise up [against them].
8 Keep me as the apple of the eye;
Hide me in the shadow of Your wings
9 From the wicked who despoil me,
My deadly enemies who surround me.*

Here begins the second part of the psalm, which consists of verses 6-12. In it, there is talk of oppression by the enemy. This section also begins with a prayer. The word “I” with which verse 6 begins has emphasis here. David says: “I, it is I who call upon You. I, who have just shown You my whole inner and outer self, by which You have seen that everything in it corresponds to Who You are.” He calls upon God because he knows that God hears him.

He asks God to show him “wondrously” His “lovingkindness” (verse 7). This is a beautiful expression. Every display of God’s lovingkindness to us is a wonder. Do we also have an eye for that and bow down in worship to Him for it? The first wonder of God’s lovingkindness is that He has saved us (Tit 3:4-6). After that, He has shown us countless more wonders of His lovingkindness. Has He not often helped us in His lovingkindness in all kinds of situations, for which we ourselves saw no solution and for which we then resorted to Him?

Here it is about a situation where David is surrounded by people who rise up against God’s right hand [the context makes it clear that this is meant here]. It points to the audacity of these rebels, for they rise up against the power of God, of whom the right hand speaks. With His right hand, God supports and delivers His own (Psa 18:35; 139:10). By this David is saying to God that he realizes that his enemies do not rise up against him, but against the strong God. We can also apply the “right hand” to the Messiah. He is at God’s right hand and He is the power of God (Heb 1:3; 1Cor 1:24).

For himself, he asks for protection. For that, he boldly appeals to God’s lovingkindness, reminding God how precious he is to Him. He describes this preciousness by speaking of himself as the “apple of the eye” (verse 8; cf. Zec 2:8). The request for its protection also includes the request to be able to continue to see everything clearly.

The apple of the eye is the pupil of the eye. The Hebrew word means ‘little man, daughter of the eye’. This is because your image is reflected by the pupil when you look at it. That David is the apple of God’s eye means that David is reflected in the apple of God’s eye, God’s pupil. This, in turn, is because the LORD does not lose sight of him and constantly protects him.

The apple of his eye is one of the most sensitive and vulnerable parts of the body. He therefore makes an additional appeal for God’s protection asking that God hides him “in the shadow” of His “wings” (Psa 36:7; 57:1b; 63:7; 91:4; cf. Rth 2:12; Isa 49:2; 51:16; Mt 23:37). In addition to protecting what is precious, it is also about protecting and securing what is defenseless.

These pictures illustrate the love of God in His acts of care and protection for those who are dear and precious to Him. Moses uses both of these pictures in the song he teaches God’s people. In doing so, he wants to teach

them about their preciousness to God and the love and care God has lavished on them because of it (Deu 32:10-11).

David presents himself to God in his preciousness and vulnerability because of “the wicked” who “despoil” him and his “deadly enemies who surround” him (verse 9). He is in mortal danger. The wicked are out to despoil him. His deadly enemies have surrounded him, making him feel like a surrounded, besieged city (cf. 2Kgs 6:14), from which every way out has been cut off.

Psa 17:10-12 | The Wicked and Deadly Enemies

*10 They have closed their unfeeling [heart],
With their mouth they speak proudly.
11 They have now surrounded us in our steps;
They set their eyes to cast [us] down to the ground.
12 He is like a lion that is eager to tear,
And as a young lion lurking in hiding places.*

In verse 9, David has told God what his enemies are up to. In verses 10-12, he holds up to God by what his enemies are led and how they proceed. Their hearts are “unfeeling”, literally “fat” (verse 10; cf. Isa 6:10), making them inaccessible to reasonable arguments for repentance. “Their fat” points to their prosperity, well-being, abundance. They revel in prosperity that they would not want to miss for anything in the world.

In doing so, they have at the same time put a barrier around their hearts, so that it is closed off to any call to turn their backs on their sinful way of life (cf. Psa 119:70; Deu 32:15). That they have closed their hearts with fat also means that they have no compassion for others.

Because of their fat inner being, “they speak proudly” with their mouths. They attribute their prosperity and well-being to their own efforts. The arrogance spells out. There is no thought of God in them, Who nevertheless “causes His sun to rise on [the] evil and [the] good, and sends rain on [the] righteous and [the] unrighteous” (Mt 5:45). Because there is no thought of God, there is also no care for others.

Instead of taking care of others they are out to plunder others (verse 11). Those who are arrogant cannot be trusted. Their actions reveal the fatness

around their hearts. They surround “us in our steps”, which are the steps of the righteous. Here David speaks in the plural. What happens to him happens to all who belong to him. Thus the Lord Jesus said that just as His enemies persecuted Him, they will also persecute those who belong to Him (Jn 15:20).

The wicked lurk on the righteous. They ‘stalk’ him. They make themselves small and lie down on the ground to jump and rob the unsuspecting passerby from that position. The wicked “is like a lion that is eager to tear” (verse 12). The lion is a symbol of brute force with a devouring voracity. “As a young lion lurking in hiding places” to pounce on its prey, the wicked lies in ambush to pounce on and tear apart the righteous.

Psa 17:13-14 | Prayer for Deliverance From the Wicked

*13 Arise, O LORD, confront him, bring him low;
Deliver my soul from the wicked with Your sword,
14 From men with Your hand, O LORD,
From men of the world, whose portion is in [this] life,
And whose belly You fill with Your treasure;
They are satisfied with children,
And leave their abundance to their babes.*

With verse 13 begins the third and final section of the psalm, which consists of verses 13-15. In this section it is about the salvation of the oppressed righteous that results from the destruction of the enemy by the LORD. This section also begins with a prayer.

The description of the wicked once again impressed David as to his mortal enmity. He cries out to the LORD to arise, go to the wicked, and bring him low (verse 13). When the LORD arises, it causes terror among His opponents (Isa 2:19). He then exalts Himself in His full, impressive magnitude, so to speak. Then He goes to the wicked, who is paralyzed with dismay, and strikes him down. Bring him low means that He brings him down from his pretended high position by killing him.

When the LORD kills the wicked with His sword, the righteous will be delivered from him. The sword of God, “Your sword”, is His Word (Eph 6:17). He kills His opponents with the sword that comes from His mouth

(Rev 2:16; 19:15). This is a different use of God's Word than the use David made of it, for he used it to stay on his guard against going astray (verse 4). He asks the LORD not only for deliverance from the wicked, but for deliverance "from men ... from men of the world, whose portion is in [this] life" (verse 14). For this he appeals to "Your hand", that is, he wants God to intervene in the lives of these men.

These men, this kind of men – they are emphatically mentioned twice – are characterized by the fact that they live for here and now. They have their portion in this life. They live by the motto, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Isa 22:13; 1Cor 15:32). It is the spirit of Cain who squandered the future blessing of the firstborn right for an instant bite of good food (Gen 25:29-34).

This category of people is always referred to in the book of Revelation as "those who dwell on the earth" (Rev 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,14; 14:6; 17:8). Their portion is in the greatest possible contrast to David's portion, who says that the LORD is his portion (Psa 16:5). That is an eternal portion, while the portion of the men of the world is limited to this life, the short life on earth here and now.

They can fill their bellies with the good things of life. That they are able to do so, they owe to God. He gives it to them from His sources (Acts 14:17), but these are hidden from them because they banish Him from their thinking. They even get so much that they can also satisfy their children. What those children have left over from that, they leave to their children.

It all seems wonderful; the blessing passes from one generation to the next. At the same time there is great drama in it. They can leave it to their children, but that is because they themselves can take nothing of it with them when they die. Then begins for them the endless eternity of doom and gloom.

Psa 17:15 | The Hope of the Righteous

*15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness;
I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.*

In this verse we see the great blessing of the righteous which forms a huge contrast to the fate of the wicked one and all the wicked in the previous verse (cf. Phil 3:19-20). Prophetically, this means that the wicked will be exterminated and the faithful remnant in the realm of peace will be satisfied in righteousness.

David confidently says that he will “behold” God’s face “in righteousness”. He will be in God’s presence by virtue of the righteousness God has proven to him and not by virtue of his own righteousness, for he does not have any. He will be with God by virtue of the work of Christ Who worked this righteousness for him with God.

The satisfaction this gives is eternal. This is an enormous contrast to the satisfaction of the wicked in verse 14. Those who partake of the resurrection, the awakening, will eternally see God’s face (Rev 22:4a), eternally enjoy His presence, eternally be satisfied with God’s likeness. The likeness of God is Christ in Whom God will be visible for all eternity.

For us, New Testament believers, this is already true now. After all, we live in a spiritual sense in the world of the resurrection because we have died and risen with Christ. Because of this we already see Him (Heb 2:9), Who is the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15; 2Cor 4:4; Jn 14:9). When we are with Him, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is (1Jn 3:2).

The psalm ends in a similar way to the previous one (Psa 16:11). There it is more the personal joy of the Lord Jesus when, having passed through death, He sees the face of God in the resurrection. Here He is more the Leader of all who will also be like Him satisfied with the likeness of God in the resurrection because in this psalm He is united with the believers.

Psalm 18

Introduction

This psalm is also found, in almost identical terms, in 2 Samuel 22. David testifies in this psalm of Who the LORD is to him and what He has done for him. It is also the expression of the feelings of those who have been in similar circumstances and have been rescued from distress and want to praise God for it.

There are four ways in which we can look at this psalm, and this applies to many other psalms. It has already been said in another way in the introduction, but it is good to draw attention to it again, especially with this psalm:

1. In this psalm, David recounts his personal experiences. We have here a historical description because it is about the history of David.
2. Parts of this psalm have been fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth and in His death and resurrection. Other parts will be fulfilled when He returns to earth to establish His realm of righteousness and peace.

The whole psalm is about Him. David is a picture of Him here. This psalm expresses the feelings of Christ. The Spirit of Christ is at work in David as he writes this psalm.

3. In direct connection with this, we also see here the feelings of the faithful remnant of Israel in the future. With them the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, that is the Anointed, unites Himself in an intimate way.
4. Finally, there is the application for us personally as New Testament believers. The Lord Jesus has also joined us with Himself, and in an even more intimate way. Here we must remember that we are joined with Him in heaven, while the remnant is joined with Him on earth. We have to deal with spiritual enemies, while the remnant has to deal with enemies of flesh and blood. Salvation from the power of the enemy occurs for the earthly people through the coming of the Lord to earth to judge those enemies,

while He delivers us from our enemies by taking us up to Himself out of the world in the air (1Thes 4:15-17).

David is remembering all that God has been to him, what he has found in Him in his needs and dangers. He reflects on the power of God that has been at work on his behalf and what the blessed result of that power is. This is all expressed in this song, an expression of feelings that find their full fulfillment in Christ.

The psalm begins and ends with a song of praise. It is a psalm of gratitude. We hear a story of sorrow and suffering that ends in joy and triumph. The psalm can begin with a praise to the LORD because it reflects past experiences and does not describe a current situation.

David describes what he went through, his suffering and distress, his cry for help, followed by deliverance and victory, and finally his coronation. In this he is a type of the perfect Servant of the LORD from the book of Isaiah: the Lord Jesus. He has been delivered by God from the dead. He will defeat His enemies and be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. David is also a type of the faithful remnant who will be delivered from the hands of the false king of Israel, the antichrist.

Psa 18:1-3 | Who the LORD Is to David

1 For the choir director. A [Psalm] of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said, "I love You, O LORD, my strength."

*2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.*

*3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies.*

As in Psalm 3 and Psalm 7, this psalm mentions the occasion for its writing (Psa 3:1; 7:1). The psalm begins with the statement that it is "for the choir director", a statement we have encountered several times before. The psalm begins by saying – and thereby emphasizes – that it is intended for

others who have been in similar circumstances as the writer. See further the explanation at Psalm 4:1.

It is “a [Psalm] of David the servant of the LORD”. He speaks of himself as “the servant of the LORD” (cf. Psa 36:1; Deu 34:5; Jos 24:29). The whole psalm breathes God’s greatness. Toward Him, David does not call himself “king” but “servant”. He realizes that it is a great honor to serve God in his kingship.

This also applies to us, who have also become a kingdom (Rev 1:6). We do not yet exercise kingship, but we do possess its dignity. That dignity is expressed in serving Him Who is our Lord. It is a special privilege to serve Him Who has all authority in heaven and on earth. Anyone who is somewhat impressed by God’s majesty will gladly be His servant and call himself so.

David “spoke to the LORD the words of this song”. Here it says that this song is “spoken” to the LORD. This implies an important lesson. We see here that to sing songs means to speak to God. To sing songs is also to speak to people. This is what Paul says to us in the letter to the Colossians (Col 3:16). All of this underlines the fact that it is primarily about the words.

The reference to a “song” reminds us of the introduction to Moses’ song after Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Exo 15:1) and the song that Barak and Deborah sang after their victory over the enemy (Jdg 5:1). The similarity between these three songs is that they are songs of deliverance, praising God for the deliverance He has wrought. Singing is the privilege of a redeemed people. The first time a song is sung in the Bible is in Exodus 15 (Exo 15:1) and the last time in Revelation 14 (Rev 14:3).

David spoke this song to the LORD “in the day that the LORD delivered him”, that is, immediately after his rescue. Likewise, we should praise God immediately after we experienced His help. David not only mentions the time of the deliverance, “in the day that”, but also the occasion of it. For the LORD “delivered” him from the hand of ruthless enemies. To deliver means that the LORD has snatched David from the hand of his enemies, pulled him out. This deliverance is the occasion for his song.

The enemies are not few in number. David speaks of “the hand of all his enemies”. These are enemies of hostile nations who sought to prevent him from accepting his kingship. They are also enemies who have wanted to remove him from the throne after he became king.

David mentions one enemy by name: Saul. The LORD also delivered him “from the hand of Saul”. He mentions this enemy last, although Saul is his first enemy. From Saul he has experienced the longest and fiercest enmity. Saul, in connection with the believing remnant, is a type of the antichrist, the false king, who is hostile to the great Son of David.

If we want to serve the Lord in faithfulness, we need not marvel that we have enemies (Jn 15:18-19). We will experience all the more His help and deliverance in it, giving us all the more reason to praise Him.

All the deliverances from the grip of all kinds of enemies, and from the hand of Saul in particular, bring out in David a song of praise, a psalm. His first reaction to his deliverance is to say to the LORD: “I love You, O LORD” (verse 1b). This is a special ‘declaration of love’ to the LORD personally. Such a thing occurs only once more, in different terms, in Psalms (Psa 116:1). It is a declaration of love expressing that the intimacy of the relationship is based on experience.

The word for “love” here is a spontaneous, emotional love based on what David has experienced and seen. It is not love at first sight, but a love because He first loved us (cf. 1Jn 4:19). This is evident from David’s experiences. He speaks of this in verse 19.

We can deduct this from the large number of names by which David mentions the LORD. In doing so, he expresses all that the LORD means to him. With this he substantiates, as it were, his declaration of love. In this way he has come to know God and, as a result, has come to love Him more and more. The LORD has so many other names than those mentioned by David. The reason David specifically mentions these names is because they are particularly appropriate in the context of this song, which is about flight, battle and victory.

As he names Him, so he has experienced Him in those situations. There he also experienced the personal relationship with God in a special way. This is evident from the repeated use of the possessive pronoun “my”. He ex-

perienced and experiences God as he reflects Him in every name by which he names Him. Similarly, Paul speaks of God as “my God” (Phil 4:19). The Lord Jesus also speaks of “My God” and “My Father” (Jn 20:17).

The first name that David mentions, he speaks to God. He does not call Him “my Beloved”, but “my strength”. This shows that David’s love for the LORD is based on Who He is for him in battle. The following names are consistent with this. Only by doing so he is not addressing God, but by doing so he is testifying to others of Who the LORD is to Him.

The name “my strength” connects directly to his declaration of love. This is what God has been to him in the presence of his adversaries. David has overcome all his opponents because God has been and still is his strength. He owes his safety to Him alone. He testifies to this in the names he mentions next.

1. In the first ‘testimony name’ he says: “The LORD is my rock” (verse 2). By this he is saying that the LORD is his unshakable foundation (cf. Isa 17:10; Mt 16:18; 1Cor 10:4). The Hebrew word for rock here is *sela*. It is a word for high rocks, layered by sediment. The rock here is a type of the exalted Christ. On that rock David stands. He owes that high position to God.

2. Then he calls Him “my fortress” – Hebrew *mesuda*, cf. Masada. A fortress is a mountain fortress. It is a location so fortified that an enemy cannot approach it. That is what God has become to David. He is with God, as it were, ‘in safe keeping’. He is safe and secure with Him from all his persecutors.

3. At the same time, he can call the LORD “my deliverer”. He is well guarded in the fortress and is therefore free from his persecutors.

4. He is, says David, “my God”, that is, the One in Whom I have found all that I can imagine of Who God is: the Almighty, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Who knows me and is much stronger than the dangers that threaten me. He is always with me. The Christian expresses this when he says “Abba, Father”.

5. Then David calls Him “my rock” once more (see 1.). The Hebrew word for rock here is *tsur*. This is a word for low rocks of solid black basalt stones. We can see the rock here as a picture of Christ in humiliation.

David adds that he “takes refuge” in Him. Here we see an action of David. We can know that in God we have an unshakable rock, but we must resort to it. David does not say that he “took refuge” in Him, but “takes refuge” in Him. He has done it in the past and continues to do it. He continually seeks safety and protection from Him.

6. “My shield” (cf. Psa 3:3; Gen 15:1) means protection from the arrows the enemy fires at him (cf. Eph 6:16). Arrows penetrate the body and paralyze or kill. But what arrow can pass through the LORD? Who can hit Him? He Himself is untouchable and therefore any attack on one of His own is doomed to utter failure.

7 “The horn of my salvation” means that God’s power – the horn is a picture of strength, with which an animal defends itself – guarantees the salvation of His own. The concept is that God is to the psalmist what the horn is to animals, the means of defense. What enemy can stand up to God?

8. “My stronghold” (cf. Psa 9:9) is a high place from which David can observe the enemy. It is a natural sentry post that is at the same time unreachable for an enemy attack and therefore provides complete security (cf. Isa 33:16; Pro 18:10). The LORD is his guaranteed security.

The aforementioned ‘military features’ of God can be described as follows: security, unshakability, preservation, deliverance, protection, strength, invulnerability, safety. All this is contained in the name ‘strength’.

David has called upon this Person, Whom he has described so extensively as his strength (verse 3). After all his experiences with Him, he cannot help but first point out again that He is worthy of praise. His heart is full of praise for Him Who has made Himself known in the way he has expressed in the names. At the same time he calls upon all to whom he testifies to praise Him as well.

The LORD has heard his cry. He has stood up for David and delivered him from his enemies. In the next few verses, David proceeds to speak of the great distress in which he has been and from which God has delivered

him. This makes it all the more clear how worthy the LORD is of the names by which David mentioned Him. It helps anyone who is in distress and has been delivered from it by the LORD with deeper understanding to praise Him for His deliverance. It is, after all, a psalm “for the choir director”.

Psa 18:4-6 | The Distress Brought to God

*4 The cords of death encompassed me,
And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.
5 The cords of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
6 In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried to my God for help;
He heard my voice out of His temple,
And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.*

These verses describe the feelings of David during the time when the enemy was out to kill him. It are also the feelings of the faithful remnant of Israel during the great tribulation. We see something similar with Jonah when he is in the stomach of the fish (Jona 2:3-10). Above that, these verses describe in particular the feelings of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, where the suffering of death is presented to Him in the cup of suffering that the Father shows Him there. Of Him we read that “in the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death” (Heb 5:7a). This is Gethsemane.

In what David experienced – he describes his experience as of someone in the process of drowning (verse 4) – we see what Christ experienced in perfection and far deeper than David. No one like Him knows what “cords of death” are. David felt these cords in regard to physical death. In 2 Samuel 22 he speaks of “waves of death” (2Sam 22:5). These are strong powers that wanted to pull David into the depths of the realm of the dead.

Christ felt these cords and waves in the fullest sense of the word: being separated from God. The same applies to the “torrents of ungodliness” that “terrified” David. In a literal sense, these are the sudden, fast-flowing waters in the wadis in the wilderness that drag everything along and destroy it. The torrents of ungodliness, or destruction – literally it says

“streams of Belial” – refer to the endless stream of corrupted people who, led by satan, hunted him down to kill him.

Christ was not afraid of all physical suffering and physical death. Otherwise He could never have encouraged His own “not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul” (Mt 10:28). He had no fear of what people would do to Him. What made Him fearful was the anger of God that would come down on Him in the three hours of darkness, during which He would be made sin. The “cords of Sheol”, – Sheol is the realm of the dead – surrounded Him in a way that was far more intense than David could ever experience (verse 5).

The same is true of the “snares of death”. David felt like a bird caught in a snare. The more he tried to pull away, the tighter the snare was stretched. Death could make its appearance at any moment. The snares of death also threatened and distressed the Savior (cf. Lk 12:50). That is why in Gethsemane He called upon His God in His distress. And He heard Him and delivered Him – not *of* death, but – *from* death, and this because of His piety (Heb 5:7b), that is, because of His full devotion to God

David, after describing his distress, speaks of calling upon the LORD in his distress and crying “to my God” (verse 6). His distress was so great that he despaired of life, for death threatened. The enormous powers he faced were beyond human control. All he could do was cry to God, for he had a God to Whom he could cry.

The call for help is followed immediately, without pause or hesitation, by God’s answer (cf. Mt 14:30-31). This answer is the awareness that his voice, which cried from the depths of the dead (verses 4-5), is “heard” by God “out of His temple”, the house of His government in high heaven. God was not too busy with other things. The cry for help had His full attention. David knew that he was making his cry for help before God, that is, in His presence. Therefore, it came into His ears that were open to the distress call of His chosen king.

Psa 18:7-15 | God Intervenes

| 7 Then the earth shook and quaked;
| And the foundations of the mountains were trembling

*And were shaken, because He was angry.
 8 Smoke went up out of His nostrils,
 And fire from His mouth devoured;
 Coals were kindled by it.
 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down
 With thick darkness under His feet.
 10 He rode upon a cherub and flew;
 And He sped upon the wings of the wind.
 11 He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,
 Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
 12 From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,
 Hailstones and coals of fire.
 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
 And the Most High uttered His voice,
 Hailstones and coals of fire.
 14 He sent out His arrows, and scattered them,
 And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.
 15 Then the channels of water appeared,
 And the foundations of the world were laid bare
 At Your rebuke, O LORD,
 At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.*

[Hint for the reader: To get an impression of the LORD's answer, it is good to read the whole of these verses in one go. So rather than studying verse by verse in detail, first read the whole in quiet succession. Then the experience that Elijah had is gained: the LORD did not appear to him in the storm, fire or earthquake, but ultimately in the sound of a gentle blowing (1Kgs 19:11-13)].

In these verses David tells us that the LORD listened to his cry for help (cf. Psa 17:13) and how He answered. God's response to deliver David and His people is His mighty appearance. He describes what became visible of God when He began to act on his behalf. It did not make David anxious, but filled him with awe. That God was acting for him! Smoke and fire, wind and waters, thunder and lightning, all these natural phenomena God put into action for his deliverance.

God's action begins with the earth shaking and quaking (verse 7). "The foundations of mountains", which symbolize the immobility and stability of the earth, "were trembling and were shaken". God only has to touch them with a finger and the earth loses everything a man thinks he can hold on to. It is not a question of a slight fluctuation, but of an uncontrollable violent shaking back and forth, so that everything staggers and falls over. This happens "because He was angry". It shows His exalted majesty, whereby man in his pride shrivels up to nothing.

It is quite possible that God helped David through such natural phenomena to defeat his enemies or escape them. David sees God's hand in this, which is true, while the enemies, and all men without God, speak only of remarkable phenomena in nature. All kinds of plagues and disasters that will afflict mankind when the believers are caught up, and which are described in the book of Revelation, will be explained by the unbelievers in this way. The believing remnant clearly sees the hand of God in that. We see the same thing with the plagues that came upon Egypt. They were used as judgment on Egypt, while for the Israelites they were signs and wonders of God.

Further emphasis is given to God's anger by the smoke that went up out of His nostrils and the fire that came from His mouth (verse 8; cf. Isa 65:5). The fire did a devouring work, which is proven by the coals that were kindled by it. The smoke and the consuming fire make it clear that He is judging the enemies. Fire is invariably a picture of the judgment of God that consumes everything that resists Him. Also "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29).

By bowing the heavens He brings them closer to the earth (verse 9). It is a poetic and human description of His coming down to earth to act on behalf of His godly man. In Him, heaven came to earth. That meant judgment for the wicked persecutors and deliverance for the righteous. The thick darkness under His feet emphasizes that He came to judge.

Another indication that He came to judge is that "He rode on a cherub" (verse 10). Ezekiel sees that cherubim are attached to the throne chariot of His government (Eze 1:5-14; 10:1). These heavenly beings have great power and are associated with the execution of God's government and the

maintaining of His righteousness. We see this particularly displayed in the cherubim looking down on the mercy seat on top of the ark in which the law is (Exo 25:22).

Cherubim have wings that allow them to move quickly. They are consequently also connected to heaven while performing their work on earth. God is swift in executing judgment when the appointed time for it has come. He moves with the speed and inimitability of the wind toward His goal (cf. Psa 104:3-4).

David continues in figurative language his impressive description of God in His action to deliver His anointed. God has wrapped Himself in the darkness of the night to hide Himself in it (verse 11). That hiding is like a canopy. That canopy consists of “darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies”. Everything speaks of the threat of judgment.

God announces His action in “the brightness before Him” (verse 12). God can cover Himself in darkness. The threat that emanates from it can inspire awe and work repentance. When man does not take that threat seriously, God appears in judgment. Then He appears as a blinding light. Out of the light glow of His holiness come “hailstones and coals of fire”. We also see such a combination at the seventh plague on Egypt (Exo 9:22-23).

The dark, obscure clouds began to speak majestically, deafeningly: “The LORD also thundered in the heavens” (verse 13). From heaven He made His voice sound through “hailstones and coals of fire” which were also mentioned in the previous verse. The repetition indicates that it happened regularly. He is “the Most High”, He is exalted above the universe. God speaks through His judgments; in them His voice is heard (Psa 29:3-9). During the thunders, He shoots His arrows in the form of lightning flashes in all directions (verse 14; cf. Psa 77:18; 144:6; Hab 3:11). Thus He scattered the enemies, disrupting their order and confusing them, rendering them powerless.

As a final act, David describes that through the action of God the channels of water became visible and “the foundations of the world were laid bare” (verse 15). It is a thundering final act, as it were, in which God demonstrates that there is no area in all of nature that can resist when He deals with it. It is a picture of His dealing with hostile powers. As He makes

visible the channels of water, so He uncovers all the hostile powers. He rules over the foundations of the world. He is the glorious and victorious King over all powers in heaven, on earth and in the sea. His rule cannot be questioned by anything or anyone.

All of the foregoing acts were done by God as “rebuke” against the opponents of the righteous for whom He stands up. For that rebuke He uses from the universe what He needs, for the entire universe is under His authority and at His disposal. He only has to blow against a single element with the breath of His nostrils and it is stirred up to an all-destructive storm against which no shelter can stand.

Psa 18:16-19 | The Great Deliverance

*16 He sent from on high, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my stay.
19 He brought me forth also into a broad place;
He rescued me, because He delighted in me.*

After the impressive description of the intervention of God in His omnipotence (verses 7-15), David describes in these verses in an equally impressive way his deliverance by God from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. That deliverance is expressed by several verbs in this section: “sent from on high”, “took me”, “drew me out”, “delivered me”, “brought me forth” and “rescued me”. In all these actions God proves His faithfulness. David experiences deliverance in an almost tangible way.

The words “drew me out” also appear in Exodus 2. There it is in connection with Moses being pulled out of the waters of death by Pharaoh’s daughter (Exo 2:10).

The fearful action of the LORD that David described in the previous verses did not make him fearful. It has been a “deliverance” operation, in which his enemies have been eliminated and he has been delivered. In verse 16 we recognize Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. The going of Israel through

the Red Sea is like the raising of the people out of great waters. It is represented pictorially in this way, that from on high, from His holy palace, God reached out His mighty hand, seized the people and drew them out of the Red Sea and placed them in the freedom of the wilderness. This is how David experienced his deliverance.

The “many waters” are a picture of many difficulties and dangers. It was indeed a “strong enemy” with whom he had to deal (verse 17). Added to this were others who “hated” him. They were people “too mighty for” him. Their threat was so intense that he knew the day of his ruin had arrived if the LORD did not intervene (verse 18). The distress had risen to a climax. “But” then there was the LORD, He was there to support him, He held him up, so that he would not fall and fall into the hand of the enemy. This Divine “but” indicates a reversal that God works in a situation where a man can do nothing more (cf. Eph 2:1-4).

Instead of his downfall, David experienced the support of the LORD. Instead of being surrounded by his enemies, the LORD brought him forth into a broad place (verse 19). Instead of falling into the hand of his enemies, he has experienced the rescue of God. He owes everything to God and nothing to himself. And what prompted God to intervene in this exalted way and rescue him? David acknowledges it with great gratitude and amazement: “Because He delighted in me.” David knew himself to be the object of God’s love.

What David tells of his deliverance from the cords of death by the power of God is a clear picture of the deliverance of Lord Jesus from death by the power of God. Paul writes of this when he says that we would know “what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. [These are] in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly [places], far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph 1:19-21).

Through the cross, the Lord Jesus defeated all powers (Col 2:14-15). God answered that victory by raising Christ from the dead. It was His joy to do so. Not only the power of God, but also the glory of the Father raised

Christ from the dead (Rom 6:4). Because Christ glorified Him on earth, the Father, in response, glorified Him and did so immediately by taking Him up into heaven (Jn 13:31-32). His glorification on earth is yet to come. We see a further illustration of this in this psalm in what God is doing to David.

Psa 18:20-26 | God's Righteous Reward

*20 The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.
21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all His ordinances were before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.
23 I was also blameless with Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
24 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes.
25 With the kind You show Yourself kind;
With the blameless You show Yourself blameless;
26 With the pure You show Yourself pure,
And with the crooked You show Yourself astute.*

This passage is about the perfection of the Lord Jesus. David was sincerely devoted to the LORD and remained faithful to Him, but he was not perfect. As a weak picture of Christ, he speaks as a prophet of Him Who is truly and only perfect. What David is in perfection, he owes to the LORD; what the Lord Jesus is in perfection, He is personally. By virtue of that, He is King.

The conclusion of verse 19 is the introduction to verses 20-24. In these verses David says why God delighted in him and stood up for him. As mentioned, this description in its fullness is only true of the Lord Jesus. To Him fully applies what David says of himself in these verses. He was absolutely spotless and perfectly obedient to God's ways and ordinances.

In a certain sense David can say without presumption: "The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of

my hands He has recompensed me" (verse 20). We must then remember that he is referring to the way he dealt with his greatest enemy, Saul. As long as David was not on the throne, he always acknowledged Saul as God's appointed king.

In this way he did righteousness, that is, he acted in accordance with the law of God, giving Saul the due respect. He has always kept his hands clean, even though he was twice stimulated to take the law into his own hands (1Sam 24:5,11-14; 26:9-11,18). In reward for this, God rescued him.

We see in David a dim shadow of Christ. What is true with David, but not always, is always, in all circumstances and perfectly, true with the Lord Jesus. Therefore, in these verses we see Him above all. He has been heard, as quoted above, for the piety that He demonstrated uninterruptedly in His life on earth. That was His righteousness and it was rewarded to Him by God.

Christ received His reward from God according to the purity of His hands, which always did only what God had told them to do. Never have His hands done anything impure. His hands were so pure that He could touch an unclean leper, thereby healing that leper of his leprosy and cleansing him (Mt 8:3).

David, in his attitude toward Saul, had "kept the ways of the LORD" and "had not wickedly departed" from his God (verse 21). He has done so because he has kept all of God's ordinances in mind and has not put away His statutes from him (verse 22). He has not always been perfect in going the way of the LORD, nor has he always kept God's ordinances, but this is again about his attitude toward Saul.

In going the ways of the LORD and keeping God's statutes, he was "blameless with Him" (verse 23). It never occurred to him to do anything against Saul because he was integrous before God. He lived in fellowship with God, which kept him from evil. This is especially true of the evil of taking the law into his own hands and getting Saul out of the way. The latter indicates that he was aware of the possibility of committing iniquity.

Here we see that a believer's walking in the way of the Lord without deviating from it is inseparable from obedience to the Word of God. We stay

in the way of the Lord when we have His Word constantly before our eyes (cf. Deu 8:6).

This too was practiced in perfection by our Savior. He always, uninterruptedly, walked in the ways of His God and had His law before Him throughout His life on earth. With Him this was not to give iniquity no chance to do it. He was and is without sin and had and has no tendency to sin in Him.

In verse 24 David speaks again of the cleanness of his hands as his righteousness and that God “recompensed” him on that basis, that is, rescued him. He did the same in verse 20. The fact that he mentions it again may be because he could have killed Saul twice, but did not do it both times. Both times he proved that he has clean hands. He is not a murderer and has no murderer’s blood on his hands. God saw that, it was “in His eyes”. Therefore, God has given him according to his righteousness.

Verses 25-26 give the general principle according to which God acts. God did that in the life of David and always does with every person. As we behave toward other people, so God will act with us. In other words, the Lord Jesus says the same thing: “For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Lk 6:38b).

If we show lovingkindness to others, God will show lovingkindness to us. We will reap what we sow (Gal 6:7b-8). Here we are talking about an attitude toward someone who has harmed or hurt us. “Kind” here is the Hebrew word that means faithfulness to the statutes of the covenant. The LORD says that He will certainly keep the statutes of that covenant if His people do the same. He is the faithful God of the covenant.

God is blameless toward one who is blameless, that is, inwardly focused on God and displays that in his dealings with his fellow men. It means that God stands up for such a person when he is slandered or persecuted. The pure person is one who is pure, unmixed in his thoughts, motives and behavior; he keeps himself separated from the world. God shares His own purity with him; there is fellowship with Him, without anything of sin being able to disturb that fellowship.

He who is crooked, literally “corrupted”, in the sense of perverse, follows wrong, twisted ways and tries to deviously drag others into his ways. He

is not straight, he is a hypocrite. Such a person faces God as One Who is competing against him. He will deal with him according to what he is: depraved, twisted, wicked. What he has sown, he will reap (Gal 6:7b).

Psa 18:27-36 | God Is and Does Everything for the Righteous

27 For You save an afflicted people,
 But haughty eyes You abase.
 28 For You light my lamp;
 The LORD my God illumines my darkness.
 29 For by You I can run upon a troop;
 And by my God I can leap over a wall.
 30 As for God, His way is blameless;
 The word of the LORD is tried;
 He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.
 31 For who is God, but the LORD?
 And who is a rock, except our God,
 32 The God who girds me with strength
 And makes my way blameless?
 33 He makes my feet like hinds' [feet],
 And sets me upon my high places.
 34 He trains my hands for battle,
 So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
 35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation,
 And Your right hand upholds me;
 And Your gentleness makes me great.
 36 You enlarge my steps under me,
 And my feet have not slipped.

Verse 27 can be seen as the final conclusion of verses 20-26. The verse is also the transition to the next section. Beginning in verse 27, the glorious consequences of the work of the Lord Jesus are told. In the previous section He was delivered, in the coming section He is the Deliverer. We also hear in these verses a wonderful testimony of the Spirit of Christ in the believing remnant of Israel in the end time. This remnant receives from Christ, Who unites Himself to them in the Spirit, strength in the great tribulation to endure and overcome against all enmity.

After David has told us Who God is and how He has acted in the rescues, he sings in verses 27-36 about Who God is to him. In verse 27 we hear how David attributes salvation to God and not to his own military skills. The emphasis is on “You”, which is God. He speaks of himself and those who are with him as “an afflicted people”. There is no boast, but the sense of great helplessness. He was a weak man who was totally dependent on God’s help to be saved from his enemies. Opposite to his misery is the pride of his enemies. He knows that God humiliates them for this reason.

That his lamp lights, he owes to God (verse 28). Here too the emphasis is on “You”. *God* did it, not he. With his “lamp” he can mean his light of life. God has ensured that there is still, or again, light in his life. Through Him, Whom he calls “my God”, the darkness has disappeared and the sky has been cleared. God has come in darkness in judgment for His enemies, with the result that the darkness that His enemies caused has been cleared up.

It is no longer about saving David, but about a counterattack. The circumstances have changed. Now David is going to pursue and destroy his enemy. Prophetically, we are dealing with a situation just before the realm of peace when the faithful remnant will first be saved and then used to destroy the last enemies (Mic 5:4-8).

Because God came to him and was with him, he was able to break through the hostile troop of armies that had surrounded him (verse 29). He has been able to fight and overcome because God was with him. He also says “by You”. By Him, Whom he again calls “my God”, he also can leap over a wall. When God is with you, no obstacle is too high. We can think here of an entrenchment that his enemies had built to protect themselves and prevent a further breakthrough if he had broken through the first lines. Thus every victory leads back to God. He gets all the glory and it also belongs only to Him.

The way of persecution and battle is not the way he chose for himself. God determined that way for him, because it served to educate him. Now that he stands behind that way and looks back, he cannot help but say: “As for God, His way is blameless” (verse 30). To declare God’s way blameless or perfect is the secret of resting in Him. If we can say this with our hearts, we are sure that God is not out of control.

Added to that, we may remember that God's way is always parallel to His Word. That is what the second line of verse 30 says. His word "is tried", perfectly pure. With silver and gold, purification takes place by heating these metals in fire multiple times, to purify them. Each time, impurities are removed. With God's Word, the fire is only there to prove and demonstrate that it is completely pure.

The purity of God's Word has been tried in many ways throughout the ages, but always found to be perfectly pure. It is reliable through and through. It has never been otherwise, but every test of purity, every attack on it, provides additional proof of its reliability time and again. We can trust it. God never deviates from His Word. He always acts, whether with the single person or with His people as a whole, in accordance with what He has said.

It may happen that we encounter surprises in the way we go. Often the cause is that we do not know God's Word, in which He tells us how He sees things, or we have forgotten what He tells us in it. When we surrender to God in the way He goes with us as the best way and we trust in His Word, we take refuge with Him and He proves Himself to be "a shield".

We see in this verse 30 that God gives us some special tools by which He encourages us. His way is a way in which you never err; His Word is full of His promises that never fail; He Himself is like a shield through which we need not fear any enemy (cf. Gen 15:1). Let us make use of these tools again and again.

The descriptions of the goodness of God lead the psalmist to exclaim: "Who is God, but the LORD?" (verse 31). This is more than a rhetorical question. It is a Hebrew form of solemn assurance, meaning that there is absolutely no god besides the LORD. The answer to the question, "who is a rock, except our God?" is of similar tenor: 'There is absolutely no other rock, but only our God' (Exo 15:11; Deu 33:26; 1Sam 2:2; Isa 45:5a).

In verses 32-36, the psalmist explains why God is incomparable, comparable to no one. It is God Who "girds" him "with strength" (verse 32; cf. Job 40:7). He does not have to make his way out of need in his own strength. God "makes" his "way blameless". He does not have to figure out for him-

self which way to choose. God helps to carry out his plans so that they will succeed.

God makes it so that his “feet” are like those of hinds (verse 33). Hinds have the ability to navigate impassable rock formations with playful ease. In doing so, they are quick and agile with a special intuition for danger. In line with this, David says that God sets him upon his “high places”. There he is safe, for there he is unreachable for persecutors. This does not mean that he does not have to fight. God “trains” his hands “for battle” (cf. Psa 144:1) so that his “arms can bend a bow of bronze” (verse 34).

God fights for His own. Sometimes He does it *for* them, instead of them (Exo 14:14), but often He does it *through* them, that is, by helping them in their fighting His wars. He trains their hands for that purpose. Not only the strength to fight comes from God, but also all the ability. This also applies to spiritual warfare (2Cor 10:4-5a).

To bend a bronze bow requires additional strength. A bow is the symbol for a fight with an opponent who is far away from you. To eliminate him you need special strength. Then God comes to David’s aid and ensures with His strength that he can keep the bow bend (cf. Gen 49:23-24).

In battle he has been able to count on God’s salvation (verse 35). God gave him His salvation as a shield. His salvation was solid as a rock and was the guarantee of victory. He experienced the support of God’s right hand. As a result, he has remained standing.

David realized that God had dealt with him with “gentleness”. Only because of this did he have all his prosperity in life. He had no claim on it with God. There was no merit with him, no own strength or prowess that made him so exalted. It was all just because God had dealt gently with him. What this means for us is that we must trace all the success in our lives back to its origin: the gentle favor of God.

In his exalted position, God gave him space to walk, without anything lying over which he could stumble (verse 36). All previous distress had vanished, all obstacles that made it difficult for him to go his way had been removed. He could now walk freely. His ankles did not wobble, while he could walk vigorously. It was as if he were a paralytic who had been given strength by God to walk.

Psa 18:37-45 | God Gives the Victory

37 *I pursued my enemies and overtook them,
 And I did not turn back until they were consumed.*
 38 *I shattered them, so that they were not able to rise;
 They fell under my feet.*
 39 *For You have girded me with strength for battle;
 You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.*
 40 *You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me,
 And I destroyed those who hated me.*
 41 *They cried for help, but there was none to save,
 [Even] to the LORD, but He did not answer them.*
 42 *Then I beat them fine as the dust before the wind;
 I emptied them out as the mire of the streets.*
 43 *You have delivered me from the contentions of the people;
 You have placed me as head of the nations;
 A people whom I have not known serve me.*
 44 *As soon as they hear, they obey me;
 Foreigners submit to me.*
 45 *Foreigners fade away,
 And come trembling out of their fortresses.*

In verses 32-36 we see Christ in the picture of David, the risen and glorified Lord, equipped by God for the battle. In the verses which now come before our attention, we see in the picture of David that Christ completely defeats and destroys His enemies (verses 37-42). He then establishes His kingdom on earth and reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (verses 43-46; 1Cor 15:25; Rev 19:11-16; 20:7-10). He is Head of His people and of all the nations. All the nations submit to His rule, even if by many this is done only feignedly, insincerely, hypocritically.

Through the exercise of battle, the sustaining power of God and a broad place for His feet, David is ready to sing of the victory over his enemies. With great speed and power he had pursued and overtaken his enemies (verse 37). He did not turn back until he had destroyed all his enemies. There was no doubt about the outcome of the battle. No enemy remained who had any strength left to resist, let alone defeat him, for he “shattered them, so that they were not able to rise” (verse 38). They fell under his feet,

which means that he completely submitted them to him. It was a complete victory.

He owed that total victory to God. He says so in verses 39-40. God had girded him with strength for battle (verse 39). We are told to fight the good fight of faith (1Tim 6:12). We can also achieve victories in the spiritual fight only if we strengthen ourselves in the power of His strength (Eph 6:10; cf. 2Tim 2:1).

God has subdued under David those who rose up against him. He had forced the enemy to surrender. He had caused his enemies to flee from him (verse 40). A footnote in the Dutch Bible Translation says that of God's dealings with the enemies it literally says "gave for me the neck" of the enemy. The translators have interpreted that as 'showing the neck' or fleeing. But the translation 'giving of the neck' seems to render the meaning better. It means that David could put his foot on the neck of his opponents as proof that he had completely subdued them (cf. Jos 10:24; Gen 49:8).

David completely subdued his enemies. He did not kill everyone on whom he had set his foot. He distinguished between leaders and followers. The leaders were those who hated him. Them he destroyed and thus ended their power and the possibility of organizing another rebellion against him.

In verse 41, David expresses the total helplessness and hopelessness of the defeated enemies. They cried for help, for mercy, to be allowed to live. But there was no one to help them so that their lives might be spared. Even when finally, as a last straw for salvation, they cried to the LORD, they received no answer from Him. God knows that had He saved them, they would reject Him again. There was no sincerity in their cry.

He always answers and saves one who is in need and cries to Him sincerely. We see this with David, whom He answered and saved. God did not answer these enemies because they only wanted to be spared from the sword. They wanted to stay alive. They did not cry to God because of their sinful deeds with the acknowledgment that they did not deserve to stay alive. People who give up their right to life, while acknowledging that they deserve death, find life.

David's enemies got what they deserved. He "beat them fine as the dust before the wind" (verse 42; cf. Dan 2:35,44). His enemies were made into grit, powerless, like dust blown away by the wind in all directions. As powerless as they were, so worthless and vile they were also. He "emptied them out as the mire of the streets". Mire is something that you clear away. It makes you dirty and you take it with you, thereby defiling others and leaving a trail of defilement behind you. That is why you clean away mire. Mire also doesn't offer any grip. David treated his enemies like mire (cf. Isa 10:6).

David was also "delivered" by the LORD "from the contentions of the people" (verse 43). Apart from the fact that his enemies actually fought him, they also tried to indict him. Indictments are a powerful means of demolishing a person's spiritual strength. God did not allow this to happen. He stripped the denunciations of their power by giving David His unconditional support. If God is for someone, who will be against him and be able to bring accusations against him (Rom 8:31,33)?

Instead of letting the contentions do their pernicious work, God "placed" David "as head of the nations". God had not only confirmed him in his kingship over Israel, but also given the nations around Israel under his authority (2Sam 8:1-14). It is prophetically the fulfillment of what is written in Psalm 2 (Psa 2:8). His name and fame extended far beyond the borders of Israel as a result, and every single nation with which he had not been in contact before served him.

The terror for him was so great (cf. Psa 2:8-10), that there was immediate obedience among those nations, as soon as their ear heard of him (verse 44). There was no thought of opposition to him. They were seeking his favor. The "foreigners", those who were not among God's people, feigned submission to David. They bowed with their heads, but not with their hearts. It was a calculated, hypocritical submission. They shuddered at his strength and power. It was honoring out of self-preservation, out of self-love, and not out of love for David. David accepted it, although he knew their hypocrisy. He did not let himself be deceived.

In the prophetic application we see here an indication that not all people who enter the realm of peace are also born again. Many will only submit outwardly to the government of the Lord Jesus (cf. Psa 66:3).

These strangers will eventually be exposed (verse 45). They may persist in hypocrisy for a long time, but the hour of truth will come. They will succumb to the pressure of the truth and come “trembling out of their fortresses”, the places of their own pursuits and security. Because there is no relationship of love with David, they will not have a lasting relationship with him and will miss the ultimate blessing.

Psa 18:46-50 | Giving Thanks to God

46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock;

And exalted be the God of my salvation,

47 The God who executes vengeance for me,

And subdues peoples under me.

48 He delivers me from my enemies;

Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me;

You rescue me from the violent man.

49 Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD,

And I will sing praises to Your name.

50 He gives great deliverance to His king,

And shows lovingkindness to His anointed,

To David and his descendants forever.

David concludes his song with a giving thanks to God. Because God has given Him the strength for the victories, David gives Him all the glory for it. That “the LORD lives” (verse 46), He certainly showed in all His actions in favor of David.

How wonderful it is to know, and to realize as a reality daily in our hearts, that we have a Lord Who lives! He is the living God (Deu 5:26; Jos 3:10; 2Kgs 19:4; Psa 42:2; Mt 16:16; 1Thes 1:9). This is in contrast to the dead idols of the nations. The gods of the nations were not able to help their worshipers. Of course not, because they are not alive. They don’t even exist, they are vanity, emptiness.

Once again David praises the LORD as “my rock”. With that name for God, he began his song (verse 2). In the psalm, David has demonstrated that God is worthy of that name to the fullest. He therefore mentions that name again. God has rescued him from all distress, helped him defeat his enemies, and given him a high position. *God* has done everything as the unshakable rock. At the same time, the end result is thus unshakably fixed. No one will ever be able to change that.

By saying “blessed” or “praised” he also calls on others to praise God for being his rock. The same applies to “exalted be the God of my salvation”. Here it refers to his salvation that God has worked for him. What God has done for him and with him, is also a reason for others to praise Him. David directs his attention to the One Who has been so good to him. It is truly the case that God has done everything. Therefore He alone deserves all the glory.

In verse 47 he addresses God directly as “the God who executes vengeance for me”. David never took the law into his own hands. He left vengeance, or righteous retribution, over the evil done to him to God (Deu 32:35). This principle is also held out to us New Testament believers (Rom 12:19). God has subjected nations to him. God did that by giving David the power to subdue those nations. David is well aware of that. He takes no credit for himself, but gives God all the credit.

The same goes for the deliverance of his enemies and the exalted place he takes above those who rise up against him (verse 48). Instead of being dominated by them, he rules over them. He is exalted; they are humbled. A special word David devotes to “the violent man” from whom God has delivered him. It may be that David is thinking of Saul in this context. It is also possible that he is thinking of his own son Absalom. Prophetically, we can apply this to the antichrist or the king of the North, the Assyrian. Both are men of much violence.

Because of the deliverance he sang about in the previous verses, David says to the LORD in verse 49: “Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O Lord, and I will sing praises to Your name.” Paul quotes this verse to make it clear that the coming of the Lord Jesus – of Whom David

in this psalm is a remarkable picture in so many ways – means blessing not only for Israel, but also for the nations (Rom 15:9).

For God, the work of His Son is so great that He cannot restrict its effects to Israel (Isa 49:6). He wants all nations to share in the mercy that has come to people through Christ and is offered to all people. The result is that God is glorified and exalted everywhere. That is exactly what this verse says and why Paul quotes it. It is about the deliverance of the remnant by God from the hand of the enemy. This deliverance is the occasion for them to confess God's Name among the nations.

David is aware that his “great deliverance” is given to him by God and that it is the result of the “lovingkindness” shown “to His anointed” (verse 50). ‘Lovingkindness’ here is again the translation of the Hebrew word Adonai which means ‘covenant faithfulness’.

From the New Testament, we understand that the LORD can give His blessing in accordance with the covenant because the Mediator of that covenant has fulfilled everything. It is not only *to* Him, it is also *through* Him. This lovingkindness will never fail because in fact it is about the Anointed, the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Man of God's good pleasure. In Him all the promises of God are yes and amen (2Cor 1:20).

Because of “His anointed”, Christ, God will also show lovingkindness “to David and his descendants forever”. What an awesome prospect. God's faithfulness to His Anointed is also the basis for us that God will act in our favor. There is nothing in or of ourselves, everything is from Him and through Him. To Him be all the praise and glory for all eternity!

Psalm 19

Introduction

Now that Christ has been exalted in Psalm 18, we see the multiple glories of Christ in the following six psalms. In Psalm 18, God reveals Himself in the life of David. In Psalm 19, God reveals Himself in two other ways. In this psalm, two books open to us: the book of creation (verses 1b-6) and the book of the law (verses 7-11).

The law here is not the way of justification when obedient to it, but the law as teaching – *torah* means teaching. The law here is synonymous with the Word of God.

In the book of creation we read one time about God, which is God the Creator (verse 1b; cf. Gen 1:1-31; 2:1-3). In the book of the law we read seven times about the LORD, the God of the covenant Who speaks to man and wants to have a relationship with him (cf. Gen 2:4-25).

In both books God reveals Himself and man can come to know Him. They are two different ways in which God reveals Himself. In the created heavens we follow the path of the sun; in the inspired Word we follow the path of the Son, Who is called “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2). We can speak of a revelation in ‘work’ and a revelation in ‘the Word’. In both revelations we see the revelation of the Son. It is about Him in particular in the two following psalms.

The ‘work-revelation’ of God happens through the Son. Scripture is clear about the fact that the Son is the Creator (Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:12-16; Heb 1:1-2). Creation reflects the glory of the Son of God, that is, “His eternal power and divine nature” (Rom 1:20). The ‘Word-revelation’ also happens through the Son. He is the Word Who was in the beginning, Who was with God and Who was God. That “Word became flesh” (Jn 1:1,14). The Son Himself is therefore also the perfect revelation of God, for in Him all the fullness of God dwells in Him bodily (Col 1:19; 2:9). He is God “revealed in the flesh” (1Tim 3:16) and can therefore say: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9).

It is also good to make a distinction between on the one hand the creation and on the other hand the Word and the Son. This distinction is important because we live in a creation on which through sin is a curse (Rom 8:19-22). Creation demonstrates the honor, power, and Divinity of the Creator (Rom 1:20), but it is not a perfect revelation of God. The Word and the Son are, however, a perfect revelation of God. Neither of them is in any way connected to sin. Through both, through the Word and through the Son, we come to know the different features of God, such as His love and grace and His holiness and righteousness.

Prophetically, this is about the period when the church has been caught up and the time for the message of the gospel of God's grace has passed. Nevertheless, even then God still gives a double testimony through

1. the everlasting gospel – in it is announced that God is the Creator (Rev 14:6-7) and
2. the gospel of the kingdom – which is the teaching of God from the Old Testament.

The psalmist looks at the revelation of God in the world of nature. This revelation is denied to God by people who have made up the theory of evolution as a substitute for creation and the source origin of life. This fabrication is completely ignored by the psalmist in his song of praise. He knows and acknowledges God as the Creator (Heb 11:3).

The revelation of God in creation is characterized by beauty. This is reflected in the language of Psalm 19. It is one of the most beautiful poems ever written, the beauty of which is especially evident in its original language, Hebrew.

Psa 19:1-6 | The Message of Creation

- 1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.*
- 2 Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.*
- 3 There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard.*

*4 Their line has gone out through all the earth,
 And their utterances to the end of the world.
 In them He has placed a tent for the sun,
 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber;
 It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.
 6 Its rising is from one end of the heavens,
 And its circuit to the other end of them;
 And there is nothing hidden from its heat.*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

The first part of the song, which is about God’s revelation in creation, has two topics: the heavens (verses 1b-4a) and the sun (verses 4b-6). The sun is the most important celestial body. The second part of the song is about the Word and the Son. The Son is the Object of God’s good pleasure, the core and content of the Word.

The psalmist treats the subject of creation not as a technical discourse, but as the revelation of God’s power and majesty. It brings us into the presence of the great God and leads us to praise and worship.

The testimony of God in creation is specially that of heaven. The earth has lost much of its original beauty due to man’s sin, rendering God’s work less clearly visible. Certainly, from and through creation God’s “eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen” (Rom 1:20). As a result, man can come to know Him, that is, in His existence (Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-31). Creation is like a window through which man can perceive the Being and action of God in time.

We can say that God’s majesty in creation is most evident through the heavens as His work of creation. David lived as a shepherd under the open sky, day and night. The heavens are not visibly tarnished by man’s sin, as is the case with the earth, which no longer gives its full yield and has lost much of its original brilliance (Gen 3:17-19; 4:12). In addition, God’s glory through heaven as a storyteller goes over the whole earth and is not limited to Israel. As a result, the nations also hear God’s voice. We hear more about that in verse 4.

Through “the heavens” and “their expanse” (verse 1b) we get an impression of the unlimitedness of God, Who is truly unlimited, while the heavens and the expanse are not. We therefore also get an impression of the source of light, and therefore of life. We also get an impression of the order and regularity that marks God, and therefore of the signs that mark time: by the sun of the year, by the moon of the month, and by the day-and-night rhythm of earth’s rotation.

The heavens and the expanse are the area where God has given place to the sun, the moon, and the stars (Gen 1:14-19). When we look at the sky, at whatever time of day or night, these lights in the sky tell God’s glory, they show His glory. They are on the expanse of heaven, making that expanse declare “the work of His hands”. His fingers placed them there (Psa 8:3). They are, as it were, His signature on His workmanship. The temporal forms of the verbs “telling” and “declaring” indicate that they are doing this continuously, unceasingly.

That this proclamation is present “day to day” and “night to night” confirms that it always goes on, without interruption (verse 2). There is, however, variety. The cycle of day and night contributes to the regularity of the seasons and therefore to the regularity of the agricultural calendar (Gen 8:22). Because of the rapid change of days, there is abundant speaking. It is a day by day speaking of God. Each new day adds a new speaking of God to the previous speaking through the previous day.

People in the past have idolized the sun. Today they explain the Creator away by the teaching of evolution. Without paying the slightest attention to the foolish theory of evolution, the psalmist in Psalm 19 lets creation declare God’s glory as Creator. The supposedly scientifically proven theory of evolution is silenced by this speaking of God. The person who watches carefully sees that knowledge is revealed. Certainly this includes knowledge concerning God, but especially knowledge of His wisdom which He reveals in His creation (Pro 8:22-31).

As already noted, the testimony of God in creation and particularly through the heavens and the expanse is a general testimony that goes over the entire world. It should not surprise us, therefore, that Paul quotes this verse in connection with the preaching of the Word of God (Rom 10:18).

In doing so, he proves that God had a preaching ministry for the Gentiles in the Old Testament as well, so that they might come to know about God and to believe in Him. It also shows that the testimony of God that emanates from creation is not limited to Israel, but can be observed all over the world.

Verses 4b-6 are about the sun, while David speaks of the moon and stars in Psalm 8, where he is also impressed by creation (Psa 8:3). The sun is vital to life on earth. The sun is metaphorically represented as a person. The Lord Jesus is called "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2). The sun is a special reference to Christ. Therefore, the creation is fundamentally about the glory of Christ, the Son of God.

God has placed "in them", that is, "to the end of the world", "a tent for the sun" (verse 4b). The tent symbolically represents the night residence of the sun. From it the sun rises. Each day that the sun rises, its appearance gives witness to the presence of Christ. Untouchable to anything on earth, He goes through the day proclaiming that He exists. It takes faith to see that.

In a brilliant way, David portrays the rising of the sun as it appears from its "tent". He compares the sun to "a bridegroom coming out of his chamber" and to "a strong man" who rises joyfully "to run his course" (verse 5). The "bridegroom" rises from his room to go to his bride, which is a great joy for him. He is sung to by the guests. The "strong man" is cheerful. Vigorous and confident, he sets out to run his race.

In verse 6, David describes the path that the sun is fast walking. The path begins "at one end of the heavens". There "is its rising". It continues "its circuit", its fast walk along the expanse, until it reaches "the other end" and goes back behind the horizon into the tent God has set up for it. During its circuit, it shines everywhere with the glow of its sunbeams, with which it also warms the earth.

Just as nothing is hidden from its glow, so also no one is hidden from the testimony of the eternal gospel that speaks from creation (cf. Rev 14:6-7). Everyone can know that God exists and realize that he will have to answer to Him (cf. Col 1:23b).

The circuit of the sun is not described in scientific, but in poetic language. This is also how man speaks of it in his everyday language. We know that

the sun stands still and the earth revolves around it, but for our perception the earth stands still and the sun revolves. Thus David describes here the rising and setting of the sun and its circuit along the sky.

Psa 19:7-11 | The Message of the Law

*7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.
10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.*

After the voice of nature comes the voice of Scripture. The second testimony that God gives of Himself is the law (*torah*), His Word which means teaching or instruction. In this too we see all the more and all the clearer the glory of Christ. He is the Word of God that was with God (Jn 1:1). “The Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14), which is Christ when He comes to earth. Then we hear Him speak and He makes God known.

In connection with the law, David speaks of God as “the LORD”, while in connection with creation he speaks of Him as God (verse 1b). As the LORD (Yahweh), He is in connection with man in faithfulness to His covenant; as God (*Elohim*), He is in connection with all of His creation. The name *Elohim* speaks of God’s power as Creator. We also see this in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. Genesis 1 speaks of God; in Genesis 2, where man has his place in creation and God is at work with him, it is always Yahweh *God*.

The law was given to one people, Israel. God has made Himself known to His people as the LORD, the God of the covenant especially with that people, with the intention that this people shall be a blessing to all nations. As mentioned above, the name LORD is used as soon as the relationship of God with man is involved. This means that we see the law here in connection with the conscience of every person, Jew or Gentile. The Gentiles are

not under the law. Yet the work of the law is written in their conscience. We have in Romans 1 God's testimony in creation (Rom 1:19-20) and in Romans 2 the work of the law in the conscience (Rom 2:14-15). That is the same order as here in Psalm 19.

Creation does show that there is a Creator, but it does not explain how it originated, nor the reason for its existence. The law, or Scripture, does what the sky, the expanse, and the sun cannot do. Scripture explains the origin of all things and also why they were made.

David describes the law by several names that are synonyms. These synonyms reappear in the song of praise about God's Word in Psalm 119, but we also find them throughout the book of Psalms. These synonyms show that the law reveals more of God than what creation reveals of God.

David does not speak technically and detachedly about the Word. He cannot do that. He speaks of it in a song of praise. In six statements he explains the Word and discusses its effect on man (verses 7-9). He speaks of

1. "the law",
2. "the testimony",
3. "the precepts",
4. "the commandment",
5. "the fear of the LORD" and
6. "the judgments".

To this he links various features, which apply to the complete Word of God and to God Himself from Whom the law comes and about Whom it is all about in the law.

He first speaks of "the law of the LORD" as the totality of directions, instructions and teachings that the LORD has given to Israel in various ways, especially through Moses (verse 7). The purpose of this instruction is that the instruction (*torah*) of the Word is adopted, in the heart (Psa 37:31).

"The law" is the totality of the written revelation of God in the Old Testament. He says of it that it is "perfect", that is, it lacks nothing and is flawless, free from all error. The law in this capacity "restores the soul". This has the meaning of invigorating (Psa 23:3), giving new life force. It means that people are brought to the right path by it.

Next, the law, or Word, is called “the testimony of the LORD”. That speaks of speaking of God as a witness does in a trial. It is about earnestly testifying to the truth. If my heart goes out to the Word of God as His testimony, I will thereby be kept from wrong motives, for example, from dishonest gain (Psa 119:36). I don’t need that anymore.

The feature “sure” is associated with this. That the law is sure is shown by the fact that it is “making wise the simple”. “The simple” is the young, inexperienced man, someone without life experience. What he needs to live his life to the glory of God is wisdom. This is given to him in “the testimony of the LORD” with penetrating solemnity. To benefit from it he will have to read in it.

The law consists of “the precepts of the LORD” (verse 8). The word “precepts” occurs exclusively in Psalms (twenty-four times). God gives His precepts that they should be kept “diligently” (Psa 119:4). It is not hard to observe them, for these commands rejoice the heart, David says here in verse 8, they give joy.

The word “precepts” is in the plural because it refers to imperative instructions for the many areas of life. In all decisions and actions we must be guided by them. It has to do with our responsibility to obey all God’s precepts. If we do so, we know that we are on God’s path, which means we live in fellowship with Him, which gives joy to the heart.

By “the commandment of the LORD” we can think of something God has explicitly commanded us to do. Here His authority has the emphasis. The Hebrew word *mitsvat* means the Divine rules and spiritual laws in all areas of life. In Psalm 18 it is translated “statutes” (Psa 18:22). It is the totality of God’s will in our lives. These commandments give light to our eyes, making us see things as God sees them.

What He commands is always “pure”. It is always without any ulterior motive. He means what He says. Pure also means that it purifies and therefore enlightens the eyes. When we do what He commands, it “enlightens” our “eyes”. We will gain insight into the way we are to go.

David also calls the law “the fear of the LORD” (verse 9). This is not about anxiety, but about reverence, awe. That fear “is clean”, pure (Psa 12:6), without ulterior motive and therefore genuine. It is not a hypocritical awe,

or awe only on a particular occasion. Nothing changes in that awe either, the awe always remains the same, it is “enduring forever”. The awe, the reverence for God and what He has said, will always remain because He never changes (Jam 1:17).

Finally, David says of the law that it is “the judgments of the LORD” which “are true”. These are judicial pronouncements that He makes on each person and his entire doings. His judgments are commandments with the force of a judicial pronouncement. The believer who loves Him will keep His commandments quickly and with love (Psa 119:60).

God’s judgments “are true”, without any mendacity or error. They are “true”, and therefore “righteous”. They are in perfect accord with the thoughts of God. All the judgments form a unity, “they are righteous altogether”. They are fair, each one getting what is due to him.

The effect of the judgments makes them “more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold” (verse 10). The law gives a wealth that far exceeds the value of gold (Psa 119:127). The law also gives an enjoyment that is “sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb”. Honey from the comb is honey that drips naturally from the comb. It is the purest and freshest honey. Gold is the most desirable precious metal of ancient times, and honey the sweetest of all the foods known at that time. Here we are talking about the superlative, about purified gold and fresh honey. The law rises far above both.

After David has thus sung the value of the law in various words, he speaks to the LORD about His law (verse 11). He testifies to the effect of the Word in his own life by allowing himself to be instructed by the Word. He tells the LORD what the law means to him.

It is significant that he, who is king, in speaking to the LORD calls himself “Your servant”. This he also does in verse 13. It is an honorary title for him, one that Isaiah also uses in his book for the Son of David: the Servant of the LORD. The fact that David calls himself thus indicates the state of mind necessary to see the full benefit of the law and to have the desire to live by it.

A servant is aware of his place before his lord. He must obey. From this awareness of submission, the law is full of warnings for him not to deviate

from it. At the same time, there is in him the awareness that “in keeping them there is great reward”. There is no forced obedience, but obedience out of love and with joy.

Its reward is not in the future, at the end of the path, but is enjoyed now. The great reward lies in listening to and acting on the law, which is listening to and acting on the Word of God. That gives the joy of fellowship with the Giver of the Word. For us, keeping the commandments and the words of the Lord Jesus gives an even richer reward (Jn 14:21,23).

Psa 19:12-14 | Prayer for a Holy Life

12 Who can discern [his] errors? Acquit me of hidden [faults].

13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous [sins];

Let them not rule over me;

Then I will be blameless,

And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer.

The psalmist has been reflecting on God’s greatness in creation and in His Word. This leads him to statements about himself in his relationship to God and God’s revelation. In Psalm 8, where he also looks at the heaven and is impressed by it, the result is that he sees how insignificant man is (Psa 8:4). Here, in Psalm 19, the greatness of God in creation and in Scripture leads to the recognition of man’s sinfulness. An encounter with the LORD brought Job to self-knowledge (Job 42:5-6). An encounter with the Lord Jesus brought Peter to self-knowledge (Lk 5:4-8).

This effect is what the instruction of God’s Word has on David as well as on us. Just as there is nothing on earth hidden from the glow of the sun (verse 6), so there is no one hidden from the Word of God, which brings everything to light. To Him, “all things are open and laid bare” (Heb 4:12-13). Here it is not about fear of punishment, but about being afraid to have to miss the joyful fellowship with God because of the presence of sin. He does not want anything to come between him and God (cf. Psa 139:23-24).

David realizes through the instruction of the Word of God that God knows him down to the very bottom of his heart. Therefore, he adds some important aspects that have to do with his own relationship with God. He speaks of hidden sins, confession, cleansing and being acquitted of great transgression (verses 12-13).

He looks at sin from two points of view. First, he is aware that he is not able to name all his sins. He doesn't recognize them enough for that (verse 12). Who will dare to claim that he has not committed unconscious sins when he, like David, has been impressed by the majesty of God in creation and by His omniscience through His Word that examines hearts? Those who are aware of this will not speak highly of their sinlessness, as taught in the extreme sanctification doctrine.

It is important to be aware of nothing, but that does not mean we are justified by it (1Cor 4:4). The awareness of God's majesty and omniscience will keep us humble. At the same time, there will be the desire to be cleansed from hidden sins. This is what David is asking for. For unintentional sins, the law offers reconciliation and forgiveness (Lev 4:2,13; Num 15:22-31).

Secondly, David sees the terribleness of presumption, the sin of pride (verse 13). He longs to be kept back from it. Pride is the primal sin. Pride means wanting to be like God. David abhors the thought of committing that sin. It shows self-knowledge that he realizes he is capable of it and prays for the LORD to keep him back from it, so that it will not rule over him.

If he is kept from that sin, he will be blameless, sincere, and "acquitted of great transgression". Pride is not just any sin, it is a terrible sin, it is a willful sin. His prayer to be acquitted of it or to remain free from it means that he is not guilty of committing that sin.

David finishes the psalm with the desire that the words that come out of his mouth and the meditations that he has in his heart will be acceptable or pleasing to the LORD (verse 14). He is not concerned only with his outward words or only with his inward piety, but with both aspects of his person. To make this true, he addresses God as his rock, his solid foundation and as his Redeemer, Who in His grace has redeemed him from his

sins. The rock refers to Christ (1Cor 10:4) Who had to be stricken so that the water of life can flow freely to all who thirst.

David returns here to his starting point in Psalm 18, where he spoke of the rock (Psa 18:2). He loves the LORD (Psa 18:1b) and longs to be acceptable or pleasing to Him (Psa 19:14).

The Hebrew word for “Redeemer” here is *go’el*. This is an indication that God had to become Man, for *go’el* is a family member, that is, a man. God the Creator (verses 1-6) had to become God the Redeemer (verses 7-14). How the latter took place is explained in Psalm 32.

Psalm 20

Introduction

This psalm is the elaboration of the last call of the previous psalm: the "LORD my rock and my Redeemer" (Psa 19:14). After God's testimonies in the life of a believer in Psalm 18 and in creation and the law or the Word of God in Psalm 19, this psalm gives us another testimony that God gives about Himself. Here we have God's testimony concerning His Son.

This testimony comes from the mouth of the subjects of God's anointed king, David, in whom we see a picture of the Lord Jesus. They wish David all the help and blessing of the LORD, Yahweh, to prevail in the wars he must fight. Like Psalm 2, Psalm 20 and Psalm 21 are kingly psalms.

Psalm 20 and Psalm 21 are closely connected. In Psalm 20 the king is the representative of the LORD and in Psalm 21 he is the representative of the people. Psalm 20 is an intercession, Psalm 21 is a song of thanksgiving. Psalm 20 is full of expectation and Psalm 21 is full of joy.

Psalm 20 beautifully expresses the solidarity between the people and their king. The reason is that they are both involved in seeking the favor of God. The people recognize in the anointed king the envoy of God by whom He wants to give His favor to His people. He represents God to the people. At the same time, he represents the people to God, which is further highlighted in the following psalm. What the king does for God is imputed to the whole people.

The historical reason for this prayer is not clear. This psalm has been adapted by the Holy Spirit to apply prophetically as much as possible to the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 2:25-32; Psa 16:8-9). The picture here is not of a king with a mighty army, but of a king who, like David against Goliath, goes alone against the enemy. Thus, the Lord Jesus will fight the battle against the enemy alone (Rev 19:15; Isa 63:3) and gain the victory. This victory is based on the offering He brought on the cross. He is the King-Priest Who both achieves the victory and has brought the offerings to God.

Here in David we see another picture of God's anointed King, the Messiah Jesus, who is also Yahweh Himself. No one but He is able to exercise God's kingship in a way that the kingship fully responds to Who God is. It is a kingship that is exercised utterly righteously. In the process, all wickedness, the unbelieving mass, is judged. The result is that the righteous, the faithful remnant, are redeemed and enjoy the blessing of the realm of peace.

Psa 20:1-4 | Wishes for the King

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble!

May the name of the God of Jacob set you [securely] on high!

2 May He send you help from the sanctuary

And support you from Zion!

3 May He remember all your meal offerings

And find your burnt offering acceptable! Selah.

4 May He grant you your heart's desire

And fulfill all your counsel!

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "a Psalm of David" see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm begins with "answer" and "in the day of trouble" (verse 1b) and ends with "answer" and "in the day we call" (verse 9). We can think of this psalm as a prayer of the people for the king as he goes to war. It is a prayer made in the form of a wish for the king – which we see from the word "may", which is used over and over again. The king is addressed here by his people.

In the prophetic meaning, we hear here the faithful remnant speaking to the Messiah. They ask answering for Him "in the day of trouble" (verse 1b). It shows the deep interest that there is in the heart of the God-fearing regarding Christ's sorrow and suffering on earth. This prayer, this intercession, is laid by the Spirit of Christ in the heart of David as the representative of all who have waited for salvation, that is, the believing remnant.

All of Christ's days on earth were days of trouble. He was a Man of sorrows (Isa 53:3). He had His own sorrows and He bore the sorrows of others

(Isa 53:4). He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He was continually harassed by the scribes and Pharisees and was grieved over the hardening of their hearts (Mk 3:5). He shed tears at the tomb of Lazarus because of the consequences of sin (Jn 11:35). His soul was greatly grieved at Gethsemane by the prospect of being made sin (Mk 14:33b-34).

When the remnant is in tribulation, they know that the Messiah is with them and intercedes for them. He has connected with them and knows their feelings and shares in them: "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa 63:9). Therefore, they wish Him whatever serves for their deliverance. When they pray for an answer, it is through the Spirit of Christ praying in them.

Their wish and prayer is that "the name of the God of Jacob" will "set" Him "[securely] on high!" "On high" means a place that is unreachable by the enemy, a place where someone is 'untouchable'. It is the high rock of Psalm 19 (Psa 19:14). The "name" of God (Num 6:27) is associated with the blessing and peace of God (Num 6:24-26). The "name of the God of Jacob" is LORD, Yahweh, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exo 3:13-14), the God of the promises.

Three times in this psalm the remnant appeals to "the name" (verses 1b,5,7). Here is the first time. That God is "the God of Jacob" indicates that He will fulfill all the promises He has made to Jacob, despite the many times Jacob has been unfaithful. This is a great encouragement to the remnant who are also aware of their own unfaithfulness. It is also a great encouragement to us, who are also so often unfaithful, that God will fulfill all His promises. The place on high gives the assurance that no one can make His king or anyone of His own miss the fulfillment of His promises.

The wish or prayer for His protection indicates that the Lord Jesus is seen here as Man. Only as Man He can be associated with people. At the same time, He is and remains in His Person also the eternal God. He Who became Man is also the God of Jacob. We cannot fathom this mystery of His Person (Mt 11:27a), but we can accept, admire and worship it in faith. We encounter this mystery, which we have also seen before in Psalms, again and again. As Man, He is completely dependent on the help of God. He

counts on that help in confidence. The remnant knows this through the Spirit of Christ working in them.

This also applies to the wish that help will be sent to Him “from the sanctuary” and that God will “support Him from Zion” (verse 2). His help does not come from men, but from Zion, where He has made His Name dwell as an earthly representation of His heavenly dwelling place (Deu 12:5; 14:23). God, by His help and support, shows His presence on behalf of His Anointed, His chosen King. In doing so, He at the same time shows His favor toward His people. Yahweh, the LORD, goes out before His people as in the days of old (Exo 15:13,17).

The remnant reminds God of all the offerings His King has offered Him (verse 3). Offerings are the basis for victory. In the offerings, the LORD first receives His portion and then He gives the victory (1Sam 7:10). The Lord Jesus did not offer literal offerings. David did. With respect to the Lord Jesus, these offerings speak of Himself. These offerings are fulfilled in Him (Heb 10:5-9).

The meal offering, a non-bloody, voluntary offering (Lev 2:1-16), represents His life on earth that was fully committed to God. The burnt offering, a bloody, voluntary sacrifice (Lev 1:1-17), represents His perfect surrender to God on the cross. His offering in all its aspects is the basis for the answer to prayer.

It says “meal offerings”, plural. This indicates that every single act, every single word, every single thought of the Lord Jesus is utterly dedicated to God. He can say at the age of twelve that He is always in the things of His Father (Lk 2:49). The “burnt offerings” – also “burnt offerings” is literally in the plural – indicate that also all aspects of His work on the cross are perfect before God. He offered the offering of His life once for all, so that we are sanctified once for all (Heb 10:10).

The remnant knows the desire of the Messiah’s heart and wishes that this desire will be granted (verse 5). In Psalm 21 we see the answer to this prayer (Psa 21:2). They can ask because they know that the only desire of which His heart is full is the glorification of God. They pray to God to fulfill all the purposes that the Messiah has to achieve that goal. All that the Lord Jesus has done and will do has been fulfilled. He has glorified God

and will continue to do so until the complete will of God is accomplished and also always thereafter.

Psa 20:5-8 | Assurance of the Answer

*5 We will sing for joy over your victory,
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.*

*6 Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven
With the saving strength of His right hand.*

*7 Some [boast] in chariots and some in horses,
But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.*

*8 They have bowed down and fallen,
But we have risen and stood upright.*

In verse 5, it is evident that the believing remnant does not doubt that their prayer will be answered, which was inspired in them by the Spirit of Christ. They see by faith that the Messiah will return from His battle as Victor (cf. Isa 63:1-6). Therefore, they set up the banners as a sign of victory. A banner is placed on a conquered territory. Here they are many banners, for the victories will be numerous. The reign of God's King will be established everywhere.

The banners are set up "in the name of our God". The remnant is thereby saying that the God of their King is also their God. They give God all the glory for all the victories of their King. This means that they will also give their King that honor, for He is their God (cf. Psa 44:4). In connection to that, they do not ask the LORD for victory for His chosen King, but that He will fulfill all His petitions. All His petitions have the glorification of God as their goal.

In verse 6, the psalmist speaks as the mouth of the believing remnant. Based on the prayer and desires in his heart, he expresses his confidence that the LORD will save His Anointed. The expression "now I know" means "I have come to the conclusion that" (cf. Exo 18:11; 1Kgs 17:24). The word "save" is closely related to the word for victory. It means that David

or the believing remnant is convinced that the LORD gives His Anointed the victory.

The Anointed is given victory on the basis of His prayer to God in “His holy heaven”. His LORD will answer Him by fighting for His King “with the saving strength of His right hand”. Thus God has heard His Anointed by raising Him from the dead by the power of “His right hand”. This is His first mighty act of salvation. Countless more mighty acts of salvation will follow as He raises all who belong to Christ from the dead by the power of His right hand (1Cor 15:20-23).

In verse 7, the remnant speaks again. They speak the same language of faith as the Messiah and join in what He has just said. First, they point to the resources that the opponents rely on. The Israelite kings may not own many horses (Deu 17:16). They must learn to rely on God’s strength, for in themselves they are weak. God’s power is accomplished in weakness (2Cor 12:9). The faithful call to mind and make mention of the name of God, which means that God is with them (Psa 121:2). The word “[boast]” is not in the original text, but has been added for the sake of readability, indicated by the square brackets. It is derived from the word “boast” in verse 7b, which literally is “make mention of”; or “praise the name”.

There are those who make mention of their trust “in chariots”, while others make mention of their trust “in horses” (cf. Isa 31:1-3). These are poor, not to say ridiculous means compared to the One in Whom they trust. Pharaoh experienced this (Exo 15:1,3-4).

But “we”, the remnant says emphatically, “will make mention of the name of the LORD our God” (cf. 1Sam 17:45). It involves remembering or thinking about “the name”, which is all that that Name contains.

The opposite result of trust is described in verse 8. The two parties are sharply contrasted by an emphatic “they” and an emphatic “we”. “They”, that is, those who trust in chariots and horses, are forced to bow down, that is, bend their knees, before Him Who has overcome them (Phil 2:9-11). Then they fall down, without ever getting up again. It is written here in the prophetic past tense, which means that it is stated as an accomplished fact, while in reality it still has to happen. That is how certain the outcome is.

The same applies to 'we', that is the faithful remnant, but in complete contrast to the enemies. They seemed to have bowed down before the enemy and have fallen down. They also felt as though they were doomed, but they "have risen and stood upright". It gives the picture of a resurrection from the dead and entering into life.

Psa 20:9 | The Call for Salvation

9 *Save, O LORD;*

May the King answer us in the day we call.

As this last verse reads here, is a possible translation is. Yet it might be better to translate it with: "Save the king, O LORD. Answer us in the day we call" (this is how the Septuagint has translated this verse). Here we hear the remnant calling to the LORD. They are asking the LORD to deliver Him, their Messiah, by giving Him the victory (verse 6). This brings us back to verses 1b-4, where the people are interceding that the LORD will help the King in His battle.

Psalm 21

Introduction

Psalm 21 continues the subject of Psalm 20. Both psalms belong together. They are both about God's anointed King. Psalm 20 is a prayer for the King's victory (Psa 20:2). Psalm 21 sings of and celebrates the victory that has been won (Psa 21:1b-2).

The psalm begins with the joy of the King (verse 1b) and ends with the joy of the remnant (verse 13). Verses 2-6 are a psalm of thanksgiving; verse 7 speaks of the example of the King's confidence, which is followed in verses 8-12 by the confidence of the remnant.

Psa 21:1-7 | Reward for the King

*1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad,
And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!*

*2 You have given him his heart's desire,
And You have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.*

*3 For You meet him with the blessings of good things;
You set a crown of fine gold on his head.*

*4 He asked life of You,
You gave it to him,
Length of days forever and ever.*

*5 His glory is great through Your salvation,
Splendor and majesty You place upon him.*

*6 For You make him most blessed forever;
You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.*

*7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "a Psalm of David" see at Psalm 3:1.

David, “the king”, knows that victory is a gracious gift from the LORD, which he owes to His power (verse 1b). A victory is not due to his own strength or military acumen (Psa 20:7). The achieved victory means that God has given him His salvation. About this “he will rejoice”.

Here we also hear the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, speaking, Who is glad and rejoices in all His victories because therein becomes visible what Yahweh has done. It is here about the final victory, about the time when God has put all the enemies of the Lord Jesus under His feet (Psa 110:1-6). Here we also hear the voice of the remnant. The Spirit of Christ works in the remnant the feelings that correspond to the feelings of Christ.

In the previous psalm, the remnant prayed that the desire of the heart of the Messiah will be fulfilled (Psa 20:4). That desire is perfectly consistent with the will of God. By the Spirit, the remnant now says that Yahweh has given that desire to the Messiah and has not withheld “the request of his lips” from Him (verse 2; Psa 20:1b; cf. Jn 12:27-28).

Having trusted in God, after His victory – which He achieved on His own, without help from others (Isa 63:5-6) – God immediately approaches Him with rich blessings (verse 3; cf. Jn 13:31-32). This recalls the blessing with which Melchizedek blessed Abraham after his victory over the kings of the east (Gen 14:18-20). It also recalls the designation by God of the Lord Jesus as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek after His victory on the cross (Heb 5:10).

God also gives Him a beautiful crown of pure gold on His head (Heb 2:9). By this He guarantees the continuation of the kingship of David. What He gives to His Son keeps its value forever. The Son deserved and received the eternal kingship promised to Him (Lk 1:32-33).

God has also given His Messiah the long life that the Messiah desired of Him (verse 4). This is life with a “length of days” that has no end (Isa 53:10c). It is life “forever and ever”. This is the life given to the Lord Jesus in the resurrection in answer to His supplication in view of His impending death (Heb 5:7). God speaks of this to David when David wants to build a dwelling place for Him. God then promises that He will give David a house and a kingship to which there will be no end (2Sam 7:16).

The Messiah is then given glory, splendor and majesty (verse 5), features peculiar belonging to God (Psa 96:6; 104:1). They are given to the Messiah here when entering His kingdom. Yet He need not wait for the actual fulfillment in the realm of peace. For they are already given to Him by God in His glorification with God (Heb 2:9). It is not seen here as a reward for His atoning death, but for His victory over His enemies, who are also God's enemies.

The greatest blessing of all is the great blessing of gladness in God's presence (verse 6). Verse 3 speaks of rich blessings. These have to do with the place of honor He has received. Here God expands on that by saying that He has made His Son "most blessed forever". This being made most blessed is the blessing with which He was blessed and that He is also a blessing to others (cf. Gen 12:2). Thus He has given us the glory that the Father has given Him (Jn 17:22). This is an indescribable blessing to us.

What God says to His Son here rejoices Him with joy. That joy takes its root in the presence of God. When He says "in Your presence", He is saying that He finds the greatest possible satisfaction in the presence of the Father. His presence surpasses all (cf. Psa 17:15).

The Messiah confirms His dedication to Yahweh by expressing His trust in Him (verse 7; Heb 2:13). We see here that the basis of all the blessings that the remnant, and we too, may share with the Lord Jesus is His dependence on God. He has always trusted that the LORD is with Him and that He will fulfill all His promises made to Him.

Because of the structure of Psalm 21, verse 7 is in the middle of the psalm. Verse 1b is a reflection of verse 13 and verses 2-6 are the reflection of verses 8-12.

The response to the Messiah's trust in Him is that "the Most High" upholds Him by His lovingkindness, so that He will not be shaken. Here it is not strength – that is already contained in the name "Most High" – but lovingkindness or favor. Because of His trust, the Most High looks upon Him in lovingkindness and acts with Him on that basis. This simultaneously keeps Him from being shaken.

As has been noted many times, the word "lovingkindness" is the translation of the Hebrew word Adonai. That word implies that God is faithful to

His covenant. We know from the New Testament that God can be faithful to it on the basis of the work of the Mediator of the new covenant, Christ, because He paid the price.

Psa 21:8-13 | Judgment on the Enemies

*8 Your hand will find out all your enemies;
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
9 You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;
The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,
And fire will devour them.
10 Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men.
11 Though they intended evil against You
[And] devised a plot,
They will not succeed.
12 For You will make them turn their back;
You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.
13 Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength;
We will sing and praise Your power.*

In order for the full blessing to be enjoyed, it is necessary for all that are in rebellion against God be judged by the Conqueror of Calvary. In verses 8-13, the remnant is speaking to the King. This is about trusting in the victory that the King, Christ, achieves over the enemy, whereby the King puts His trust in the LORD and the LORD does not shame His trust.

God is performing His work of deliverance with respect to the remnant Himself and does so in and through His Messiah. In the last verse of this section, verse 13, we see this clearly. There they ask the LORD to redeem them by His strength and power, while the Messiah has that strength and power. The cursing and extermination of the enemy are part of God's faithfulness to His covenant. We see this, for example, in what God says to Abraham: "The one who curses you I will curse" (Gen 12:3). By this He is saying, as it were: "The one who despises you, I will destroy."

There is no doubt about God's power and that of His King over the enemies. His "hand", and specially His "right hand" as a picture of power,

will know how to find His enemies, that is, those who hate Him (verse 8). No enemy can hide from Him un-findable. He will seize them in their most hidden hiding place and place them in the light of His judgment.

He will make them “as a fiery oven” as soon as He shows His face to them (verse 9). Here God reveals His wrath. He is furious, as it were. That will happen “in the time” of His “anger”, or the time of His presence, which is the time “when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God” (2Thes 1:7b-8a). Then He shows His face. He is “the LORD” Who “will swallow them up in His wrath”. “The fire shall consume them”, nothing of them will remain on earth.

Not only will they themselves perish in judgment, but also “their offspring”, literally “their fruit” and “their descendants” He will “destroy” them “from the earth, ... from among the sons of men” (verse 10). They will have no successors in evil. There will be no remnant of them left through whom evil could progress or revive. Evil has been eradicated radically, that is, root and all. Truth and righteousness will triumph and never be trampled on again. The Messiah reigns and He is the Friend of truth and righteousness which will be upheld by Him in a perfect way.

In verse 11 the reason for the judgment is mentioned, which we see from the word “though” with which the verse begins. Judgment comes because of the “evil” they have “intended” against the LORD and His Anointed (cf. *Psa 2:2*). This is not about evil deeds, but about devising a plot in their hearts. It proves that they are sinning deliberately, premeditatedly. Several times in the Gospels we read that the leaders were plotting evil against God’s Anointed (*Mt 12:14; 26:4*).

They have “devised a plot”. They do not want Him to be King over them (*Lk 19:14*). Therefore, they have devised all kinds of things to put Him to death. But nothing came of their cunning plan. It proves their folly to do anything against Christ. They devise it all in their pride, while being blind to the fact that “they will not succeed”. If they finally succeed in putting the Lord Jesus to death, it will not be because of their scheming, but because He delivers Himself to them, because it is God’s time for it.

They will not be able to carry out their plans to thwart God because God turns the tables. It is not the Messiah Who is their target, but they are God's target (verse 12). He will "make them turn their back" and "aim with" His "bowstrings at their faces". That He is aiming His bow at their faces means that they are on an advance in His direction. He is not lying in ambush, but is attacking them head-on, with the result described in the preceding verses.

The psalm ends with a prayer that the LORD will exalt Himself in His strength and the promise of the remnant that they will then sing and praise His power (verse 13). The King began in verse 1b by praising the power of the LORD. Then the song of victory sounded.

The song of victory was sung in faith trusting in the LORD. He will do what He promises and fulfill it in His anointed King, Who trusts in Him perfectly. The remnant shares in that confidence and in the certainty that it will be as it was sung. The LORD has helped and it is also certain that He will continue to help.

Yet it still comes down to trusting in faith, because the enemies may be considered defeated for faith, but they are still there. Therefore, the knowledge that things will eventually be all right does not make prayer unnecessary. In fact, this certainty cannot endure in any other way than through prayer alone. This prayer of faith that the remnant prays is therefore completely appropriate.

What matters in the end is that the LORD is glorified. Thus, this psalm ends with the heartfelt desire to exalt Him. This corresponds to the prayer: "Hallowed be Your name" (Mt 6:9).

Psalm 22

Introduction

With this psalm a series of three psalms begins in which we see the Lord Jesus as Shepherd:

1. Psalm 22 speaks of “the good Shepherd”, Who gives His life for His sheep (Jn 10:11).
2. Psalm 23 speaks of “the great Shepherd”, Who was brought back by God from the dead (Heb 13:20-21) and Who leads, feeds and protects His own.
3. Psalm 24 speaks of “the chief Shepherd”, Who will appear in power and reward all who have done a service as a shepherd among His people (1Pet 5:4).

We see the following aspects in the order of these psalms:

Psalm 22 – Psalm 23 – Psalm 24

Past – Present – Future.

Savior – Shepherd – Ruler.

Cross – Staff – Crown.

Golgotha – Green pastures – Zion.

The demand of God’s holiness – The distress of His own – The glory of the Son.

Psalm 22 is unmistakably a Messianic psalm, as evidenced by its quotation in Hebrews 2 (Psa 22:22; Heb 2:12). The entire book of Psalms refers to Him (Lk 24:44), with the Messianic psalms overwhelmingly doing so. Although the psalm is written by David, it is not about David, but about Christ. David, as a prophet, speaks of Him (cf. Acts 2:29-30).

This psalm is about the Savior’s death on the cross. We find here an elaboration of what we have already read in Psalm 20 about “the day of trouble” of the Messiah (Psa 20:1b). We hear Him speak of His inner feelings, of what went on in His innermost being during the hours He hung on the cross. In the Gospels we read mainly about His visible sufferings.

Some of the features mentioned in the psalm show that we are not primarily hearing the experiences of David, but those of the Lord Jesus. When we read in verse 16 “they pierced my hands and my feet”, this is not something what David – at least in a literal sense – experienced. This was done to the Lord Jesus when He was crucified. Death by crucifixion did not yet exist when David wrote this, approximately 1100 BC. The dislocation of the bones also points to crucifixion (verse 14), as does the counting of the bones, which could be done because the crucified person was (mostly) disrobed, while His body was dehydrated (verses 17-18).

The psalm can be divided into two main parts.

1. The first part (verses 1-21a) deals with “the sufferings of Christ” (1Pet 1:11b).
2. The second part (verses 21b-31) deals with “the glories to follow” (1Pet 1:11c).

The Lord Jesus speaks of these two aspects when He explains to two disciples on their way to Emmaus what is written of Him in all the Scriptures: “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Lk 24:26-27). We see this reflected in this psalm: the psalm changes from a lamentation to a song of praise.

Psa 22:1-5 | Why Have You Forsaken Me?

1 For the choir director; upon Aijeleth Hashshahar. A Psalm of David.

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?

Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.

2 O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer;

And by night, but I have no rest.

3 Yet You are holy,

O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

4 In You our fathers trusted;

They trusted and You delivered them.

5 To You they cried out and were delivered;

In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

For “for the choir director” see at Psalm 4:1.

The feelings that David expresses in this psalm are the result of a severe ordeal, about which we know no further details. Yet, as far as we know, there is no event in this psalm that could correspond to actual experiences in his life. What he says transcends his feelings and experiences. The Holy Spirit has led him in such a way that here he prophetically describes the feelings of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

Again, this psalm is not about feelings with which a believer can identify and express his own feelings because of similar experiences. Singing this psalm together is done to sing of the sufferings of the Messiah and to express a deep admiration for Him. It is an expression of feelings aroused by the psalm, not of feelings of personal experiences.

Certainly, a person can feel unutterably miserable and even abandoned by God. This will also be the feeling of the believing remnant during the great tribulation. Many psalms speak of the Savior's suffering in a way that also reflects the suffering of the remnant. Therein lies a comfort for the believer. But in this psalm the suffering is connected to the Savior's work of atonement in which He is alone.

The singing of the psalm is done "upon Aijeleth Hashshahar" which means 'the hind of the dawn'. While the psalm describes the deep darkness of the Savior's unique suffering on the cross, we also find in this heading the loveliness of the hind as the dawn of victory glows. The first rays of sunlight, just before dawn, resemble the horns of the hind. It is here an indication of the beginning of redemption.

David writes this psalm for the choir director. The intention is that others will experience something of the content of this psalm by singing it. The melody is named 'hind of the dawn'. It reminds us of what is written in Song of Songs 6: "Who is this that grows like the dawn?" (Song 6:10). She represents His bride, appearing on the scene on that morning without clouds. Christ, on the cross in the fearful God forsakenness, always thought of her whom He would possess as the fruit of His work. It was an essential part of the joy that was before Him.

It is a gloomy song, but not without hope. This psalm provides the answer to the mystery of why, after the long night of sin and suffering, God allows

a new day – the dawn – to come: it is because the Lord Jesus was made sin on the cross.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm begins in verse 1a at the deepest possible point with an exclamation that is also, as it were, a summary of all the emotions expressed further on. The Lord Jesus exclaimed the words “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me” at the end of the three hours of darkness, after He had completely emptied the cup of God’s anger over sin (Mt 27:45-46; Mk 15:33-34). This is something that no human being, and certainly no believer, has ever experienced, including David.

Christ calls out to God, Whom He addresses as “My God”. He does it twice in a row in this verse, which increases the intensity of His cry. He is the only Man Who in all truth can call God “My God”. This has been so throughout His life, from the womb (verse 10) up to and including the first three hours on the cross. He has always gone His way in fellowship with God. There has never been a whisper of discord in that fellowship.

And that God, with Whom He lived in such close fellowship, had forsaken Him. He did not ask His question about the “why” because He did not know. He knew better than anyone that God cannot have fellowship with sin. God had to leave Him because He made Him sin (2Cor 5:21).

Christ was the true sin offering in these three hours of being forsaken. God had awakened the sword of His judgment against Him, Whom He calls “My Shepherd” and “My Associate” and with Whom He had perfect fellowship in His life on earth (Zec 13:7). What is incomprehensible to us happened in those three hours: “The LORD was pleased to crush Him” (Isa 53:10). This happened as punishment for sin, not His own sin, but substitutionary for the sin of others who accepted His sacrifice.

People in hell will never be able to ask “why” God has forsaken them, because they have never had a living relationship with God. They will also know why they are there. The Righteous One asks “why” God had forsaken Him, so that all who know Him as the true sin offering would answer: “It is because of me.” Christ knew it, but the question should appeal to us.

It is important to remember that the Lord Jesus as *Man* was forsaken by His God. As the eternal Son, He was not forsaken by His Father. Nowhere do we read in God's Word that the Father has forsaken Him. On the contrary, we read that the Father was with Him (Jn 8:29; 16:32; cf. Gen 22:6,8). Never can the eternal Son be forsaken by the eternal Father. Even in the three hours of darkness, when God left His Son as come in the flesh, that is, the Man Christ, the eternal Son had perfect fellowship with the eternal Father. Here we have to do with a mystery which we cannot understand, but which is accepted and admired by faith.

That it concerns the Lord Jesus as Man, we also see from the seven words He spoke on the cross. The first and the last word He introduces with "Father". Here, in Psalm 22, is the fourth word, the middle one of the seven. In it He speaks not to His Father, but to His God.

It is a special exclamation. This verse is uttered here in Hebrew by David. In the quotation in Matthew and Mark it is in Aramaic, together with the translation into Greek (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). This means that this verse appears in all three languages used to write the Bible. This is the only verse in the Bible where this has happened. It emphasizes the importance of this exclamation. Also, that this psalm begins with it makes the importance clear.

After His question of why God has forsaken Him, He asks a second question. That question is why God is far from His deliverance. That God was "far" from His "deliverance" meant for the Lord a fathomless depth of suffering. When there is always a close fellowship with someone, it is immediately felt when there is some distance in that fellowship. Between the Lord Jesus and His God not only some distance had come, but a deep rift through which the distance had become far and unbridgeable. The words of His lamentation sounded like the roaring of a lion ["groaning" is literally "roaring"]. These words, the expressions of one in deep trouble and suffering, were not heard because of the unbridgeable distance. There was no hand to deliver and no ear to hear.

The Lord Jesus cried "by day", but God did not answer (verse 2). He cried "by night", but He had no rest. He continued to cry. He said this during His suffering on the cross. We can think of the "by day" being the first

three hours on the cross, which is from 9-12 am, and the “by night” as being the three hours of darkness on the cross, which is from 12-15 pm. In these hours on the cross, an eternity is compressed.

Despite the fact that God was far from the Lord and did not deliver Him and did not hear Him, the Lord had no doubt about the holiness of God (verse 3). On the contrary, He confirmed it. He justified God in His forsaking of Him precisely because God is holy and therefore could have nothing to do with Him whom He had made sin.

God is enthroned, that is to say, established His government, on the praises of Israel. The praises of Israel were sung in the temple, near the altar in the court. The praises came from the mouths of those who praise Him for Who He is to His people. They were in the place where He had fellowship with them. The Lord Jesus was outside the city, outside the sanctuary where He was made sin.

Three times the Lord reminds God of the trust the fathers had in Him and that they were delivered by Him (verses 4-5). This proves that God has always been faithful and has always been able to deliver! Never had anyone appealed to the faithfulness and help of God in vain, not even David (Psa 9:10). God never disappoints anyone who appeals to Him in sincerity.

With the fathers – and also with us – being forsaken by God means only that in the trouble of suffering and persecution we have no prospect of salvation, which makes us feel forsaken by God. Nevertheless, we cry out to God. And God always answers such cries for help in His time and His way. A believer will always experience the nearness of God in the midst of suffering. It was not so with the Lord Jesus.

What the Lord Jesus experienced was unique. The Lord always called to trust in God and always did so Himself. And now He Himself was forsaken. This was because in those hours He was the object of the wrath of God, because of the fact that God had made Him sin. Therefore, God could not answer His call for help then.

With these verses, which deal with the three hours of darkness during which the Lord Jesus was made sin and God did not deliver Him from His enemies, the psalm begins. The feelings of suffering inflicted on Him by

men follows hereafter, although it actually preceded the suffering inflicted on Him by God.

Psa 22:6-10 | Mocked and Challenged

*6 But I am a worm and not a man,
A reproach of men and despised by the people.
7 All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, [saying],
8 "Commit [yourself] to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him".
9 Yet You are He who brought me forth from the womb;
You made me trust [when] upon my mother's breasts.
10 Upon You I was cast from birth;
You have been my God from my mother's womb.*

In His complaint, the Lord Jesus compares Himself to a worm (verse 6; cf. Job 25:6; Isa 41:14). He feels Himself to be "not a man", as someone that people don't care about. There is nothing in Him that would allow Him to count on any respect as a Man. In addition, a worm is the deepest expression of defenselessness. A worm has no legs to run away with, no teeth or horns to defend itself with. He also has no thick skin or spines for protection.

It is also noteworthy that the Hebrew word for worm is related to crimson, the blood red color, which is made from this worm. To obtain this dye and to feed the young larvae and keep them alive, the mother crimson worm (a type of scale insect) must die. It reminds us of the blood for atonement that He shed.

The Lord Jesus was despised and sneered at on the cross because of His trust in God (verses 7-8). He was despised by the people, His people. What He says here is found in the account given of His crucifixion in the Gospels (Mt 27:39,43; Lk 23:35). The sneering was expressed through words and gestures. In the first half of the psalm, we hear only the vain cries of the Righteous One and the scorn and ridicule of evil men, while God remains silent. In the second half, we hear songs of praise.

The Gospels show that the Jews understood well what the Lord always pointed out and what He Himself always did. He has always stressed that they should trust in God, or, as it is translated here, commit everything to God. He demonstrated this in His own life as well. This the bystanders at the cross were now using against Him, making His suffering that much harder. God seemed to be on the side of sinful man. The Lord repeated the mocking words. He did this not to reproach God for it, but as confirmation that it was true, despite the appearance He had against Him.

In verses 9-10 the Lord turns away from His mockers and turns to His God. He speaks of His earliest Childhood and of Mary. From His earliest existence as a Man He was “cast” upon God“, He was completely dependent upon Him, upon His care and protection. Immediately after His birth there were already attempts to kill Him. The poor conditions in which He grew up also strengthened this position of dependence. All the care and protection He had always enjoyed were completely gone.

He calls God “my God from my mother’s womb”. With this the Lord Jesus says that from His birth on earth He had a relationship with God and that therefore there was no reason to forsake Him.

Also, we see here that He calls God “my God” only from the moment He became Man. Previously, this was not the case either. Before He became Man, He was Himself God (Jn 1:1), which, of course, He also remained when He became Man. Since He became Man, as Man He assumed a position of submission to God. When we read that God is the Head of Christ, it is of Christ as Man (1Cor 11:3).

He lay at the breasts of His mother, a place identified in verse 9 as a place of trust. This place is of great importance to a child from his earliest days. Breastfeeding is important not only for nourishment, but also, as shown here, for providing the sense of security, trust, and acceptance.

Psa 22:11-18 | The Trouble

11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near;

For there is none to help.

12 Many bulls have surrounded me;

Strong [bulls] of Bashan have encircled me.

13 They open wide their mouth at me,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It is melted within me.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And You lay me in the dust of death.

16 For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;

18 They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.

In these verses we hear expressions of the Lord's trouble. He found Himself in it because God had forsaken Him, although according to verses 9-10 there was no reason for that. Instead of being in the presence of His God, God was far from Him, for He had forsaken Him (verse 11; cf. verse 1b). In contrast the trouble is near, the distress of death, the being separated from God.

He is all alone in suffering, with no prospect, "for there is no helper". This loneliness is beyond our comprehension. We do not know what the enormous contrast is between perfect, undisturbed, uninterrupted fellowship with God and being forsaken by God, having no fellowship with God, and instead having to suffer the strokes of God's sword.

Added to that, He is surrounded by "many bulls" (verse 12). Bulls are clean animals and can be seen as a picture of the Jews, who considered themselves clean (cf. Jn 18:28). They rejected the Lord Jesus with many, a great multitude. They are also "strong [bulls]". This points to the pride, the unbending proudness of the Jews, which has been evident in their attitude toward the Lord Jesus.

These are strong bulls “of Bashan”. Bashan was a very fertile area. The Jews are also compared here to well-fed, unfeeling animals. The prosperous, distinguished religious leaders rejected Him. They boasted of being God’s people, but were like these animals, who also have no connection with God.

Then we hear the complaint from His mouth that they had opened “wide their mouth” in enmity at Him “as a ravening and a roaring lion” (verse 13). This means that they displayed the character of their father, the devil (Jn 8:44), who “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1Pet 5:8). Satan stood behind those who are described as bulls.

In verse 15, the suffering Messiah begins to speak of Himself. He feels how His life has flowed away. He compares Himself to water and His heart to wax. Water and melted wax are without form and have no power and offer no support. They are pictures of fear and death (Eze 7:17; 1Sam 7:6; 2Sam 14:14). Enemies become as wax by the anger of God (Psa 68:2). That is also the thought here, for the Lord Jesus was in the heat of God’s anger. Wax melts in the heat (cf. Jos 2:11). Again, it is clear that over David we hear the Lord Jesus.

His strength was broken to pieces by dehydration like the sherds of a broken pot (verse 15). A dried-up sherd can easily become grit. Another consequence of dehydration was His unspeakable thirst, which caused His tongue to stick to His palate.

In the last part of verse 15 the Lord turns to His God and speaks plainly of His death. He accepts His death from the hand of God. He says to God: “You lay me in the dust of death.” His physical death was an act of Himself after the three hours of darkness, when He “crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT”. Having said this, He breathed His last” (Lk 23:46). Certainly, His own people killed Him (Acts 2:23b), but He died at the time God had determined, surrendering His Spirit into the hands of the Father.

But not only the Jews are guilty of Christ’s death. The nations also have their share in it. We see this in verse 16, where the Savior speaks of “dogs” that have surrounded Him. Dogs are unclean animals that we can see as a picture of the nations, represented in the Romans at the crucifixion (cf. Mt

15:21-28). The dogs referred to here are probably African wild dogs. These dogs are known to march in groups, surround their prey, and in a short time tear it apart and devour it completely.

The Romans were in charge in Israel and had pierced His hands and His feet in that land. When the Lord Jesus returns, the remnant will ask: "And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, '[Those] with which I was wounded in the house of my friends'" (Zec 13:6). The house of His friends is the land where Israel lived. When He returns, "every eye" – of Jews and Gentiles – "will see Him, even those who pierced Him" (Rev 1:7).

That the Lord Jesus could count all His bones (verse 17) means that He was hanging on the cross at least with His upper body bared. It also means that His body was emaciated and had been stretched by hanging on the cross. It aroused no pity in those who stood around it or past by it. To all of them He was a spectacle, they observed it and looked at Him Who was so broken, so miserable (cf. Isa 52:14).

His garments had been taken from Him, as was customary with people who were given the death penalty on the cross (verse 18). The soldiers who had taken His clothes from Him divided them among themselves. For one garment they cast lots. That was the tunic which was woven seamlessly, in one piece in its entirety from the top. That we have here a scene that took place at Christ's cross, and that it involves His garments, the evangelist John tells us, for he quotes this verse in his account of the cross (Jn 19:23-24).

Psa 22:19-21 | Cry for Salvation

*19 But You, O LORD, be not far off;
O You my help, hasten to my assistance.
20 Deliver my soul from the sword,
My only [life] from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth;
From the horns of the wild oxen You answer me.*

One last time, the Lord turns with all His trouble to God, *His* God. God, His only Support and Relief, has forsaken Him. All men, incited by satan,

are full of mockery and hatred against Him. In His trouble He cries out and asks if God, Who is now so far off, will not remain far off (verse 19). He asks that God as His help will come to His assistance soon, with haste, to deliver and save Him. Here faith in God Who has forsaken Him speaks. Despite the reality of being forsaken He continues to trust in His God.

He asks God to deliver “my soul”, that is He Himself in His deepest feelings, “from the sword” (verse 20). That sword weighs heavily upon Him. His unspeakable and indescribable loneliness He expresses by presenting Himself to God as “My only [life]”. Because of that loneliness He feels “the power of the dog”, the heathen powers, all the stronger.

He feels Himself in “the lion’s mouth” (verse 21a). Satan, he is that lion, and all his demons have stirred up the wicked mass of the religious people and brought them to the grossest expressions of mockery and defamation. Christ sees the people as “wild oxen” who have taken Him on their horns (verse 21b).

We see in these verses the demand for a threefold redemption:

1. From the sword (verse 20a; cf. Zec 13:7), that is from God’s side.
2. From the violence of the dog (verse 20b), that is from the side of man.
3. From the mouth of the lion (verse 21a), that is from satan’s side.

Christ’s demand for salvation is not the demand not to die. He had come to do the will of God and He fully knew what that meant. His question is not to be saved of death, but to be saved *out of* death, that is, that He would be raised (Heb 5:7). That question was answered, as we hear in the last three words of verse 21: “You answer me.” Here comes the great turn in this psalm.

The Lord’s prayer is answered in the resurrection (verse 21c; Psa 21:4). In what follows, all of man’s sin is gone, for it has been judged in the three hours of darkness. The complaint has been changed into a song of praise. The lamentation has been changed into a psalm of praise. The suffering is forever behind Him. What follows in the next few verses shows that God dwells on the songs of praise of Israel. It is one great song of praise to God in the midst of an ever-widening circle, until from the whole earth one

great song of praise rises to God. The grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died is now going to bear much fruit (Jn 12:24).

The suffering inflicted on the Lord by men results in *judgment* for men. The suffering done to Him by God results in *reconciliation and blessing* for man. In this psalm Christ is the sin offering, the sacrifice for sin. He was made sin, meaning that God made Him the very source of sin and judged it in Him (2Cor 5:21). What results from this is nothing but pure grace and blessing to man. He accomplished the work all by Himself, but in the results countless millions of redeemed share (Jn 12:24).

After Christ's victory over sin, world and death, there is no judgment on the enemies, but blessing for His own. The ultimate result of the work of reconciliation is blessing for all mankind in the realm of peace and for all believers in eternity (Col 1:20-22). He is the Lamb of God Who, by virtue of His atoning work, will take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

We must remember that between the transition from complaint to praise is a period of about 2000 years now. What is described up to verse 21a took place at the first coming of Christ. What is described from verse 21b onwards moves us to His resurrection and its consequences at His second coming. We move, so to speak, from the hill of Golgotha to the Mount of Olives.

Psa 22:22-27 | Heard and Song of Praise

22 I will tell of Your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him;
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel.
24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from him;
But when he cried to Him for help, He heard.
25 From You [comes] my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.
26 The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.

Let your heart live forever!

*27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations will worship before You.*

After His resurrection, His first thought is to tell the Name of His God to His brethren and then to praise God together with those where He is in the midst (verse 23). He is the Son Who knows the Father and reveals and declares Him (Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18). His “brethren” are His disciples to whom He lets Mary make known their new relationship with His Father and His God (Jn 20:17).

Because He is risen, He can give His disciples His resurrection life (Jn 20:22), placing them in the same relationship to His Father as He Himself has. Yet He does not make them fully one with Himself in His position before the Father, but maintains a distinction therein. He does not speak to them of ‘our’ Father and ‘our’ God, but of “My Father and your Father” and “My God and your God” (Jn 20:17). On resurrection morning we see Him appearing in the midst of them (Jn 20:19) and again a week later (Jn 20:26).

His disciples are prophetically the remnant of Israel, the true Israel in the future. In our time they form the core of the church that originates on the day of Pentecost. The church is a mystery in the Old Testament. Through the quotation of this verse in the New Testament, ‘the assembly’ acquires the higher meaning of ‘church’ in the New Testament (Heb 2:11-12). ‘In the midst of the church’ then is the New Testament church (cf. Mt 16:18; 18:15-20). He reveals His presence where the church gathers. He starts the song of praise in the hearts of His own. That is why it is so important for every believer to be present, because He is present there.

Then we hear about “all you descendants of Jacob” and “all you descendants of Israel” (verse 23). Here the Lord Jesus says to the believers from Israel that they will honor and fear the LORD. They are not merely hearers of the praise of David, but are called to join in this praise. Those who honor Him, fear Him. Reverence and awe go together.

The Lord Jesus speaks of Jacob and of Israel. The name Jacob recalls failure, the name Israel refers to what God made of Jacob. We will also never

forget what we were and always honor Him in awe for what He has done for us and made of us.

In verse 24, the remnant speaks. What they say proves that they are aware that they owe all blessing to Him, Whom they here call “the afflicted”. They have an understanding that God “has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted”, which His people has done. God did have to hide His face from Him, but He did not keep it hidden. He heard the Afflicted when He called to Him and raised Him from the dead (Heb 5:7-8).

In verse 25, He who was the Afflicted speaks. All the praise He utters with His own to the glory of God comes from God, He says. Even after His resurrection, He gives all glory to God, as He always did in His life (Jn 7:18; 17:4). The “great assembly” is the earthly people of God in the realm of peace after the period of the New Testament. In that great assembly, Christ will fulfill all the vows He made in His trouble.

His vows included praising God after His salvation from His affliction. These vows of praise to God He fulfills “before those who fear Him”. His vow is a peace offering in the form of a votive offering. It may, unlike the ordinary peace offering, also be eaten on the second day (Lev 7:15-16). The afflicted are invited to do this (verse 26).

Those who fear God are “the afflicted” or better “the humble”. They are believers who have been burdened by injustice in the hard times, but have set their expectation on God. The word “humble” has the meaning of being “humble in spirit” (Isa 57:15) because they tremble before God’s Word (Isa 66:2). Precisely those who have suffered much hardship because of their faithfulness to the Savior are given abundant food and will be satisfied. They inherit the earth with Him (Mt 5:5) and, like Mephibosheth, may eat from the King’s table (2Sam 9:13).

This is the company of “those who seek Him”. There is every reason for them to praise Him exuberantly. They have prayed much to Him in their distress and they too have been heard. Now they praise Him to Whom they owe all blessing. They do not do this just for a moment or for a period of time, after which their praise weakens and disappears again. No, their hearts, which are full of praise, will “live forever!” This means that they

will have eternal fellowship with the One Who is “alive forevermore” (Rev 1:18) and Who has so wondrously turned everything for the better.

After the remnant and the whole people have joined in the song of praise begun in verse 22 by the Lord Jesus in the midst of the assembly, the circle becomes even wider: all the ends of the earth are now included (verse 27). Here the promise of Genesis 22 is fulfilled (Gen 22:18). The fulfillment takes place because the Lord Jesus has become King over the entire earth. The votive offering also appears to be a peace offering for the nations to inaugurate the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Also among the nations Christ has fruit of His work, also there people will turn to God. They “will remember” that the LORD is the Most High “and will turn” to Him. The “families of the nations” had forgotten God and served their idols. Therefore, “in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways” (Acts 14:16). This has now come to an end. Of them, the remnant says to God that they will bow down in worship before Him. Then the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled, that in him all the generations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3b; 18:18; 22:18; 26:3).

Psa 22:28-31 | The Messianic Realm

28 For the kingdom is the LORD's

And He rules over the nations.

29 All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,

All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,

Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.

30 Posterity will serve Him;

It will be told of the Lord to the [coming] generation.

31 They will come and will declare His righteousness

To a people who will be born, that He has performed [it].

The final verses of the psalm describe the general reign of the Messiah, “for the kingdom is the LORD’s” (verse 28). After the suffering and deep humiliation comes the glorification in the realm of peace. We see here again the wonder that the Messiah and Yahweh are the same Person. The kingdom is attributed to the LORD, while the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is the King. Christ does not exercise the kingdom on behalf of God, for He

is Himself the true God (Heb 1:8). He asserts His absolute right over the nations, for “He rules over the nations” (cf. Dan 7:13-14,27).

In verse 29, three categories of people are mentioned which include all classes of persons.

1. “All the prosperous of the earth” are the rich people, those in esteem. Although it is difficult for them to be saved, it is not impossible, for with God all things are possible (Lk 18:25-27; cf. Mt 27:57; 1Cor 1:26). They “will eat and worship”. This seems to refer to the eating of the peace offering, the fellowship meal of God’s people, of which all who were clean were allowed to eat (Lev 7:11-21; cf. Isa 25:6). It is a meal at which God was given thanks and people worshiped before Him.

2. The second category is that of “all those who go down to the dust”. These are those who have been oppressed, who have been in trouble and sorrow. They have despaired of life, of which “go down to the dust” speaks. They felt “the dust of death” as very near.

3. The third category, which has much in common with the second, are those who “cannot keep” their souls “alive”. They lacked the most necessary necessities of life and had nothing with which they could keep themselves alive. They are the poor, the weak, the sick, the helpless.

The second and third categories, like the first category, will share in the blessing of the realm of peace as a result of the work of the Lord Jesus. For this they will “bow down before Him” in worship.

The blessing of the realm of peace, in which all the generations described above share, will be passed on to “posterity” (verse 30). That posterity “will serve Him” (cf. Isa 59:21). It will be “told of the Lord to the [coming] generation”. Every coming generation born in the realm of peace will be His. This makes clear the name by which God is mentioned here. The name “Lord” is Adonai, which means the Commander, the sovereign Ruler. The posterity spoken of here belongs to Him and will not be sacrificed to idols, as was done in earlier generations (Lev 18:21; 20:2-3; 2Kgs 16:3; 2Kgs 21:6; Jer 7:31).

All who have passed through the terrible time of the great tribulation will declare the impressive salvation of God and His righteousness to those

who are born in the time of the realm of peace (verse 31). They will speak of what the Lord Jesus has performed. We may also tell it to our children. Each generation “will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born”, that is, the next generation. The realm of peace is founded on the righteousness of God fulfilled by the Lord Jesus on the cross. The declaration that is passed on is: “He has performed” it. It recalls the Savior’s last word on the cross: “It is finished!” (Jn 19:30). This last word will resound throughout eternity (cf. Rev 21:6a).

Psalm 23

Introduction

This psalm is the best known and most beloved of all the psalms. In verses 1-4, it gives us a full picture of the shepherd's full time activities, in whom we recognize without any difficulty the picture of the Lord Jesus. In verses 5-6 the picture of a festive meal is added.

It is remarkable that the emphasis is on the *personall/individual* relationship with the shepherd, as with Jacob in Genesis 48 (Gen 48:15). In the other psalms and the rest of the Old Testament, God presents Himself as the Shepherd of His *people*. This psalm begins with and emphasizes the personal relationship: the LORD is MY Shepherd. Very personal. David, the king, puts his trust not in himself or in his position or in his army, but in the LORD, his Shepherd. The middle part of this psalm then says, For You are with me. From this point on, the form of address changes from the third person singular to the second person singular. He no longer speaks *of* the LORD, but *to* the LORD.

In Psalm 22, the reconciliation is accomplished. In the following psalms we see what the consequences of this are for David and for all who have come to know and partake of the reconciliation. It is about living in fellowship with God and being led by Him on the basis of the reconciliation. We can also see this in the life of the Lord Jesus, though obviously not on the basis of the reconciliation, for He did not need it. For the believer individually, in the midst of life's greatest difficulties, there has come peace and confidence in their relationship with God. That is what is described in Psalm 23. In Psalm 24 we see the effects for the future.

The Lord is the Shepherd of the remnant. Several times in the Old Testament He is presented as the Shepherd of His people (Psa 80:1b; Ecc 12:11; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Eze 34:12,23-24). He is also the Shepherd of us, Christians, for the way through the wilderness. We go that way in the power of reconciliation. He, Who gave His life for the sheep, now sets Himself to work for the sheep (Heb 7:25). Faith in the nearness of the Lord takes away

all fear. It is as if the Lord says to us: “Fear not.” Fear in the Lord’s nearness is equivalent to unbelief.

We can add here the closing words of the letter to the Hebrews: “Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, [even] Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb 13:20-21). We recognize Him, Who rose from the dead (Psa 22:21b), already now as the good Shepherd Who is close to His own and cares for them.

Psalm 23:1-4 | The LORD Is My Shepherd

1 A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

3 He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name’s sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I fear no evil, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm is composed by David when he was a simple shepherd boy. In his simplicity, he had fellowship with God and experienced it deeply. An intimate, deep fellowship with God is not dependent on social status, but on fearing God.

The psalm begins with the LORD Himself, and then not with what He gives, but what He is (verse 1b). He is not ‘a shepherd’, or ‘the shepherd’, not even ‘our’ shepherd, but “my shepherd”. This can be said by anyone who has come to know Him as the good Shepherd of Psalm 22. It speaks of the continuous, uninterrupted and unfailing care and protection He has

taken upon Himself for us. What all that means is said to us in detail in the following verses.

In those verses we see that the Lord Jesus provides rest, food, water, refreshment or restoration, guidance, preservation, comfort, fellowship, oil, an overflowing cup, goodness and lovingkindness and finally an eternal dwelling place in God's house. The Shepherd's care for all these needs and circumstances is the guarantee that the believer will arrive at his destination.

Everything speaks of a deep trust in the complete and unfailing care, providence and protection of God in all things. A mother cares for her baby in everything, but for only a short time. A father and mother devote parental care to children, but also for only a limited time. But a sheep completely depends on the care of the shepherd from birth to death, who does everything for the sheep, as the rest of the psalm shows. That is what God is to each believer personally. Therefore, it does not say, as already said, 'our' shepherd, but "my shepherd" (cf. Gen 48:15).

Those who can say that the Lord is his personal Shepherd can also say: "I shall not want." There is, through fellowship with God, the assurance that He will give enough for today. Also there is the confidence that He will continue to do so in the days to come.

Verse 2 is the response of a believer's heart to the Lord's promise: "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jn 10:9). The first thing He provides is rest and food (cf. Song 1:7). Rest and food are needed to regain strength. The food is the Word of God (Heb 5:12; 1Pet 2:2). Rest for a sheep is more than just resting. A sheep is a clean animal; it takes time to chew food. So a believer takes time to 'keep the Word in the heart' by pondering over the Word over and over again in the presence of the Shepherd.

Nor does the Shepherd drive His sheep hard (cf. Gen 33:13b), but gently leads them to thirst quenching waters. The water is a picture of the Holy Spirit, from Whom the believer may drink (1Cor 12:13; cf. Jn 7:37). This means that the Holy Spirit is given the opportunity to strengthen him inwardly in order to follow the path behind the Shepherd.

The Lord Jesus is an example for those who are shepherds in God's church. He has given these shepherds to His church (Eph 4:11), that they may care for the believers, who are seen as a flock (Acts 20:28; 1Pet 5:2; cf. Eze 34:1-10; Jn 21:15-17). Those who shepherd and are faithful in it will be rewarded by Him when He has appeared as the chief Shepherd (1Pet 5:4).

A subsequent blessing is that He restores the soul of the believer (verse 3). That is, the Lord brings us back from wrong ways, a thought supported by the parallel: "He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (cf. Jer 6:16). This is necessary to remain attuned to the voice of the Shepherd. Then we remain in fellowship with Him, because sin removes us from Him. That is why our feet must be washed by Him each time, so that we can walk close to Him (Jn 13:10).

The Shepherd knows the right way. A sheep has no orientation, but is completely dependent on the guidance of the shepherd. Therefore, the sheep must listen to him. The same is true for a believer. And this is only possible if we are brought back from the wandering ways of sin and are close to Him.

The Shepherd guides the believer "in the paths of righteousness". This is not the same as the easiest paths. It is not the path where righteousness is obtained, but where righteousness is done, where everyone is given his or her due, and above all, where God is given His due. It is the path marked by righteousness, the path according to God's thoughts. "He guides me" means that He Himself walked that path.

It is the straight path, the right path, to the destination: the house of the LORD. The Shepherd guides the believer in that path not because of him, but "for His name's sake", that is, the Name of God. That is, the honor of God is involved. It can be compared to the honor Solomon receives from the Queen of Sheba because of what she sees of the walk of his servants (1Kgs 10:4-5).

In addition to providing guidance, the Shepherd also provides protection. He knows that the path may well lead "through the valley of the shadow of death" (verse 4). The path to the eternal dwelling place with God can lead through dangerous territory; all kinds of difficulties and worries can

loom up, casting the shadow of death. There are spiritual enemies at every turn who are out to harm the believer.

The shadow of death is the threat of death. The Shepherd is the Light. Whoever follows Him “will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” (Jn 8:12). Therefore, the believer who confidently calls the Shepherd “my Shepherd” is not frightened by a shadow. Nor does the reality of death frighten him, for the Shepherd has overcome death because He was laid in the dust of death (Psa 22:15c). The Shepherd here does not so much go before the believer but walks beside him, causing him to experience His nearness. As a result, he goes his way without fearing any evil.

Because of this nearness to the Shepherd, the psalmist suddenly speaks not *of*, but *to* the Shepherd and says to Him: “For You are with me” (cf. Isa 43:2; Heb 13:5). Herewith he expresses his full confidence in the Shepherd that He is always with him. It is good not only to know it, but also to express it. What danger or trouble or enemy is stronger than Him? No one is, right? There is only fear if we do not fix our eyes on the Lord (cf. Mt 14:29-30; 1Kgs 19:1-3; 2Kgs 6:15-17).

The Shepherd has a rod and a staff with Him. The rod is a club with which the lion and the bear are defeated; it is the weapon with which He drives out the enemy. The staff is the means by which the Shepherd guides the believer. It is both a ruler’s staff and a staff to lean on, a staff for support while walking, as someone leans on a staff. Among other things, the Shepherd uses the staff to discipline an erring or self-willed believer to keep him in the path of righteousness or bring him back.

Both of these means, of which the use of the staff sometimes causes the believer pain, comfort him, he says. The comfort is that through these means he experiences the care of the Shepherd, Who wants to keep him in fellowship with God.

Psa 23:5-6 | The LORD Is My Host

*5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.*

6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,

| *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

From verse 5 on, it is no longer the picture of a shepherd, but of a Host Who invites, in this case on the occasion of the appointment of a King. This is evident in verse 6, where David says: "I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

The believer going through trial and discipline sees that a table has been prepared for him (verse 5). The table here is an altar on which the peace offering is brought. In the Old Testament, a festive meal is held with peace offerings that are brought on the occasion of the appointment of a king (1Sam 11:15; cf. Isa 25:6). The guests are the afflicted of Psalm 22 (Psa 22:26).

The adversaries, who were out for his destruction, see it gnashing their teeth. It is the only remark in this psalm about the believer's enemies. They can do nothing against him, as, for example, at the coronation of Solomon (1Kgs 1:41-53). After all, the Shepherd is with him. Through Him the believer overwhelmingly conquers, by which he knows that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ and the love of God (Rom 8:35-39).

The believer goes on to speak of what the LORD is doing to him. The LORD anoints his head richly with oil. Anointing with oil is a tribute to a guest (Lk 7:46; cf. Mt 26:7). It says that the believer is valuable to the Shepherd. Also, the Shepherd gives him a cup so full that it overflows (cf. Psa 116:13). This speaks of the overflowing blessing that the Shepherd gives. His care is so rich and overflowing.

In verse 6, the believer expresses the assurance that during all the days of his life, only goodness and lovingkindness will follow him. They will be there constantly (cf. 1Cor 10:4). It concerns life on earth. God shows His goodness in His abundant care. His goodness He shows in His promises to bless His own.

David, or the believer, expresses his deep trust in God's faithfulness. Instead of being persecuted by enemies who seek his destruction, he is "followed" by God's goodness and lovingkindness. Here he does not follow the Shepherd, but the Shepherd follows him through life with His loving care. God's benevolence will be our lifelong companion.

The psalm concludes with the assurance that every believer pronounces with great joy: "I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." This is the deepest desire of every believer. He wants to be there, where God dwells (Psa 26:8; 27:4). For the Christian, this is ultimately the Father's house (Jn 14:2). For the Old Testament believer, this is the realm of peace, where he may live in the atmosphere of the temple.

Psalm 24

Introduction

Psalm 24 connects to Psalm 23. The LORD, Who is the Shepherd and guides His own and brings them home (Psalm 23), is also the One to Whom everything belongs (Psalm 24). Here He is the chief Shepherd of the sheep, Who will come to give His reward, the crown of glory, to His own. Psalm 22 is about Christ *for* His own, the good Shepherd; Psalm 23 is about Christ *with* His own, the great Shepherd; Psalm 24 is about Christ *above* His own, the chief Shepherd. The LORD will assert His right to all by helping His people as a Warrior against the enemy. To that end, He is coming to the city with the ancient doors, which is Jerusalem.

Just as Psalm 23 describes the way of the Lord Jesus – and of every God-fearing with Him – to God’s house, so in Psalm 24 we get the description of the way to the throne of His glory. However, the horizon here is not just Israel, but all the world (Psa 24:1). After all, God’s purpose is to bless all nations through Israel (Gen 22:16-18). For us, it means the way to the Father’s house and the way to the throne of the kingdom.

Psalm 24 used to be read by the Jews on the first day after the sabbath. The first day of the week, that points to the beginning – verse 1 begins with creation – or to a new beginning, that is the realm of peace, the restored creation.

It is possible that David wrote this psalm on the occasion of bringing the ark to Jerusalem (2Sam 6:1-19). The ark is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus, Who is called “the King of glory” five times in this psalm (verses 7-10).

We can divide the psalm as follows:

1. The LORD is the Creator and therefore the Owner of the universe (verses 1-2; cf. Rev 4:9-11).
2. He is also the LORD, which is His Name as the faithful God of the covenant. As a result, He has a double right – as Creator and as Redeemer (cf. Revelation 4-5) – to His people:

- a. He declares who among men may approach His holy habitation (verses 3-6) and
- b. comes to take possession of His rightful property (verses 7-10).

Psa 24:1-2 | The Earth Is the LORD's

1 A Psalm of David.

*The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.*

*2 For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.*

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm begins by presenting the sovereignty of God. He is the rightful Owner of creation because He is its Creator and Sustainer. He is the Possessor of “the earth ... and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it” (verse 1b; Psa 50:11; 1Cor 10:26).

God has an absolute right to men, to their services, to their talents, to everything they can acquire through labor and skill. He has a right to everything that flies in the air, walks on the earth and swims in the sea. All the treasures of the soil and what the field yields also belong to Him. By “the world” is meant the inhabited world. He “formed it to be inhabited” (Isa 45:18).

God has done everything. The earth is not a composition of all kinds of elements on which a multitude of gods worked. Nor did anyone help Him make the plans or carry them out. Everything was brought about by the one, true and living God. The earth became what it is by this simple fact that God founded and established the earth. Therefore, the earth and all that it produces is His.

In verse 2 it says why the earth is His: “For” He has “founded” the earth. In doing so, He has acted with wisdom (Pro 3:19). There is order in His actions. He caused the dry to emerge from the waters on the third day of creation, thus showing His control over it (Gen 1:9-10; Psa 136:5-6). That He has “established” it, given the tense form of this word, is not a one-time act, but He is constantly engaged in it. He created and maintains His

creation. He makes sure that the earth remains in its place (Psa 104:5; 1Sam 2:8).

Psa 24:3-6 | Who May Be With the LORD

*3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
And who may stand in His holy place?
4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood
And has not sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This is the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face —[even] Jacob. Selah.*

Verses 1-2 form the background for the two questions posed in verse 3. Who dares to “ascend into the hill” of that sovereign and almighty God to approach Him? By “the hill of the LORD” is meant Mount Zion (cf. Psa 2:6; 15:1). And what is beyond that – for the hill of the LORD is a holy place – who is able to stand “in His holy place”, to stand in His presence and serve Him as a priest? These are questions about how a person can approach a holy and righteous God, about the possibility of having fellowship with that exalted and holy God.

Four conditions are mentioned (verse 4; cf. Psa 15:2-5). These do not involve sacrifices or good deeds, but uprightness in actions and motives. Two conditions are positive and two negative. “Clean hands” refers to the deeds; “a pure heart” refers to the motives behind the deeds. “Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood” means that he does not indulge in idolatry and does not worship anything or anyone other than God alone. He who does indulge in what is false exalts himself against God. One who “has not sworn deceitfully” is one who does not use God’s Name in vain by committing fraud in His Name. To swear deceitfully means to make God the protector of one’s falsehood. He who is ‘clean’ is not ‘false’, and he who is ‘pure’ is not a ‘deceiver’.

He who is upright in his actions and motives receives blessing and righteousness from God (verse 5). The blessing is that he is in God’s favor, that

God accepts him in pleasure. The righteousness is that God sees him as righteous and receives him into His presence. God can do that because He is “the God of his salvation”. That means that God has kept Him from all that testified against him. That is only possible because He imputes to him the work of the Lord Jesus, which He sees ahead. God always blesses and gives His righteousness only on that basis.

The answer to the question of who can dwell with Him is the Lord Jesus. He answers all the conditions. But He also wants others to dwell with Him. They are mentioned in verse 6. Those who are blessed by Him and to whom He gives His righteousness, are those “who ask Him, who seek Your face”. They demonstrate a mind that is pleasing to Him, for they desire to be pleasing to Him and to live to His glory.

This is about the fact that it is possible to approach the Creator, and therefore the rightful Owner, of the universe. That this is possible is apparent from the change halfway through this verse from speaking of God, “who seek Him”, to speaking to God, “who seek Your face”.

Those who seek Him are the offspring of “Jacob”, of that Jacob of whom God said: “I am ... the God of Jacob” (Exo 3:6). The offspring of Jacob bear the characteristics of their ancestor. It is a generation that has always longed for the blessing of God, but has so often been unfaithful in the way they have sought to appropriate that blessing. God gives them the promised blessing in the realm of peace after a long way of forming, which He also went through with their forefather.

Psa 24:7-10 | The King of Glory

*7 Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
8 Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift [them] up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!*

*10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. Selah.*

After the conditions for dwelling with the LORD are given in verses 3-6, in verse 7 both the city and the people are called to receive the King of glory. His great majesty as the One Who possesses everything because He created it (verses 1-2), obviously also gives Him the right of entrance into Jerusalem. Every gate must be opened to Him with a dignity appropriate to that Majesty. In some cases it was necessary to make the lintel of the gate higher. Here the lifting up is done because of the greatness of the majesty of the King of glory.

The poetic language represents the gates and doors as persons. The gates and doors of the city have long let their heads drop because of the sad state the city had fallen into because of its sins. But when the King of glory appears, it can be said that they lift up their heads. With the coming of the King, the time for mourning is over and the time for celebration has arrived.

In verse 8 we hear the question: "Who is the King of glory?" The answer immediately follows: It is "the LORD", the faithful God of the covenant. That He is the Messiah, that is, that He has become Man, is evident from the fact that He enters through the gate of Jerusalem. The expressions "strong and mighty" and "mighty in battle" describe the Messiah as the Divine Warrior Who fights on behalf of His people (cf. Mic 2:13; Rev 17:14; 19:11-16). He is the strong God (Isa 10:21), Who uses His power in battle against His enemies and on behalf of His own.

He appears in a totally different way than when He first appeared on earth. The first time He came to earth in humility and went His way in humility. When He went to Jerusalem as King, He was addressed as follows: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout [in triumph], O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zec 9:9; Mt 21:1-11).

The call in verse 9 is a repetition of verse 7, with an even slightly stronger exhortation. The repetition emphasizes the importance of giving this high Majesty ample room and a dignified reception.

The question asked in verse 10 is also a repetition (cf. verse 8). That the question is asked twice emphasizes the Person of the King of glory. As in verse 8, the answer is “the LORD”, but now with the addition “of hosts”. He is Yahweh *Zebaoth*, this is the warrior name of the LORD. He is the Supreme Commander of all the heavenly and earthly hosts. He has authority over all angelic and earthly forces, both good and evil (cf. Jn 19:11a). This means that they never act on their own initiative, but only at His command. He directs them in such a way that they cooperate in the execution of His plan, sometimes against their will. For the believer, this knowledge is a great comfort.

In the spiritual application, this psalm is fulfilled in us when we open our hearts to the Lord Jesus and give Him dominion over our lives. In the prophetic application, we see the fulfillment when the whole earth and all that it contains is subject to Him, giving Him the glory due to Him.

Psalm 25

Introduction

In Psalms 22-24 we have seen the revelation of the Savior. In Psalms 25-39 we see the experience of the believer's exercise in response to this revelation. This emphasizes that the sequence of Psalms is also inspired and has much to say to us.

The sense of grace is still weak, but it is growing. To that end, this psalm also begins with confession of sin (verses 7,11,18). As a result, the psalmist can receive the teaching of grace (verses 8-9). A person who wants to, whether he is a Christian or belongs to the faithful remnant of Israel, must begin by trusting God (verses 1-2) and being open to His teaching (verses 4-5).

The LORD can only teach the meek – these are the humble, the broken-hearted, those who tremble at God's Word (verse 9; cf. Mt 5:5; Isa 66:2). Prophetically, this is the growing sense of grace among the remnant of Israel in the end time.

We hear in this psalm a believer speaking who has in his heart a deep awareness of Who the LORD is. The thought of Him dominates everything with him. In Him he trusts with regard to his enemies. He does not cry out to God to judge them. He speaks but little of them. What he mainly asks is guidance for his path of life.

The believer also sees himself in God's light, which brings him to confession of sins. In this psalm we find confession of sins for the first time in this book. At the end, we hear him pray for the whole people; he becomes an intercessor for others.

Psa 25:1-3 | In You I Trust

1 [A Psalm] of David.

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

2 O my God, in You I trust,

Do not let me be ashamed;

Do not let my enemies exult over me.

3 Indeed, none of those who wait for You will be ashamed;

Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

For “[a Psalm] of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

The occasion for this psalm seems to be the ever-present enemies. It may be that David wrote this psalm when he was fleeing from his son Absalom, a flight resulting from his own sins.

David, with an emphatic “to You”, lifts up his soul, or his whole person, his body included, to the “LORD”, exclusively and only to Him (verse 1b). His soul is in distress. He speaks to God as “my God” (verse 2), because he has a personal relationship with Him. Therefore, he also says to Him, “in You I trust”. The word “trust” means “to feel safe”, just as a child feels safe with his father when he is threatened by a dog. David felt safe with God. This is the secret of overcoming difficulties. A God-fearing believer has no other refuge. There is no ‘plan B’ for him. His entire hope is in God alone.

David here speaks of (1) “my God”, of (2) “me”, and of (3) “my enemies”. The enemies drove him out to God, to seek refuge with Him. He begs his God not to let him be ashamed of his trust in Him. The consequence would be that his enemies would leap for joy about him, as if his trust in God was something only from his lips. Surely God will not let that happen, will He? In addition, as king he is the representative of God’s people. If he is ashamed, it takes away the complete basis of trust of God’s people.

He reminds himself that all who wait for God will not be ashamed (verse 3). He is sure of this, which we see by the strong “indeed”. This does not make praying redundant, but rather drives to it. He expects the help and outcome of Him with Whom he lives in fellowship. This verse is quoted in Romans 9 (Rom 9:33), where it appears that “wait for” here means “believe”, as opposed to ‘good works’.

He also knows who will be ashamed, namely those “who deal treacherously without cause”. These are people who love iniquity. He is not one of them. He acts in faithfulness toward God, Who has appointed him king over His people. The fact that it is said “deal treacherously without cause” of course does not mean that there could be a reason to deal treacherously. This saying underlines the infamy of treachery. That there is talk of deal-

ing treacherously also means that in this psalm David's enemies must be sought among his own people and not among the nations.

Psa 25:4-10 | Prayer for Guidance

4 Make me know Your ways, O LORD;

Teach me Your paths.

5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation;

For You I wait all the day.

6 Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,

For they have been from of old.

7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;

According to Your lovingkindness remember me,

For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.

8 Good and upright is the LORD;

Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.

9 He leads the humble in justice,

And He teaches the humble His way.

10 All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth

To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

David is in the presence of God. He has prayed with regard to his enemies. But there is a greater danger than being overcome by his enemies. That danger is that he himself will wander away from the ways of God. If the LORD does not guide him, he will become like his enemies and also act treacherously. He does not want that. Therefore, he asks the LORD to make him know His ways (verse 4). He wants to learn the lessons that the LORD wants to teach him through the difficulties.

He is not asking for the good or best way, but for "Your ways", which are the ways of the LORD. They are the ways the LORD has chosen for him in which the LORD Himself walks and in which He causes the righteous to walk (cf. Eph 2:10). In doing so, he surrenders his life to the loving care of God. Then he asks God to teach him His paths. By this he means that God teaches him how to walk His paths, how to behave in them, so that his life is to the glory of God.

To that connects his next question to God to lead him in His truth and teach him (verse 5). Leading in the truth can be compared to a shepherd leading the sheep. The shepherd goes ahead. A person goes in the ways of the Lord only when he walks in them and does so in accordance with the truth of God's Word. Knowing the ways of the LORD intellectually is not a true knowing if one does not also walk in them. We see David taking the place of a pupil. Every sincere believer will take that place.

In verses 4-5 we see that David, and with him every God-fearing believer, has an earnest desire to do God's will. He asks God for "Your ways", "Your paths", "Your truth". The LORD's "ways" and "paths" do not refer to doctrines or principles, but to the way of life, that it is as He shows them (cf. Psa 32:8). The "truth" describes how we are to walk in the ways of the Lord (cf. Psa 26:3).

The God-fearing has this desire because he knows God as the God of his salvation. He knows Him this way because he has come to know Him this way time and again. Every previous salvation he owes to Him. Therefore, even now he waits for Him "all the day". He looks forward to Him continually, day and night, to His help that will bring relief (cf. verse 4).

David has prayed in the preceding verses for guidance because of the danger of treachery. He knows that he is liable to do so. This awareness leads him to pray for himself. One who knows his own weakness and sins knows that he is no better than his enemies. But he also knows – and his enemies have no knowledge of this – God's compassion and lovingkindnesses (verse 6). He asks God to remember that. God doesn't need reminding, of course, but we do, and it's good to show that, as David does here.

Compassion is a feature of God that He shows to someone who is in misery and trouble. He makes the afflicted feel that He is with him in his misery. When we think of lovingkindnesses we may think of God's love toward His covenant, of the blessings He grants on the basis of His covenant.

It is His mind, which longs to help people in distress. Compassion has more to do with the distress of man. Lovingkindnesses emphasizes more God's mind. These are not features that God only acquired the moment their expression was requested. They "have been from of old", for He is eternal, but have become visible to people in distress.

After asking God in verse 6 to think of some of His features, he asks in verse 7 for God not to remember the sins of his youth or his transgressions (cf. Psa 119:9; Job 13:26). Instead, he asks God once again to remember His lovingkindnesses – that is, His covenant faithfulness – and to do so for the sake of His goodness which is a feature of God. The sins of his youth sometimes come to his mind again. The same goes for offenses he committed later in life. He is worried about them at the time he writes this.

Prophetically, by “youth” is meant the earlier history of the people of God. The “old age” (Psa 71:9,18) is the history of the remnant at the end of time, just before the coming of the Lord Jesus.

David’s request to God not to think of the sins of his youth shows that he had no knowledge of the forgiveness of sins on the basis of a once for all accomplished work of Christ on the cross. Nor could he yet, for Christ had yet to come. We, New Testament believers, know that the work has been accomplished and the forgiveness is certain. Although David does not know this forgiveness, he does trust in God’s grace to forgive.

We can learn much from the mind David shows here. Every believer will at times think back with shame on the sins of his youth (cf. Rom 6:21). In youth, in the time when we have little experience of life and the passions are sometimes not controlled, certain sins are easily committed. It is short-sighted if we have forgotten the cleansing of past sins (2Pet 1:9).

The point is not that we should be burdened with past sins again and again. We may know that they are forgiven if we have confessed them uprightly. Still, we will need to be reminded again and again of what we used to be in order to be thankful for what we have now received in Christ and have become in Him.

David is deeply impressed with his own sinfulness and iniquity, but also with the fact that the LORD is “good and upright” (verse 8). It brings to mind what John writes about the Lord Jesus in his Gospel, that He is “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Now that the goodness of the LORD has been mentioned, David begins to give a testimony about Who God is. From now on, David speaks of the LORD in the third person singular (except for verse 11). First He is called “good”, and then “upright”. ‘Upright’ means ‘right’, ‘just’. God is never

just one or the other. With Him, both features are perfectly in balance. That is, His goodness is never at the expense of right, of His righteousness. "Therefore", says David, "He instructs sinners on the way".

He is speaking here in the plural, sinners. We are not talking about people who love sin, but people who, like him, have fallen into sin and repented of it. They have been taught about "the way" to return to Him in order to continue on the way with Him. It is the way of confession, making sin known to Him with repentance. He then forgives and the believer can continue his way with Him, for which He also teaches. God is a God Who gives 'aftercare'.

Sinners who have come to repentance, either for the first time or have sinned after they have become believers, have become "humble" (verse 9). They accept humiliation without resistance. They have learned to humble themselves under the powerful hand of God.

To do this, they have come into a mind of humility – they are twice called "humble", which underscores that mind – in which God can lead them "in justice". To lead in justice means that God determines how they are to walk. He is the Judge and His law is the only law that matters. Because they have the right mind, He can teach them His way.

In verse 4 it is about "Your ways", which are the ways of God. In verse 8 it is about "the way", that is the way of restoring the sinner to fellowship with God. When that fellowship is restored, it is again possible to speak, as here in verse 9, of "His way", that is, the way of God.

Once again, in verse 10, the "paths of the LORD" are spoken of. This time it is said in general terms. It refers to "all" the paths. It is all the paths that He Himself treads to lead each of His own. He does this through His "lovingkindness and truth". In His lovingkindness He brings them back when they have gone astray and in His truth He fulfills the promises He has made toward them.

Here again, lovingkindness is the covenant love of God. The paths of the LORD are characterized by His covenant love and His faithfulness toward those who keep His covenant and His commandments. Thus, it is about the LORD's faithfulness toward His covenant and man's obedience toward the commandments of His covenant.

All who “keep His covenant and His testimonies” follow Him on that path. They appreciate His covenant that He has made with them and observe its conditions. These conditions are the testimonies or commandments. They show that they are the true people of God by adhering to what He has said. In doing so, they show that they believe in its truth. In this way He guides them safely through the world of dangers toward His final goal.

Psa 25:11 | Prayer for Pardon

*11 For Your name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.*

Again and again David is reminded of sins. This does not make him despair, but longing to know more of God’s grace. The greater the awareness of sin, the greater is also the awareness of the greatness of God’s grace. Also, he who is forgiven much, loves much (Lk 7:47).

It brings David into God’s presence as a supplicant. While verses 8-15 give a testimony *about* the LORD – third person singular – here the psalmist gets personal and speaks *to* the LORD – second person singular.

In God’s presence he prays for pardon. He has done the same in different words in verse 7. He concludes that prayer by asking not to remember the sins of his youth or his transgressions “for Your goodness’ sake”. He begins his prayer here with a more comprehensive version of those words. He now asks for the LORD to pardon him “for Your name’s sake, O LORD”.

Goodness makes us think of a feature of God; His Name reminds us of the glory of His Person. His Name is dishonored when things go badly with His people. David knows that he cannot claim pardon on that basis, but he mentions the holiness of the Name of the LORD as a reason to ask for pardon.

The Name of the LORD encompasses more than just His goodness. The Name represents all that He is. David addresses the LORD in this way for the pardon of his iniquity “for it is great”. That means that no one but God can take it away. And so it is, for the iniquity may be great, the pardon of God is greater (Psa 103:3,10-12; Mic 7:18-19).

Psa 25:12-14 | Assurance of Guidance

*12 Who is the man who fears the LORD?
He will instruct him in the way he should choose.
13 His soul will abide in prosperity,
And his descendants will inherit the land.
14 The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,
And He will make them know His covenant.*

After coming again under the impression of the greatness of his sins and the need for pardon, he again testifies to and instruct about the LORD's guidance for the way forward (verse 12). This instruction can only be enjoyed by "the man who fears the LORD". That man is in awe of the LORD and will only do what is pleasing to Him. This is the mind needed to receive, understand and put into practice this instruction.

The instruction does not consist of multiple choice questions, choosing from a number of options. It is about the way that "he should choose" and not the way that seems most appealing to him. It is the way that God has selected for him. The man who fears God will wholeheartedly agree to it. On that way he is assured of the guidance and support of God. God knows that way perfectly, from the beginning to the end.

Assent to God's 'route plan' implies blessing for himself and also for his descendants (verse 13). The blessing, the "prosperity", comes from the covenant mentioned in verse 14. That blessing, by virtue of the covenant, continues into the following generations. The "prosperity" is the inheritance they will receive.

David is like someone who has come "home" after a journey, comes to rest there, makes himself comfortable. He is safe and at peace and enjoys all the good things he possesses. He who is God-fearing also does his descendants a tremendous favor. The children who walk in his footsteps will "inherit the land". They will have their home in the land under the government of the Messiah.

In verse 14, it is no longer just "the man who fears the LORD" (verse 12), but we read about "those who fear Him", which is plural. The consequence of the confession of verse 11 is that the way is clear for the LORD to deal

confidentially [this is the meaning of “secret”] “with those who fear Him”, which is a company of God-fearers.

God will make them know the real meaning of “His covenant”. They will know that in Christ He has fulfilled all the conditions of the covenant and that on that basis they will enjoy all the blessings of the covenant (Jer 31:31-34). The blessings of the covenant that will be their portion can be summarized in having a confidential fellowship with the LORD in which He makes known His thoughts.

Psa 25:15-22 | Prayer for Deliverance and Preservation

15 My eyes are continually toward the LORD,

For He will pluck my feet out of the net.

16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,

For I am lonely and afflicted.

17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged;

Bring me out of my distresses.

18 Look upon my affliction and my trouble,

And forgive all my sins.

19 Look upon my enemies, for they are many,

And they hate me with violent hatred.

20 Guard my soul and deliver me;

Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You.

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,

For I wait for You.

22 Redeem Israel, O God,

Out of all his troubles.

What matters is that the eyes of the God-fearing are constantly on Him (verse 15). It means that he expects everything from Him. When we look on the Lord Jesus, it is the assurance of deliverance from the evil that people want to do to us, for which they have stretched a net for us.

David has said that he is continually looking to the LORD. Now he asks the LORD if He will turn to him and be gracious to him (verse 16). He is aware that he does not deserve that the LORD turns to him. Therefore, he appeals to His grace, pointing out his loneliness and affliction.

Loneliness is one of the worst things that can happen to a person. It greatly increases the misery in which a person finds himself if there is no one who cares about him, who shows any interest in him. Affliction – Hebrew *ani* – means defeated in spirit and trembling at God’s Word (Isa 66:2) and is a reason for God to turn to someone.

With “the troubles” of his heart (verse 17) David seems to mean his sins and the oppressions and enemies resulting from his sins. He is overwhelmed by them, for they “are enlarged”. They have taken possession of him, as it were. In verse 15 he asked for the deliverance of his feet from the net his enemies had stretched for him. Here he asks for deliverance from his “distresses”. Outward difficulties can have the effect of bringing past sins back to mind (cf. 1Kgs 17:17-18).

With an urgent “look upon”, David prays that the LORD will yet regard his “affliction” and his “trouble” (verse 18). He also asks – for the third time in this psalm (verses 7,11,18) – if the LORD will forgive “all my sins”. David was uncertain about this because he did not know of a finished work at Calvary. We, by grace, do know that.

Outwardly he is in affliction and trouble and inwardly he is plagued by the thoughts of all his sins. It is not just a single sin. He sees that there are many. It seems that he sees his affliction and trouble as a result of his sins. This can be the case with us as well. Many people want to be delivered from affliction but do not want to break with their sins because they love them. This is not the case with David.

Having called God’s attention to his affliction, trouble, and sins with a “look upon” in verse 18, he can call God’s attention to his “enemies” with a new “look upon” (verse 19). His enemies “are many”, they increase in number (quantity), and they hate him “with a violent hatred” (quality). Again, he is not asking God to put them down, but to take note of them. He leaves it up to God how He deals with it.

In verse 20 he asks for the guarding of his soul, which he lifted up to God in verse 1, by delivering him from his hopeless position. Again, as he did in verse 2, he asks that God will not let him be ashamed. There he expresses that he trusts in God. Here he expresses that he has taken refuge in God. In both cases, all his hope for salvation is completely in God. Therefore, in

this prayer not to be ashamed, the certainty that God will hear him is also heard.

David also points to his “integrity and uprightness” (verse 21). We can only expect God’s lovingkindness and goodness (verse 6) if we ourselves are integrous and upright. He holds these up to God, saying that these qualities are conditions for God to preserve him. This means that he is not appealing to his own merits. He knows that he cannot attribute his integrity and uprightness to himself. His confession of his sins does make that clear.

What he means by this is that God has given him integrity and uprightness, that he has lived in accordance with it by His grace, and that God will therefore preserve him. He expects nothing from his own achievements, for he has none, but he “waits for” God. God is the Only One Who can give outcome.

The psalm concludes with a prayer for Israel (verse 22). David has prayed for himself that God will deliver him from his affliction. Now his view widens. He no longer sees only his own troubles, but thinks of the troubles in which God’s Israel finds itself. God’s intention is that the troubles He brings upon His own will cause them to take refuge in Him and become intercessors for others.

Verse 22 is a kind of postscript, where the psalmist now gets an eye for the distress of others. In the same way, if we drink of the living water, we ourselves will become a source of water for others (Jn 7:37-38).

Psalm 26

Introduction

In Psalm 25 and Psalm 26 we find something similar to what we find in Psalm 5 and Psalm 6. In Psalm 5 we find that the believing remnant acknowledges their sinful condition in the light of God, while in Psalm 6 the remnant appeals to their righteousness, to their righteous actions. That is not in conflict with each other. It is both true.

Psalm 25 ends with the psalmist's desire to be integrous and upright (Psa 25:21). In Psalm 26, the psalmist also begins and ends with a testimony of his integrity (verse 1 and verse 11).

In Psalm 25, the remnant see themselves in the light of God and confess their sins, while in Psalm 26 they testify of their innocence. They do so on the basis of the forgiveness of their sins, which enables them to come to God, into His house (verses 6-8). Psalm 26 is the first psalm in a series of five psalms in which the house of God has an important place (Psalms 26-30).

Psa 26:1-3 | Declaration of Integrity

1 [A Psalm] of David.

*Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity,
And I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.*

2 Examine me, O LORD, and try me;

Test my mind and my heart.

3 For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes,

And I have walked in Your truth.

For “[a Psalm] of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm is a prayer for redemption (verse 11b), which here means ‘acquitt me’. David asks the LORD to vindicate or judge him (verse 1b). He is asking for a court judgment. He wants a declaration of innocence concerning the false accusations made against him by his enemies. He gives the reason that he is going his way in his integrity (verse 11a). This is not

a presumption nor is it a declaration of sinlessness. It is here in defense against false accusations. Paul said something similar (1Thes 2:10).

David confessed his sins and received forgiveness. He walks, to put it in New Testament terms, in the light (1Jn 1:7) and has fellowship with God. He trusts in the LORD. He is sure that he will not waver because he trusts in the unwavering God.

A believer does not want to hide anything from anyone he loves and therefore certainly not from God. David has nothing to hide. He does not defend himself against the false accusations with strong oaths, that nothing of it is true, but takes his refuge in God. We can take an example from David. It drives him out to God with the desire to examine him, try him and test him (verse 2).

“Examine” – Hebrew *bahan* – means to examine for quality, for example, metals; this involves integrity. “Try” – Hebrew *nasa* – means verification of genuineness. “Test” – Hebrew *sarap* – means to melt, to purify; this involves the removal of impurity.

He makes himself available for a deep inner – to which “mind” [literally “kidneys”, figurative for inner man] and “heart” point – examination by the LORD. The psalmist is not only concerned with his actions being judged, but also the thoughts, motivation and feelings behind them. In doing so, the psalmist asks the LORD to search him thoroughly (cf. Psa 139:23).

We must do the same. God may judge, not the enemies, but us. The figurative speech used is that of precious metal put into a melting furnace to test its purity.

He wants to be completely open to God. He says this with boldness because he keeps God’s lovingkindness, that is, the LORD’s covenant faithfulness, in mind (verse 3). He can do this because he walks in God’s truth (cf. 2Kgs 20:3; 3Jn 1:4). One of the first features of God-fearing is the desire to know what truth is and to live by it.

Truth here is the faithfulness of God and His commandments. It is not ‘knowing the truth’, for truth does not consist only of doctrines, as we sometimes think. Whoever walks in the truth knows that God’s delight

rests upon him. The emphasis is on walking, that is, the practice of life. This life is focused on the lovingkindness or God's covenant faithfulness. It is David's desire to live in such a way that this remains the case. That is why he longs for this examination by God.

Psa 26:4-8 | Proofs of Integrity

*4 I do not sit with deceitful men,
Nor will I go with pretenders.
5 I hate the assembly of evildoers,
And I will not sit with the wicked.
6 I shall wash my hands in innocence,
And I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
7 That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving
And declare all Your wonders.
8 O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house
And the place where Your glory dwells.*

David proves his integrity by pointing out, on the one hand, his separation from sinners (verses 4-5) and, on the other, his love for God and His house (verses 6-8). It seems that David was accused of close contact with wicked people and would have become unfaithful to his God as a result. He makes no claim to perfection, but does plead for acquittal of those imputations, while pointing to his love for God and His house.

David wants nothing to do with deceitful men and pretenders (verse 4). He does not want to sit with them or go with them (Psa 1:1; Jer 15:17). Those who walk in integrity do not want to. Deceitful men are people who are not integrous and not honest; they are unreliable reckless boasters. It is unthinkable that he could sit with them, as if he were comfortable with them. Pretenders are the hypocrites, people with hidden, depraved plans. They give the appearance of being friends, but they are out to harm you in the grossest way.

Instead of love for "evildoers" there will be hatred for being part of their "assembly" (verse 5). Evildoers are a separate company in God's people. They do not have the good of God's people in mind, but set out to do evil to that people. Nor does he "sit with the wicked". He does not want to be

involved with them in any way or give the impression of feeling at home in their company. They are a complete contrast to him.

This also applies to us, believers of the church. Those who live with God do not want fellowship with such people. It is not about people who think differently from us about certain things in God's Word, but about apostates. Unfortunately, there are also people among God's people who do so anyway. If a member of God's people has fellowship with such people, God cannot have fellowship with such a person (2Cor 6:14-18).

Whoever imitates David in this attitude toward the apostates, should not count on approval in professing Christianity and certainly not in the world. Those who love fellowship with God will joyfully bear the reproach that separation from the world and the Christian world brings.

David made it clear that he has no fellowship with apostate sinners. After having said what he has not done he says what he has done (verse 6). He says with Whom he does have fellowship and with Whom he does feel at home. First he pleads his innocence again. He laid his hands on the sacrifice to confess his sins after which the sacrifice was slaughtered. As a result, the sins were taken away.

In this way he has washed his hands – a picture of a cleansed and therefore pure conscience (Psa 73:13). He has clean hands (cf. Deu 21:6; 1Tim 2:8). Originally this precept was only for the priests. Before they could do their service, they had to wash their hands and feet (Exo 30:18-21). Later the laity did similar ritual washings, and even Pilate. It is obvious that it is about the spiritual meaning of it. Therefore, what Pilate did was a gross lie. He washed his hands (Mt 27:24), while smearing them by personally handing over the Innocent to be crucified.

As far as David knew, he confessed all his sins (Psa 25:18). He is, contrary to the deceit in verse 4, honest and integrous. He has clean hands. Therefore, he can boldly go to God's altar and go about it, that is worship there. On the altar, where the atoning sacrifice was brought, he can now offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.

The altar speaks of the Lord Jesus, as does the sacrifice, for the Lord Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice to God. The picture is that the believer who goes to the altar has fellowship with the Lord Jesus as well as with others

who are also there (cf. 1Cor 10:18; Lev 7:6,15). This is a huge contrast to the fellowship with sinners that David spoke of earlier, which he had no part in. Not only that, but he also greatly disliked their practice and attitude toward life (verse 5).

The worship service of the believer is to give thanks to God (verse 7). As in verse 6, it is still personal in this verse. Later, in verse 12, the heart expands and David does so in the midst of others in the congregations. We had something similar in Psalm 25, which was a personal struggle of David, but ends in an intercession for the people (Psa 25:22).

In the song of praise here, David sings of all the wonders God has done for him (Psa 66:16; 145:5-6). This is a great example for us to practice worship. We may “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Heb 13:15). There is always plenty of reason to honor God. Do we still see the wonders God has done and continues to do for us? Do we sing about them and tell Him about them?

In verse 8, David speaks of his love for the place where God’s altar stands. The elaborate way in which he speaks of God’s house makes it clear how important that place is to him. David speaks of “house” and “place”, a double expression of the dwelling place of God. This is a preparation for Psalm 27 where the house of God occupies a predominant place. In this sense, Psalm 26 is a bridge between Psalm 25 and Psalm 27.

For David, the house where God dwells is the tent where he brought the ark (cf. 2Sam 15:25). Later, this place is the temple. It is the dwelling place of God’s glory, the *shechinah*, the symbol of His presence. A house or a dwelling place is more than just a place to be, it is also to ‘feel at home’ there.

For us now, the church is the dwelling place of God. That is where His glory, which is Christ, lives. We can experience this when we come together as a church. The Lord Jesus said of that place: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Mt 18:20). Do we love that place too?

Psa 26:9-12 | Reward for Integrity

| 9 Do not take my soul away [along] with sinners,

*Nor my life with men of bloodshed,
 10 In whose hands is a wicked scheme,
 And whose right hand is full of bribes.
 11 But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity;
 Redeem me, and be gracious to me.
 12 My foot stands on a level place;
 In the congregations I shall bless the LORD.*

After his expressions of love for the dwelling place of God, David returns in verse 9 to the sinners and the men of bloodshed (cf. verses 4-5). He finds himself, as he has said, not in their company. He did not want to have to do with the lifestyle of the wicked. Now, therefore, he asks the LORD not to let him share in the fate of the wicked. The “sinners” are those who have yielded to a life of sin and rebellion against God. They are “the men of bloodshed”, or violent, bloodthirsty people.

God will take away their lives. This is just, for they have not washed their hands in innocence. On the contrary, their hands, their actions, are marked by “a wicked scheme” and bribery (verse 10). With them he does not want to be associated in life nor in death. He distances himself as far as possible from people who openly commit crimes and from people who secretly carry out their pernicious acts.

Very different, completely opposite, is his attitude, which he indicates by saying: “But as for me.” He repeats what he said in verse 1, that he goes his way in his “integrity” (verse 11). By beginning and ending with this point, he emphasizes it and now boldly asks for redemption.

At the same time, he asks that God be gracious to him. Here we see that David is not claiming a right to redemption because he is integrous. He is integrous, he realizes, because God made him so, and he lives integrous, he also realizes, because God enables him to do so. Redemption can never take place on the basis of any merit of man.

David testifies in the last verse of the answer to his prayer (verse 12). He says that his “foot stands on a level place”. It is a place that God has levelled for him, that is, a place from which God has removed all obstacles to stumbling, so that the believer is in no danger of wavering and stumbling (cf. Isa 40:4; 42:16).

Then David speaks about how he will “bless” or “praise the LORD” in “the congregations” of God’s people. This is also the beauty of the meetings of the Christian church. We come together and together we can glorify God for the work that His Son has accomplished for each member of the church personally and for the church as a whole.

The psalm calls for a careful self-examination of our dedication to God. It corresponds to what the apostle Paul says to the Corinthians in connection with partaking of the Lord’s Supper: “But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup” (1Cor 11:28). Those who take the Lord’s Supper seriously will examine themselves.

This self-examination, this “examining himself”, is necessary. Self-examination always has a result. It may be that we remember things that are not good; we can then get rid of them by confessing them (cf. Mt 5:23-24). It can also be that we are sincerely unaware of anything; then we can participate in the Lord’s Supper without fear.

Staying away from the Lord’s Supper or letting the Lord’s Supper pass us by is by no means the ideal solution. We would then let the obstacle or sin triumph over our love for the Lord Jesus. No, let us examine ourselves, get rid of the hindrance or the wrong and eat the bread in this way and drink the cup in this way, while we glorify Him for what He has done.

Psalm 27

Introduction

Psalm 27 is connected to the previous psalm by the desire for the dwelling place of God (Psa 26:8; 27:6). We hear here the desire of the believer who has confessed his sins (Psalm 25) and goes in integrity about the altar (Psalm 26) to dwell in the house of the LORD.

In Psalm 24 the question is raised: Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Psalm 25 speaks of longing for the LORD and Psalm 26 speaks of loving the house of the LORD. Psalm 27 speaks of staying in the house of the LORD where you may tell Him everything. You may spread there, like Hezekiah, as it were, the threatening letters before the LORD (Isa 37:14).

The psalmist, who is a type of the faithful remnant of Israel, has put his trust in the LORD in the past and He has not brought shame on that trust (verse 2). Now that danger threatens again (verse 3) – prophetically the king of the North, of whom Daniel and Isaiah speak at length –, the psalmist, like Hezekiah in Isaiah 38, decides to persevere and to put his trust in the LORD (cf. Mk 9:24).

The psalmist, or the faithful remnant, desires not only to stand in God's presence to serve Him, but to dwell with Him and to meditate [literally inquire] (verse 4). To meditate indicates that there is a desire to know Him better, Who He is, Who worked the great redemption, how beautiful He is.

This psalm is read by the Jews every day between the Feast of Booths and the day of atonement, ten days during which the Jews humble themselves before God. Humiliation is a condition to draw near to God (Isa 66:2).

The psalm can be divided as follows:

1. Confidence (verses 1-3).
2. Request (verses 4-12).
3. Renewed confidence (verses 13-14).

Psa 27:1-3 | Strong in the LORD

1 [A Psalm] of David.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;

Whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the defense of my life;

Whom shall I dread?

2 When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,

My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.

3 Though a host encamp against me,

My heart will not fear;

Though war arise against me,

In [spite of] this I shall be confident.

For “[a Psalm] of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

David begins this psalm by expressing his confidence in the LORD Himself (verse 1b). He does so in view of his enemies, for he speaks of “fear” and “dread”. He fears no one, not because the LORD *gives* him light and salvation, but because the LORD *is* his “light” and his “salvation” (cf. Mic 7:8b).

He needs light because darkness is all around him. Darkness here means without the LORD’s guidance and safekeeping, without the pillar of fire. By “light” we may think of the pillar of fire in the wilderness (Exo 13:21-22; Neh 9:12,19). Connected to this is what the Lord Jesus said: “I am the Light of the world” (Jn 8:12). And in Psalms, light is connected with truth (Psa 43:3) and joy (Psa 97:11) and is needed for salvation (Psa 18:27-28).

He needs salvation because he is in need. He feels his own weakness and also sees the strength of the enemy. Salvation means that the Lord helps him through it, He cares for him day by day (Psa 68:19), so that even though he is weak or even though the enemy is strong, he will arrive safely. Therefore, not darkness and distress control his thinking, but the LORD. The same is true of the “defense of my life”. In Hebrew, “defense of my life” literally means “the fortress of my life” (cf. Psa 18:2; 28:7).

He has no strength in himself to resist the adversaries and stay alive. The power of evil is a reality; he does not close his eyes to it. Yet this does not paralyze him because he does not compare the evil with his own strength,

but with the strength of God Who protects his life. He views evil from the presence of God and then he has peace and is without fear amidst evil (cf. Rom 8:35-39).

He recalls a situation when evildoers came upon him (verse 2). These people wanted to devour his flesh, indicating that they came at him like wild, tearful beasts. They were his “adversaries” and his “enemies”. Adversaries are men of his own people (cf. verse 12), enemies come from outside the people.

Then he saw how they themselves “stumbled and fell”. That is how God helped them. That is why there is no fear in his heart now, even if a host should encamp against him and a war should arise against him (verse 3). We have an example of this in Isaiah 36-37. He simply trusts in the LORD. In whom else?

His trust concerns the present (verse 1), the past (verse 2) and the future (verse 3; cf. Heb 13:8). This trust is put to the test (verses 4-12) and not ashamed, but strengthened and renewed (verses 13-14).

Prophetically, it is about the time of the great tribulation, when adversaries within their own people – the antichrist and his followers, that is, the unbelieving mass of the people – oppress the believing remnant. The enemies from outside the people (the Assyrians) will besiege the faithful remnant at the end of the great tribulation and make war on them. They will be robbed of all light. But then they look up and see the LORD there. He gives light, yes, He is light (see verse 1), in that dark period. The immediate consequence is that He is also their salvation. He will cause them to arrive safely in the realm of peace.

These verses are particularly applicable to the unshakable confidence of the Lord Jesus when He is taken captive to be condemned and crucified. When they come to take Him captive, He says: “This hour and the power of darkness are yours” (Lk 22:53). But God is His light. God is also His salvation, for He knows that God will save Him from death (Heb 5:7). He goes to the crowd that comes to take Him captive without fear and without anxiety. When He calls His Name, “I am” or I am the LORD, the I AM WHO I AM, they fall down (Jn 18:6; Exo 3:14).

Psa 27:4-6 | God's Dwelling Place

*4 One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD
And to meditate in His temple.
5 For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock.
6 And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me,
And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.*

Fear (verse 3) can be paralyzing. We see this with Peter in the storm (Mt 14:30). The answer is “one thing” (verse 4) and that is: to remain true to the Lord with, as it literally says, purpose of heart (Acts 11:23). Although the danger is great, as the second half of the psalm shows, the psalmist does not begin, as in some other psalms, with a cry for help, but with a song of praise of confidence (cf. 2Chr 20:21-22; Acts 16:22-25).

David has come to know the LORD as his light and salvation through his deliverance from his evildoers (verses 1-3). This does not cause him to enjoy his rest now, but it works in him a desire and an activity. He strongly desires to dwell in the house of the LORD and to behold His beauty and to meditate in His temple. “Behold” means that he longs for God Himself; “meditate” means that he longs for the knowledge of God’s will. His stay in the temple is also his greatest security against the enemies who seek his downfall.

This is the only thing, “one thing”, that he desires, and that for “all the days of my life” (cf. Psa 23:6). This is the “exclusiveness” of faith. It excludes everything else. Everything else is seen as loss and rubbish (cf. Phil 3:8). Only this “one thing” is important.

Many believers are not satisfied with ‘one thing’. They think that is too narrow-minded. You have to look more broadly; after all, there is more to enjoy. But what is there to enjoy apart from the beauty of God, His greatness and all His gracious features that we experience more and more as

we live with Him? What believer does not want to know more and more about that?

However, as soon as we add something besides Christ to give our attention to, we are no longer satisfied with 'one thing'. 'One thing' excludes everything else. The choice is not difficult if we consider that this 'one thing' also gives perfect satisfaction to life. Everything we add decreases that satisfaction.

There are more histories that show us the importance of "one thing". The Lord Jesus says of Mary that by sitting at His feet she has done "one thing" that is necessary and that she has thus chosen the good part (Lk 10:39,42). The blind-born, when he has become seeing, knows "one thing" (Jn 9:25); the rich young man lacks "one thing" (Lk 18:22; Mk 10:21); there is only "one thing" that Paul does (Phil 3:14).

The sanctuary is a shelter in which God causes the believer to take refuge and protect him "in the day of trouble" (verse 5). The word "for" explains why he does not ask for judgment on his enemies. He could do that, but new enemies will present themselves. Much rather he is in the shelter of God which provides security against all present and future enemies.

David calls the sanctuary "His tabernacle" or "His shelter". It is a simple hut of four posts with a roof of leaves, in which one who works in the fields can seek protection from the heat of the sun (Isa 4:6). It is also a place where God hides him "in the secret place of His tent". This is the private part of the tent. It indicates that the place of safety is also a place of personal intimacy with God, where no one else is present. Finally, David says that God lifts him up "on a rock". No enemy can reach that place or cause it to waver.

We also find this aspect with the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time. They will find refuge from evil with Christ. For this He will bring them to a safe place and there provide for them and supply them with what they need (cf. Rev 12:13-14).

Because of the safety and security, David can lift up his head above his enemies who surround him (verse 6). 'Lifting up his head' is metaphor for 'gaining victory' (cf. Psa 3:3; 110:7). The enemies may surround him, but

he is with his God and therefore above them. They cannot do anything to him, they cannot get to him, no matter how they roar and rage.

Next, David no longer looks to them, but to God. He expresses his confidence in full deliverance by saying that he will offer sacrifices of praise and thanks in God's tent, the tabernacle. He will do so "with shouts of joy". The hiding place becomes a place of loud, open praise. From the fullness of his heart he sings, yes, he sings psalms to the LORD.

Psa 27:7-10 | Seeking God's Face

*7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice,
And be gracious to me and answer me.*

*8 [When You said], "Seek My face", my heart said to You,
"Your face, O LORD, I shall seek."*

*9 Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;*

*Do not abandon me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation!*

*10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the LORD will take me up.*

Verses 7-12 are an elaboration of verse 4. It alternates between prayer (verses 7,9,11) and the reasons for prayer (verses 8,10,12). In verses 7-10 we hear the believer crying out to God for help and waiting for that help to come. The confession of trust in faith of verses 1-6 is now severely tested. Faith shines, but the test must prove whether it is real gold or fake gold.

The conviction that the LORD helps does not make prayer for help unnecessary. On the contrary, the need for it will be felt all the more. He also knows God as a God Who is angry over sin and therefore appeals to His grace (verse 7). He knows that an answer cannot be given on the basis of any merit of his own, but only on the basis of God's grace. He begs for an answer.

God's command to seek His face resonates in the heart of the believer (verse 8; Psa 24:6; cf. Deu 4:29). It is, so to speak, a 'commandment of grace' to do so. At the same time, it is also a privilege to be allowed to do it. David

seeks God's face and asks God not to hide His face from him (verse 9). He considers God could reject him in anger, because he realizes that he is unworthy – there have been things in his life about which God is angry. He calls himself "Your servant", which gives emphasis to his humble attitude toward God.

He also reminds God that He has been his help in the past. Surely then God will not abandon him and forsake him, will He? We hear in his addressing God with the words "O God of my salvation" how intensely he calls upon God and appeals to His salvation.

The dearest earthly relations of care are finite (verse 10; cf. Isa 49:15). They cannot provide the guarantee of unwavering and lasting reliability. David's parents did not literally leave him, for he himself left them and later took them to the king of Moab (1Sam 22:3-4). Forsaken here has the meaning of 'not being able to help'. If father and mother cannot be appealed to, God's faithfulness remains. He guarantees to accept anyone who expects his salvation from Him. Take up here means to lift up a child to help or comfort him (cf. Exo 19:4).

Psa 27:11-12 | The Enemies

*11 Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a level path
Because of my foes.*

*12 Do not deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries,
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.*

David asks God to teach him His way, that is, that He would instruct him in His commandments (verse 11). Connected to this, he asks if God will lead him "in a level path", that is, a path on which there is no danger of stumbling because the hindrances have been taken away (cf. Psa 26:12). He knows that he is only walking the right path when God leads him. The way of faith is a paved path for those who live according to God's Word. David asks this because the enemies, his assailants, are lurking on him to see if he deviates from the way, God's way, God's commandments, in order to then attack him.

The pressure of the enemies is great (verse 12). David knows the desire of his adversaries. They are the “false witnesses” who have risen against him and accuse him of all kinds of evil. They “breathe out violence”, meaning they want to violently kill him. We recognize this in the trial of the Lord Jesus. False witnesses rose against Him. They were deliberately sought by the accusers (Mt 26:59).

Psa 27:13-14 | Wait for the LORD

13 [I would have despaired] unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD

In the land of the living.

14 Wait for the LORD;

Be strong and let your heart take courage;

Yes, wait for the LORD.

David’s faith trust has been tested (verses 7-12), it has been purified, and it turns out to be gold. Verse 13 follows this up with a renewed confession of faith. He cannot imagine what would have become of him if he had not put his trust in the goodness of the LORD.

He knows that only “the goodness of the LORD” has kept him “in the land of the living” (verse 13; cf. Psa 52:5; Isa 38:11). If he had not believed that, then, yes, what? He does not complete his sentence. The words in brackets indicate that these words do not appear in the root text. It may well be intended to say that otherwise he would have despaired, as is done here, but this interpretation takes away something of the power of faith in the goodness of the LORD on which all emphasis is placed. It is only due to his faith that he is still alive. It demonstrates that faith trust will never be ashamed.

Here, prophetically, we listen to the faith of the remnant in the end time. During the judgments that come on the land, their confidence remains unshaken. It seems that they are in the land of death, but it is the land of the living. There is trust and therefore patience.

Therefore, the believer can wait for God in all times in the assurance that He will strengthen his heart (verse 14). Now that the psalmist has experienced that his faith trust has not been ashamed, he can exhort others to do the same as him.

It seems that David is saying this to himself, exhorting himself with this. The exhortation to wait for God is made twice in this one verse making the exhortation all the more urgent. It is an encouragement to have a powerful trust in God, to be strong in Him. Then in response He will strengthen his heart, give it the peace and assurance that He will help.

Psalm 28

Introduction

Psalm 27 and Psalm 28 are linked by the themes of salvation and strength (Psa 27:1; Psa 28:8) and by the theme of the sanctuary (Psa 27:4; 28:2). Psalm 28 is a prayer (verses 1-5) with thanksgiving (verses 6-9).

Once again David – and in him the believing remnant – turns to God in prayer. He begs Him to answer and raises his hands to the temple, more specifically to the “holy sanctuary” (verse 2). This is the holy of holies, containing the ark of the covenant, which is particularly associated with the presence of the LORD. David asks God not to drag him away along with the wicked and apostate, but to repay the enemies according to their deeds.

Beginning in verse 6, he expresses his trust in God, Who has heard him. He praises Him, for He has helped him (verse 5). At the end, the people recognize that the same power available to the Anointed is available for them. In the final verse, David prays for salvation and blessing for God’s people and inheritance and that He will take care for them and bring them safely to their destination.

Psa 28:1-5 | Prayer for Salvation

1 [A Psalm] of David.

To You, O LORD, I call;

My rock, do not be deaf to me,

For if You are silent to me,

I will become like those who go down to the pit.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help,

When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

3 Do not drag me away with the wicked

And with those who work iniquity,

Who speak peace with their neighbors,

While evil is in their hearts.

4 Requite them according to their work and according to the evil of their practices;

Requite them according to the deeds of their hands;

Repay them their recompense.

5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD

Nor the deeds of His hands,

He will tear them down and not build them up.

For “[a Psalm] of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

David calls “to You”, which is strongly emphasized in Hebrew by being at the beginning of the sentence (verse 1b). Because of the symmetry of verse 1 and verse 2, “to You, O LORD, I call” of verse 1 corresponds to “lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary” of verse 2. He calls God “my rock”. God is the living rock, a rock to Whom we can speak (cf. Num 20:8) and Who answers. He takes refuge in Him because He is the Unshakable. Rock is here the translation of the Hebrew *tsur*, which is a massive, low, black rock, the struck rock (Exo 17:6). Another Hebrew word for rock is *sela*, which is a high, layered sedimentary rock, the rock to which must be spoken (Num 20:8).

David asks if God will answer his prayer NOW and not be deaf to him. When God does not answer, but keeps Himself silent for him, for David it is like going down into the pit, where God pays no attention to him.

David asks God to hear the voice his “supplications” (verse 2). He knows where to be with his pleas. He must be in God’s “holy sanctuary”, which is the place where he can speak, where the ark is, in the holy of holies (cf. 1Kgs 6:19). That is where God lives and that is where he needs to be heard. He has no other option and does not want one. He raises his hands there in order to, as it were, lift up his heart, himself, to God and offer it to Him.

The fear of being dragged away with the wicked is deep in David (verse 3). He specifically asks that this will not happen after all. We might rather expect that he would ask for salvation for himself and for judgment on his enemies. In this prayer he asks for both in one sentence. In doing so, he expresses the firm conviction that the wicked will perish.

What David says here also applies to the faithful remnant in the end time. Their fear is also that they will perish with the wicked when God brings

His judgments on wicked Israel in the great tribulation. David knows that the judgment is meant for those wicked people and that they will surely be dragged away by the judgment. For they are people “who work iniquity”, such are their deeds. Also their speaking is corrupt. They do speak of peace with their neighbors, but in their hearts is evil. They are hypocrites.

The Lord Jesus, unlike David, did deliver Himself to His enemies, that is, He gave Himself into their hands when God’s time had come (Lk 22:53-54a). He was crucified along with two evildoers (Lk 23:33), thus sharing in their fate. He was “numbered among the transgressors” (Isa 53:12).

In verse 4, David asks God to requite to the wicked according to their practices. The emphasis on requital is striking. We see this in the word “according to” that he uses several times in this verse. He asks that God gives them “according to their work and according to the evil of their practices” and “requite them according to the deeds of their hands; repay them their recompense”. They need to be given their due.

The motive for asking the wicked to requite is, as always, their relationship to God. They do not pay attention to Him, they do not reckon with Him, there is no place for Him in their thinking (verse 5). The reproach is not that they do not keep His laws and commandments. What is reproached is that they “do not regard the works of the LORD nor to the deeds of His hands”. This contrasts with “the work of their hands” in the previous verse.

They are engaged in evil deeds, of which they are full. Therefore, there is no attention to the deeds of God (cf. Mt 11:20-21). Time and again God has punished the wicked and blessed the righteous. But God’s actions pass them by; they do not listen to the message that He has for them.

God’s response to this is clear: “He will tear them down and not build them up” (cf. Jer 1:10). It is, in fact, the answer to the prayer David uttered in the previous verses. All the works of the wicked will perish. They will be judged by Him, for they have done all their deeds without involving Him, without asking Him what He wants them to do. He will tear down their works irreparably. “Not building up” means that the judgment is final; with their downfall, their descendants will also be wiped out.

What they have built is built on sand and not on the rock. Therefore, it will not stand in the day of judgment (2Pet 3:10; Mt 7:24-27).

Psa 28:6-8 | God Has Heard and Helped

*6 Blessed be the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;
My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart exults,
And with my song I shall thank Him.
8 The LORD is their strength,
And He is a saving defense to His anointed.*

In verse 6, David praises the LORD that He has heard “the voice of my supplication” (cf. verse 2). The supplication of verses 1-4 now gives way to praise, for the LORD has heard the prayer. He is not deaf to him. He has clung to God as “my strength and my shield” (verse 7). The word “my” makes it clear that David is an ‘experience expert’, he has experienced that the LORD has answered his prayer and that brings him to praise.

In God’s strength he has been able to push back his enemies. Because God is his shield, the attacks of the enemy were unsuccessful. A shield provides shelter on one side, but God protects on all sides. His heart continued to trust in Him. That is precisely why he uttered his loud supplications to Him. And behold, he was helped.

His heart, which at first was so full of distress, is now full of joy about God’s help. His confidence has not been shaken. God never shames the confidence of His own who continue to hope in Him, even though He seems to be so far away. David will praise Him with his song. He expresses his gratitude in a song to His glory.

In verse 8, David involves others in his experiences. David’s experiences are not unique. They are the experiences of all who put their trust in God. Therefore, the people of God can identify with David. The LORD is not only his strength, but also “their strength”. By this is meant those who are with him. Prophetically, it refers to the faithful remnant in the end time. They must learn to make the choice between trusting in people and

trusting in God (Psa 121:1-8). Ahaz chose not to trust God (Isa 7:12), while Hezekiah chose to do so (Isa 36:14-15).

To his trust in the saving defense of the LORD, David immediately connects “His anointed”, which is the Messiah. Anointed is the translation of the Hebrew Messiah. Here we are talking about the anointed King. The saving defense with which the LORD assists the remnant is the same saving defense with which He assists His Messiah.

Psa 28:9 | Prayer for God’s People

*9 Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.*

In the previous verse, David included the Anointed in his prayer. This causes his personal need to fade into the background and that in this verse he becomes an intercessor for God’s people. He asks God four things for them. The first is: “Save Your people.” The people are *God’s* people. Therefore he appeals to God as the Savior of His people.

Connected to that He asks: “Bless Your inheritance.” His people is His personal property (Exo 19:4-5; 34:9; Psa 74:2; 1Pet 2:9). In doing so, He appeals to God as the Possessor or Owner of His people. These two questions remind us of the position the people hold toward God, of the close connection between God and His people.

This leads him to two further questions that relate to the practice of the people, about the way they should go. The third question is about God’s care for them, to “be their shepherd”. He asks God if He will provide rest and food for His people who are in distress and tribulation. He appeals to God as the Shepherd of His people (Psa 23:1; 80:1b).

The fourth question, and with this he concludes his prayer, is: “Carry them forever.” With this he appeals to God’s fatherly and motherly feelings for His people. To carry with care requires strength and love. God does not carry a burden, but His people (Deu 1:31; Isa 40:11; 46:3). The intercessor asks God to take His people in His arms and carry them to the blessing of the realm of peace and to do so throughout the entire duration of it. By “forever” is meant the realm of peace. He carries them with “everlasting arms” (Deu 33:27; Isa 46:4).

It is a beautiful conclusion to a prayer that began with loud supplications. It ends with an appeal to God's love and His power, in the realization of own helplessness, being unable to make it in own strength. This is a prayer that God loves to hear and answer. How wonderful it is to have a God to Whom this can be asked and of Whom we know for sure that He answers such a prayer. That God is also our God! We may ask it for ourselves and also for others.

Psalm 29

Introduction

To the prayer in Psalm 28 where judgment on the enemies is asked, in this psalm God's answer is given. God will make His voice sound full of power and majesty at His time. That will mean judgment for the wicked and salvation and joy for the remnant.

In this psalm we do not hear the cry of an afflicted in distress, but the power of God is displayed. This is done to encourage the faithful. He Who cares for them is more powerful than all the mighty rulers of earth who are still in control today and who often make life so difficult for the faithful.

The description of God's power is connected to His voice which is compared to a violent thunderstorm. This makes it clear that God is greater than Baal, the Canaanite idol of storm and thunder. His voice is the answer to the voice of David (Psa 28:2). One of the characteristic features of a person is his voice. David recognizes in the thunder the voice of God (cf. Job 37:2-5a).

Psa 29:1-2 | Ascribe to the LORD Glory

1 A Psalm of David.

Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty,

Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name;

Worship the LORD in holy array.

For "a Psalm of David" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

In this psalm, David calls on "the sons of the mighty", the mighty rulers, the great ones of the earth, to "ascribe to the LORD glory and strength" (verse 1b). With this he is calling for their acknowledgment of it. They are to ascribe to Him "the glory due to His Name" (verse 2). Several times in verses 1b-2 the mighty rulers are told that He is "the LORD", the Name that emphasizes His covenant with His people. In the entire psalm, that Name occurs eighteen times. There is clear emphasis on it (cf. Isa 42:8).

The command is appropriate: “Worship the LORD in holy array.” This will happen without any resistance. Where He dwells, everything is glorious and holy. With Him there is no contradiction between glory and holiness. One of His glories is His holiness. Both features of Him compel the rulers of the earth to worship Him.

The three times repeated “ascribe”, seems to imply a certain unwillingness. But they cannot escape it. One day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:10-11).

Psa 29:3-9 | The Mighty Voice of God

*3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;
The God of glory thunders,
The LORD is over many waters.*

*4 The voice of the LORD is powerful,
The voice of the LORD is majestic.*

*5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.*

*6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
And Sirion like a young wild ox.*

7 The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.

*8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.*

*9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”*

The psalm is characterized by a repetition of words, giving the impression of repeating thunders. Seven times in these verses “the voice of the LORD” is spoken of. This gives this psalm its nickname: the psalm of the seven thunders.

With the exception of the seventh time, “the voice of the LORD” always speaks in connection with judgment. The seventh time the voice of God speaks to bring forth new life. That His voice sounds mighty seven times cannot but work deep awe for that Majesty. His works are mighty and

mighty is also His directing of history. These verses describe His glory and honor over all creation: over the air, the sea, the land and the wilderness.

The first time we hear the voice of the LORD sound “upon the waters” (verse 3). Waters are often a picture of the nations living in rebellion against God (cf. Isa 57:20). “The God of glory thunders” terrifyingly over them. God is “over many waters”, He rules over them, they are in His power. Therefore, He can save His people when they have to go through the waters (Isa 43:2; Exo 14:21-22).

The voice of God is powerful and majestic (verse 4). When God speaks, it is always with power. He reveals Himself in His speaking, something of Him then becomes visible. We see this in creation (Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24). Everything comes about by His mighty speaking; and whatever He has created, He also upholds by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). In creation we see “His eternal power and divine nature” (Rom 1:20). In it He speaks (Psa 19:1b) and reveals Himself. And when He reveals Himself, He glorifies Himself.

God’s power and majesty are expressed in a storm; they become tangible in it. A storm is a way of speaking of God. As a result, cedars are broken, “yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon” (verse 5). Cedars here are a picture of proud man, who will be humbled by the LORD (Isa 2:11-13,17). Not only the proud man will be humbled, but whole nations, which are compared to mountains like “Lebanon” and “Sirion” (verse 6), which is Mount Hermon (Deu 3:8-9). Sirion is the Phoenician name for Mount Hermon. The Phoenician name emphasizes that in this psalm a contradiction with the Phoenician idol Baal is highlighted.

These mighty mountains in the north of Israel skip by His voice “like a calf” and “like a young wild ox”. He deals with them as if they were playful, young animals. Mountains are immovable to us humans, but by the voice of God even these immovable mountains start skipping like a calf and a young wild ox.

Unlike the surrounding verses which consist of two parallel phrases, verse 7 consists of only one powerful verse which we can therefore consider the center and core of this psalm. The earthquake created by God’s speaking in the previous verse is accompanied by the fiery flames that God hews out

of the clouds, as it were. It resembles His glittering sword with which He brings vengeance upon His adversaries (Deu 32:41; cf. Rev 19:15). In the face of that greatness, man shrinks (Jer 10:13-14).

From Lebanon and Sirion in the north, the storm rages on to the wilderness of Kadesh in the south (verse 8). The entire land is ravaged by God's judgments to requite the shedding of the blood of innocent people.

By His voice, God brings forth new life (verse 9). This verse refers back to the beginning of Psalm 22, 'the hind of the dawn' (Psa 22:1). That deer or hind here becomes deer that cast young. Through the connection to Psalm 22, we can say that God gives new life on the basis of the death of the Anointed. The deer is a picture of the faithful remnant (cf. Psa 42:1b). They go through the great tribulation, in which they have so often despaired of life, and then come to new life, as it were.

The forests are stripped bare by the storm. The trees stand bare after the storm. All their glory is gone. The trees here are a picture of the greatness of man (Dan 4:20-22). In this picture we see that after the judgments of God man is completely stripped of all his glory and stands naked before God. God glorifies Himself through judgment.

After the cleansing of the land, the sanctuary will be cleansed. The temple will be rebuilt by the antichrist who will let himself be worshiped there as God. Then God intervenes, for whoever comes into His temple must give Him glory. Everywhere, in all creation, the honor of God is visible. No one will worship anything or anyone else anymore. Everyone will say to Him what they see: Glory!

Psa 29:10-11 | God Is King Forever

10 The LORD sat [as King] at the flood;

Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.

11 The LORD will give strength to His people;

The LORD will bless His people with peace.

These verses are the answer to the prayer in verses 1-2. In verse 10 we see Who the LORD is as the One Who has power over everything. In verse 11 we see Who He is to His people.

His dominion over all is shown in His rule over the flood (verse 10). This speaks of the judgment He brings on the earth, a judgment similar to the “flood” of the deluge (Gen 6:17). The LORD “sits as King” above it, He rules over it, it is His judgment. But just as with the deluge then, He keeps a remnant during the judgments.

Just as a new world emerged after the deluge, so also this judgment storm is needed if there is to be a new world, a new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:17-25). On that earth cleansed by judgment, the remnant spared by Him may dwell under the rule of the Lord Jesus, Who reigns as King from Jerusalem. His reign does not end; it is an eternal reign (Dan 2:44).

God has taken away the power of the mighty rulers of verse 2 and hands it over to “His people” (verse 11). Israel will exercise world domination with the LORD in their midst and do so from the peace with which they have been blessed by His God. There will be an abundance of peace that will fill the whole earth (Psa 72:7-8). It is the peace that prevails on earth after the tempestuous storms.

For the practice of our life of faith, the psalm is an encouragement. Those who are in trouble because they are treated with hostility by the world see here that God is in control of everything. He has the power to strike down the strongest opposition. When the believing heart considers this, it receives strength to persevere and there is peace in Him.

Psalm 30

Introduction

The psalm is a song of thanksgiving after deliverance from great distress, possibly an illness, similar to the illness of Hezekiah (Isa 38:1-6). It is a picture of the inner restoration of the people in the future, followed by songs of praise.

Psa 30:1-5 | Song of Thanksgiving

1 A Psalm; a Song at the Dedication of the House. [A Psalm] of David.

*I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my enemies rejoice over me.*

2 O LORD my God,

I cried to You for help, and You healed me.

3 O LORD, You have brought up my soul from Sheol;

You have kept me alive, that I would not go down to the pit.

4 Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones,

And give thanks to His holy name.

5 For His anger is but for a moment,

His favor is for a lifetime;

Weeping may last for the night,

But a shout of joy [comes] in the morning.

Now that the LORD has answered the prayer of the remnant (Psalm 28) and has appeared (Psalm 29), the enemies are defeated (Psalm 30) and David can dedicate his house, which means he can move into his palace (verse 1a). At the same time, the dedication is portrayed as the healing of an illness.

For “[a Psalm] of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David extols the LORD because He has “lifted” him “up” from an illness that has brought him close to the pit (verse 1b; cf. verse 3). “Lifted up” is also used for ‘lifted up out of the water’ (cf. Jer 38:7-13) and thereby saved from drowning. His enemies hoped and rejoiced that he would die of his

disease. Through his healing, the LORD deprived them of the opportunity to rejoice over that.

He cried out to the LORD his God in great distress and his healing was the answer to his prayer (verse 2). The exalted God has come down and brought up his "soul from Sheol" (verse 3). God has kept him alive and thereby set him apart from those who go down to the pit, that is into the grave. He praises God for the contrast that he has been "brought up" and not gone "down to the pit".

David not only thanks God himself, but calls on all God's "godly ones" to do so together with him (verse 4). The solo song is to become a choral song. And what is the subject of the praise here? God's holiness, which here is the holiness of His Name in connection with His faithfulness to the covenant. "Godly ones" are those who are faithful to the covenant – Hebrew *chasidim*, a term also used today for orthodox Jews.

David calls for giving thanks to "His holy name". Because God is holy, He wants His own to be holy as well. If that lacks, He brings discipline into their lives, causing them to remove what is wrong so that He can have fellowship with them again and make them happy again (Heb 12:9-11; 1Pet 1:14-19).

The anger of God lasts "but for a moment" (verse 5; cf. Isa 54:7-8). After that, when the anger has accomplished His purpose, there is enjoying His "favor ... for a lifetime". In the night of trial there is "the weeping" over sins. But after the night of weeping, in the morning there is "a shout of joy" over deliverance.

With the days of creation we see the same order: "Then it was evening and it was morning", and then comes the next day. Each new morning is born out of the night. It is like the opening words of Psalm 22, the psalm of Christ's suffering, which has in its heading "the hind of the dawn" (Psa 22:1). This indicates that after suffering, the dawn comes that announces a new day without end.

The Lord Jesus wept at night in Gethsemane, for a night of suffering came upon Him. But did He not then rejoice in the resurrection? He came into the midst of His disciples and rejoiced with them. The joy that began then will never end.

Psa 30:6-10 | Call to the LORD

6 *Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,*

"I will never be moved."

7 *O LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong;*

You hid Your face, I was dismayed.

8 *To You, O LORD, I called,*

And to the Lord I made supplication:

9 *"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?*

Will the dust praise You? Will it declare Your faithfulness?

10 *"Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me;*

O LORD, be my helper."

In this section we hear the story of distress and salvation. It begins with an emphatic "now as for me, I" (verse 6). David tells of a period in his life that he describes as "I will never be moved". During that period he said or thought that he would not waver forever. There is no notion in his mind of the possibility of a change in those circumstances. Is this naiveté that necessitated God's discipline, bringing him close to death? Does he resemble Nebuchadnezzar here who also once experienced such a period of pride and was punished by God for his pride (Dan 4:4-5,29-31)?

It is not easy to answer that question. There is a difference between David and Nebuchadnezzar. David says in verse 7 that he owed his prosperity, his carefree rest, to God's favor, for He had made his "mountain to stand strong". By this David seems to mean his kingdom, which had the firmness of a mountain. With Nebuchadnezzar, it was clearly only pride.

Also God's people are later addressed by God about their prosperity, but God adds that they don't want to listen (cf. Jer 22:21). With David it is different. In him it is clear that he saw God's hand in his prosperity. It is also possible that he had forgotten this and acknowledges it afterwards, here, as the real reason for his prosperity, after he had suffered God's discipline.

Whatever way we are to interpret his prosperity, the lesson for us is that we should not put our trust in the prosperity we may have, but in God. If we have no worries, if we are healthy and have everything we need, if our children and grandchildren are doing well, then we are experiencing

a period of 'prosperity', of 'carefree rest'. The thought can then arise that we 'will never be moved'.

This notion does not have to mean that we are completely apart from God, as it does not seem to be the case here with David either. We realize that we owe it to Him and say to Him: 'Lord, through Your favor we have this unwavering rest. My mountain stands strong.' 'My mountain' we can then apply to the 'little kingdom' we may have, an area we control and the management of which we are doing well. Our gaze has become more focused on our prosperity and peace as something that cannot be moved, than on the Lord.

The Lord, in His grace, makes David aware of this by hiding His face from him. The result is that David "was dismayed" (cf. 2Sam 12:1-13). This is also evidence that David is not really apart from the Lord. He cannot live without Him. However, his attention was focused more on his prosperity than on Him Who had given it to him. That is a dangerous situation that can be the beginning of a different course and therefore of a different end.

With David, hiding God's face has the desired effect of God: he starts calling to Him (verse 8). He realizes again that he is dependent on God. In the time of prosperity he will also have prayed, but possibly more thoughtlessly. For example, we can pray "give us this day our daily bread" because there is a real lack of daily bread. If we have everything, and even have a supply for several days, we can also pray this, but the danger becomes great that it has no meaning.

We can also apply this to health and sickness. David seems to have been felled by an illness, and by such a serious one that death was imminent. How then all prosperity becomes relative. He begins to pray, to call to God, to plead with God.

David points out to God in his prayer that he cannot praise Him if he will die (verse 9). The dust to which he returns when he dies has no voice. Surely then that means no profit to God, does it? What God will profit from is being praised for His salvation. That will also result in a declaration of His faithfulness to the world.

At this point in his prayer, David makes an urgent appeal to God to listen to him and to be gracious to him (verse 10). At the brink of death, everyone

knows that he can do nothing himself. Then he needs grace from God and God as Helper. He feels the need for God to support and guide him from moment to moment.

Psa 30:11-12 | Mourning Turns to Gladness

*11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,
12 That [my] soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.*

Only God can turn suffering into joy. Here we find the blessing of restorative grace from God. God “loosed” his “sackcloth”, the sign of mourning and penance. After salvation, there can be a time of joy. David sees the difference between his distancing from God and his healing as the difference between a mourning lamentation at a funeral and the gladness of a wedding (verse 11; Isa 61:3; Jer 31:13; Isa 3:24; Lam 5:15).

He has every reason that his “soul”, literally his “glory”, that is the glory of his majesty, sings praise to God (verse 12). For the continuance and restoration of His kingship He thanks God. He cannot be silent about that. His praise is not only temporary, not only at the time of restoration and answer to prayer, but he will praise the LORD his God “forever”. What God has done for us in His discipline over us will be reason to praise Him forever.

Psalm 31

Introduction

The psalm describes David's experience in a manner that also applies to the believing remnant. It is a plea and an expression of their trust. Some of the statements apply to the Lord Jesus, such as verse 5. The words of the first line of that verse are spoken by Him on the cross (Lk 23:46). Many portions of this psalm can also be applied to us.

David wrote the psalm in a time of great distress. It is the prayer of a person who is despised, blasphemed and persecuted. David experienced such a situation many times. We can see, therefore, that many of his psalms originated from it. In this psalm he encourages the depressed believer to love the Lord and be strong, for the Lord will keep him because his times are in His hand. The believer's life is in the hand of God, not in those of enemies or circumstances.

Several times in this psalm we see the transition from supplication to thanks and vice versa from thanks to supplication:

First cycle:

1. prayer (verses 1b-2),
2. trust (verses 3-5a) and
3. thanks (verses 5b-8).

Second cycle:

1. complaint (verses 9-13),
2. trust (verses 14-15a),
3. prayer (verses 15b-18) and
4. thanks (verses 19-24).

We see in them a representation of life, which has its ups and downs. Sometimes we are high on the mountain and other times deep in a valley.

After the valley we climb up again, jubilantly, after which we can have another period of need. But the psalm ends with thanks and encouragement.

Psa 31:1-2 | Call for Salvation

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;

Let me never be ashamed;

In Your righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;

Be to me a rock of strength,

A stronghold to save me.

For “for the choir director” (verse1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David says to the LORD that he has “taken refuge” in Him (verse 1b). With the emphasis on “in You” he declares that he trusts in God and has taken refuge in Him, “the LORD”. The LORD is the God Who is faithful to the covenant, the I AM WHO I AM. The psalm also ends with an encouragement to those who put their hope in the LORD (verse 24).

The LORD is his only shelter. He has no one else, nor does he want anyone else. He can ask no one else not to let him be ashamed. Only the LORD is able to prevent that and to do so in a way that it will never ever happen. For this he does not appeal to the grace of God, but to His “righteousness”.

The case for which he is praying involves false accusations and vicious attacks by enemies. Against these, God must act in righteousness and deliver him, otherwise he will be ashamed of his trust in Him. Righteousness here means that God will act in accordance with the covenant He made with Israel. If God hands him over into the hand of his enemies, it will also give the enemies cause to blaspheme the Name of God.

In short sentences he begs God to incline His ear to him (verse 2), that is, to pay attention to his plea. He begs for a quick rescue, because time is running out, the need is growing by the minute. And also whether God will yet be “a rock of strength”, that is, a rock house (Psa 18:2), and “a stronghold” for him “to save” him. It makes clear how much the enemies

are pressing on him and are already so close to him that they almost lay hands on him.

Psa 31:3-8 | Trust and Gladness

*3 For You are my rock and my fortress;
For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.
4 You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You are my strength.
5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.
6 I hate those who regard vain idols,
But I trust in the LORD.
7 I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have known the troubles of my soul,
8 And You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a large place.*

In verse 3, David directly expresses confidence that God is to him what he asked in verse 2. We find several synonyms for God in connection with confidence: strong rock, fortress (verses 2,3). The LORD is the rock, Whose work is perfect (Deu 32:4): this says something about the LORD's willingness and ability to deliver His people.

Already during a prayer made in faith, the prayer receives the assurance of its being answered. This experience of David – and in the end time of the remnant – is a wonderful incentive for us to take refuge in God in faith. We will then also experience that “He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb 11:6).

Having been strengthened by the hearing, David prays on, asking God to lead him and guide him and to do so “for Your name's sake”. The honor of God is connected to the fate of His people. His name is dishonored when things turn bad for His people (cf. Psa 23:3; 106:8). Here the psalmist returns to Psalm 23 where the LORD is seen as the good Shepherd (Psa 23:1).

The way is full of dangers. The enemies are lurking. To avoid falling into their hands he asks the LORD to lead him. He also asks God to guide him,

in which is contained the question to do it with patience. How we too need to ask that! The motive is not so much that we will be kept if God is our Guide, but that His Name will be glorified.

In verse 4, David speaks of what his enemies are doing to him. They have secretly laid an invisible net for him. David often complains in Psalms about nets and traps that his enemies have laid to catch him with. He asks if God will pull him out of it and free him from its danger. He himself cannot do it, but God, of Whom he says "You are my strength", can.

David commits his spirit, which is his life or breath of life, into God's hand (verse 5). This is a culmination of trust, it is trust unto death. This applies in fullness only to the Lord Jesus. We are admonished, though, to imitate this trust (1Pet 4:19).

David cannot protect his spirit, his life, himself and therefore places it in God's hand. We hear the Lord Jesus speak the same words as He hangs on the cross, at the end of His suffering on the cross (Lk 23:46). There are, however, differences from what David says. We see, as noted above, that our confidence is weak, while that of the Lord Jesus is perfect.

These words occur in the evening prayer of the Jews before they go to sleep. 'To commit' means 'to entrust temporarily', a kind of deposit, a deposit of savings to be withdrawn later. Here it expresses the expectation that the Lord Jesus will rise. With the Jews and with David it expresses the expectation that they will rise from sleep the next day.

Further, we see that these words from David's mouth imply a request for protection. It means that he no longer makes plans himself, but leaves it to God. This is also different with the Lord Jesus. He has always done everything in perfect agreement with His God and Father. With Him, committing His spirit into the hand of His Father is His final act of dedication, of Self-surrender. No one has taken His life, His life-breath, from Him. He surrenders His spirit Himself, He lays down His life Himself because He received a commandment from the Father to do so (Jn 10:17-18).

David's spirit was not taken from him, for God made sure he kept his life. He testifies with gratitude that the "LORD", the "God of truth", or "faithful God" as it can also be translated, can and will redeem. God has proven that He is the faithful God or the God of truth. Opposite to that God David

places his enemies, as people “who regard vain idols” (verse 6) or people who put their trust in these puny gods, these empty vanities. He contrasts this with emphasis, “I”, that he trusts in the LORD.

David has great joy because of the lovingkindness of God (verse 7). After all, God has seen his misery. And not only that. He has known the troubles of David’s soul, that is, He has not only taken note of it, but participated in it. It implies a deep knowledge that was gained through intimacy.

David thanks God that He has not given him over “into the hand of the enemy”, but on the contrary has set his “feet in a large place” (verse 8). We can think here of the persecution by Saul who surrounded him at some moment and that God delivers him from it (1Sam 23:26-28).

Psa 31:9-13 | Prayer in Distress

*9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body [also].
10 For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away.
11 Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,
Especially to my neighbors,
And an object of dread to my acquaintances;
Those who see me in the street flee from me.
12 I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
13 For I have heard the slander of many,
Terror is on every side;
While they took counsel together against me,
They schemed to take away my life.*

In this section we hear again a prayer in distress. David’s trust is tested, resulting in exercises of faith. Before God, he has expressed his trust in Him. Now comes the practice: he sees his enemies. Then David notices that he has, so to speak, the treasure in an earthen vessel, and that the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. Therefore, he appeals to God’s grace here,

so that later he may find, as Paul experienced, that when he is weak, he is strong (in the Lord).

The prayer in distress in this section goes deeper than the supplication in verse 1b. There David appeals to God's *righteousness*, here to His *grace*. He portrays his affliction, he spreads out his distress before God. He is in distress (verse 9). His earlier experience in verse 8, that his feet were set in a large place by God, he seems to have forgotten. Reality seizes him again. But he goes with that reality to God, of Whom he said in verse 3 that He is his rock and fortress.

Just when the harsh reality of circumstances overwhelms him, he speaks to God about his distress. He is weakened from grief. His eye is wasted away, he no longer sees all things clearly; his soul is also wasted away. He can't bear it anymore. He can hardly gather the strength to go on living; he is tired of life. His bones are wasted away as well; he is exhausted within, in his emotional life.

Prolonged sorrow destroys a person's strength; his life wastes away because of it (verse 10). The only thing he can do is sigh, because he no longer has words to express his sorrow. So the years go by. He realizes that his strength has failed because of his "iniquity". Here again we find a great difference between David and the Lord Jesus. David speaks of *his* iniquity, while the Lord has taken our iniquities upon Himself.

Here David is no longer speaking of his enemies, but of his own sinfulness. As a result, he can no longer walk in faith. His body or substance has wasted away.

Besides his inner distress there is also the distress that is inflicted on him by others, from outside (verse 11). He has many adversaries and "all" those adversaries have caused him to become "a reproach". His "neighbors", the people with whom he interacted regularly, whom he could expect to be 'a good neighbor' (cf. Pro 27:10), have turned against him the most.

Neighbors are people who live nearby, while "acquaintances" are friends, people close to your heart. Even for his "acquaintances" he has become an object of dread. They see him as a leper, someone with whom it is better to have no contact. That's why they keep well away from him when they see

him coming in the distance. They avoid him like the plague. This is also what the Lord Jesus experienced.

He feels like a dead man, someone who has been forgotten, out of mind, someone who is ignored, to whom no one cares (verse 12). Here it really is 'out of sight, out of mind'. Nobody thinks of him anymore. He has become "like a broken vessel", like a useless utensil, of no use to anyone. His life lies in sherds, it is broken beyond repair.

Then there is the slander about him all around (verse 13). On the one hand he is forgotten, he is ignored and shunned like a leper, but on the other hand people talk about him, they speak ill of him. He hears what they say. It is all slander. He feels that he is surrounded by enemies, causing fear to overcome him from all sides. For they conspire against him and devise plans to put him to death. He is already being treated as a dead man and now they want to actually end his life.

This way of talking behind someone's back is nowadays called 'mobbing'. Mobbing can be defined as humiliating, intimidating or hostile behavior that is systematically directed at the same person, who is unable to defend himself. This is a tried and tested means of bringing someone down. They intend to literally neutralize him, to get rid of him. With the Lord Jesus this literally happened, when the decision was made to kill Him (Jn 11:53).

Mobbing is used in the world, for example in a work situation toward a colleague. It can also happen in professing Christianity, as it happened here with David. Not only in the world, but especially in Christianity, the most horrible slander against the Lord Jesus is proclaimed. Believers also suffer from these practices. The following verses of this psalm show what we should do in such cases.

Psa 31:14-18 | Trust and Prayer

*14 But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD,
I say, "You are my God."*

*15 My times are in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.*

*16 Make Your face to shine upon Your servant;
Save me in Your lovingkindness.*

17 Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I call upon You;

Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.

18 Let the lying lips be mute,

Which speak arrogantly against the righteous

With pride and contempt.

This section repeats themes from previous sections, e.g., “ashamed” (verses 1b,17), “save me” (verses 2,15), “Your hand” (verses 5,15).

When everyone turns away from David and opposes him, he turns to God and says, “But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD” (verse 14). David here is a hero of faith, having overcome the enemy by faith (Heb 11:34). He repeats his confession of verse 6: “But I trust in the LORD.” He does so not only in prosperity, but also and especially in adversity. Just like Job. David’s trust was put to the test, and it turns out to be real, real gold.

The sentence begins with “but”, so that the contrast with the forgoing becomes clear. He says emphatically “I” and just as emphatically “in You”. He then underlines his full trust in God by making the personal confession: “I say, “You are my God.”” Here we hear where he gets the strength from not to be discouraged by all the above-mentioned defamation, slander and opposition. We may also, when life becomes difficult for us, express this as a confession of our faith.

In doing so, we may know, just as David says next, that our lives are not in the hand of men, but of God (verse 15). Our times are in God’s hand, not in those of our enemies, no matter how great their power and their hatred. For example, the Jews wanted to kill the Lord and said, not at the feast, while the Lord says He would be killed at the feast and so it happened.

He determines the times in our lives, times of prosperity and times of adversity, the time of trial and the time of redemption, yes, all times (cf. Ecc 3:1-8). He also determines the length of our lives and not the enemy when he plans to kill us. Therefore, the believer who lives in a time of adversity is urged to place his life in the hand of the faithful Creator (1Pet 4:19).

Because his times are in God’s hand, David prays that God will save him from that other hand, the hand of his enemies and persecutors. He asks God to make His face shine upon him (verse 16; cf. Num 6:24-25), for now

it seems that God's face is not visible, while the face of his enemies and persecutors becomes more and more visible.

David addresses himself to God as His "servant". That is what he is as God's anointed king. Because he is in need as God's servant, he asks God to save him in His lovingkindness. He is aware of his failure as a servant. At the same time, he is aware of God's lovingkindness that is available to failing servants. Therefore, he appeals to it.

He asks God not to let him be put to shame, for he calls upon Him (verse 17). Then God must hear, right? The wicked, yes, they must be put to shame by God. They must be silenced by death, so that they can no longer speak their pernicious words. His enemies are out to put him to death. Here David asks that God takes away their lives.

Their mouths must be shut forever, for they have lying lips (verse 18). They do nothing but libel, deceive, slander, and speak lies. It is speaking "arrogantly against the righteous". The wicked look down on him "with pride and contempt". The "righteous" here is singular, that is, it refers to the individual believer. Surely we will think primarily of the Righteous One, the Lord Jesus. How much haughty language was spoken against Him.

Psa 31:19-22 | Song of Praise

*19 How great is Your goodness,
Which You have stored up for those who fear You,
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of men!
20 You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of
man;
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.
21 Blessed be the LORD,
For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city.
22 As for me, I said in my alarm,
"I am cut off from before Your eyes";
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.*

So far it has been about the prospect that God will give salvation. From now on it is about looking back how God has given salvation (cf. verse 22). We can therefore consider the section from verse 19 as a psalm of thanksgiving (see introduction to this psalm).

After David has expressed his distress because of the wicked, he speaks again in verse 19 about the goodness of God. He is impressed by the “goodness” of God Himself that He has “stored up for those who fear” Him. This “goodness” includes all blessings. God has stored these up for His own, which means that He has secured them against any corruption or loss. What He has stored up, He has also prepared Himself, the whole package of blessings He Himself composed (1Cor 2:9).

Here it is again clear that to fear God does not mean to be afraid of Him, but to be in awe of Him in confidence. Indeed, those who fear Him take refuge in Him. This happens “before the sons of men”. People see believers taking refuge in a God they do not see. They see His blessing and preservation for those who trust Him.

There comes a time when God will make believers, along with the blessings He has stored up and prepared for them, visible to the people of the world. God’s children, now misunderstood by the world, and the treasures of heaven, now despised by the world, will be exhibited to the world in Christ Himself when He appears on the clouds (2Thes 1:9-10).

Those who take their refuge in Him He hides “in the secret place of Your presence”, that is, He protects them with His presence (verse 20; cf. Jer 36:26). God’s presence not only gives light, as in verse 16, but also a place of refuge. Those who take refuge in Him are safely hidden with Him. He is the guarantee of their hiding.

Thus we see that God keeps the “goodness” for His own (verse 19) and that He keeps His own for the “goodness” (verse 20). This ‘double keeping’ applies to both Old Testament and New Testament believers. Peter writes about this in his first letter (1Pet 1:3-5).

Because God hides the believing remnant (cf. Rev 12:13-14), they are un-touchable “from the conspiracies of man”. This “man” is the antichrist. As in Psalm 27, David also speaks here of “keep them secretly in a shelter” (Psa 27:5). This shelter provides not only protection, but also intimacy or

fellowship with God. This is the counterbalance to “the strife of tongues” of which the God-fearing are the object.

Again David bursts into a song of praise (verse 21). The occasion, indicated by the word “for”, are the wonders God has done to him. He further describes those wonders as wonders of “His lovingkindness”, by which God has brought him “in a besieged city”. As a result, he has not become the prey of his adversaries, and the strife of tongues, though deeply wounded by it, has not caused him any permanent damage.

He has been, because of the pressure of his enemies, in doubt for a moment whether God had an eye for the seriousness of his situation. This led him to the hasty statement to God that he had been cut off from before His eyes (verse 22). For a moment it seemed that he would fall victim to the enmity he was experiencing after all, as if God did not hear his cry. Immediately he corrects himself and says that God did hear the voice of his supplications when he cried to Him.

Psa 31:23-24 | Encouragement

*23 O love the LORD, all you His godly ones!
The LORD preserves the faithful
And fully recompenses the proud doer.
24 Be strong and let your heart take courage,
All you who hope in the LORD.*

David has learned from what has happened to him. He wants to share those lessons with others. Through his experiences he appeals to God’s godly ones, not only to praise God, but to love Him (verse 23). The name “godly ones” means that it concerns believers who are in the undeserved favor of God.

In New Testament words it refers to those who have been “favored or made pleasant in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). This God, Who has accepted us in favor or grace and has also made us experience His favor or grace so many times, is worth loving with our whole heart. This will also be expressed in praising Him, but loving goes much further and includes one’s whole life.

Two reasons are given for this loving. The first is that God preserves the faithful. This is what David experienced (verse 20). The second is about

how God deals with the proud doer. He “fully recompenses the proud doer”. Here there is no punishment above what the proud doer deserves, but an ample repayment in line with the measure of pride the proud doer has shown. A proud doer is not modest in his pride, therefore he does not receive a modest punishment. Here again we can think especially of the antichrist (2Thes 2:3-4,8).

David concludes the psalm with the encouragement to be strong for which verse 23 gives an additional reason. Then God will strengthen the heart of all who hope in Him (verse 24). Salvation from the present distress does not mean that dangers and disasters will not happen in the future. But when the distress comes, God is still present as the God in Whom we may hope in the distress that will then present itself. This gives courage and strength to continue the journey with Him.

We can also apply this verse to the end of our life’s journey on earth. We look forward, that is to say we look ahead to the time when God will distribute the goodness that He has stored up for us. Even when we are in times of distress, those times are in God’s hand. This means that we will not miss the ultimate goal. The Lord Jesus is our example in this, He endured the cross for the joy set before Him and despised the shame. Let us therefore fix our eyes on Him (Heb 12:1-2).

Psalm 32

Introduction

Psalm 32 is the second of the seven penitential psalms. See the introduction to Psalm 6, the first penitential psalm. This second penitential psalm is an encouragement for believers to come to God with repentance knowing that He is pleased to forgive. Psalm 32, however, is more than a penitential psalm: it is also a wisdom psalm with an instruction and a teaching and a thanksgiving.

This psalm, which is about confession of guilt and forgiveness of sins, has great similarity to Psalm 51. David wrote both psalms after his grave sins of adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah. In both psalms we find his true repentance and humbling.

The basis on which God can forgive sins, that is, the work of Christ, is not mentioned here. That is not revealed until the New Testament. The Jews in the end time will therefore be acquainted with it.

A division of the psalm:

Verses 1-2 the blessing of confession of guilt.

Verses 3-5 the “experience expert” speaks.

Verses 6-7 the protection of God after confession.

Verse 8 instruction and teaching about the way of the restored believer.

Verse 9 warning not to be rebellious.

Verse 10 lawfulness.

Verse 11 call to joy to all the righteous.

Psa 32:1-2 | Blessed

1 *[A Psalm] of David. A Maskil.*

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,

Whose sin is covered!

2 *How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,*

| *And in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

In Romans 4, these two verses are quoted as proof that the forgiveness of sins occurs apart from circumcision and the law, that is, without works (Rom 4:5-8). Forgiveness is based solely on faith. The psalmist does not say: 'Blessed is he who keeps the law.' People who keep the law do not exist, except for the Lord Jesus.

The quotation in Romans 4 makes it clear that these verses about forgiveness apply to the New Testament believer as well, only to the deeper and richer degree that comes with this believer's knowledge of the work of Christ.

For "[a Psalm] of David" see at Psalm 3:1.

It is "a Maskil", an instruction or a teaching. David gives "an instruction". He does not do this as a teacher giving theoretical lessons, but he speaks as 'expert by experience'. Instruction is in Hebrew as is written here *maskil*, which is an instruction of the *maskilim*, who are the wise who make others wise. The Hebrew word is derived from the word *sakal* which means 'to have insight'.

It will be the wise, the *maskilim*, who in the end time will give insight to many to understand the time in which they live (Dan 11:33,35; 12:3; Rev 13:18). It is a time of great trials of God's people on earth. The maskil-psalms also contain instruction for us, for we also undergo trials and we also live in an end time (cf. Rom 15:4; 1Cor 10:11).

These 'instructions', which are also called 'didactic poems', convey knowledge, not of doctrines, but of experiences, of teachings gained in the school of God. The whole book of Psalms deals with this, but the maskil-psalms deal with it par excellence.

Psalm 32 is the first of the thirteen maskil-psalms. Six are of David (Psalms 32; 52; 53; 54; 55; 142), four of the sons of Korah (Psalms 42; 44; 45; 88), two of Asaph (Psalms 74; 78), and one of Ethan (Psalm 89).

This psalm, by way of exception, begins not with praising or calling to the LORD, but with mentioning or more so proclaiming the beneficence of forgiveness (verse 1b). This, of course, involves the utmost thanks to God, for the forgiveness comes from Him. We find here twice the word "blessed"

or “happy”, an expression we find in this first book of Psalms at the beginning of three psalms (Psa 1:1; 32:1; 41:1b). In Psalm 1, it’s about the relation to God: obedience. Here, in Psalm 32, the middle of the psalm book, it is about the believer: forgiveness. In Psalm 41, the end of the psalm book, it’s about the attitude toward others: mercy.

It is not an exuberant praise because David has a deep awareness of what he has done. The believing Israelite expresses through David how blessed it is to know that sins are forgiven (literally: carried away) and covered. The sins have been carried away. It means that God no longer sees the sins and He therefore no longer imputes them. That this also has its meaning for the New Testament believer has been noted above.

David uses three expressions for what he has done and for which he has received forgiveness: transgression, sin and iniquity.

1. *Transgression* is the violating of any commandment of the law and is therefore rebellion against the authority of the Lawgiver.
2. *Sin* is lawlessness in the broadest sense, that is, disregard for any authority (1Jn 3:4). It is a wrong acting, usually deliberately. The Hebrew word for sin, *chata’a*, means to miss the mark (Rom 3:23), it is, consciously or unconsciously, not answering to the will of God.
3. *Iniquity* is acting unjustly. It is an action that is contrary to what a person is entitled to. This applies both to God and to fellow human beings, believer or unbeliever.

In verse 2, God is said to “not impute iniquity”. It means that not only are sins forgiven, but the person whose sins are forgiven is seen by God as not having done the sins. The full truth of this could only be made known after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as the wonder of justification. This wonder is so great that God devotes an entire letter in the Bible to it, namely the letter to the Romans.

One whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the iniquity is not imputed, is one “in whose spirit there is no deceit”. A sincere confession lacks the spirit of deceit. One who confesses his sins has seen himself in God’s light and tells “the whole truth” about his sins to God (cf. Mk 5:33). He has held nothing back; there is no residue of sin that

he wants to hold on to. In the mind, in the thinking, of one who has thus dealt with himself in God's presence, there is really no deceit. Nathanael is an example of such a person and of the believing remnant (Jn 1:47).

Psa 32:3-4 | The Heavy Hand of God

*3 When I kept silent [about my sin], my body wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.*

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;

My vitality was drained away [as] with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

What is said in verses 1-2 can and will only be said by one who has confessed his sins. Until the moment of confession of sins, silence is maintained, that is, the sin is concealed (verse 3). It is not a silence in general, but the choice to deliberately not confess the sin.

David experienced that the deliberate keeping silent about his sin of adultery with Bathsheba paralyzed him; his body, better: his bones, wasted away (cf. Pro 17:22). There is no power to walk. He has kept silent with his mouth, but inwardly there is no silence, but there have been "groaning all day long". A person who is conscious of his sins has no rest.

The symptoms may be different with us. We recognize David's stubbornness to persist and keep silent about sin within ourselves. There may also be physical symptoms in us that are an indication of a spiritual defect (1Cor 11:30).

During the silence, that is the keeping silent about his sin, God's hand presses heavily on such a person "day and night", i.e. continuously (verse 4). It speaks of God's meddling with him to bring him to confession and thereby to Himself, in fellowship with Him. His "vitality was drained away [as] with the fever heat of summer", which means that no more fruit has come forth out of his life for God.

Psa 32:5 | Confession and Forgiveness

5 I acknowledged my sin to You,

And my iniquity I did not hide;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD";

And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Then comes the moment of surrender. It is the moment of stepping down from the throne of pride followed by humiliation before God with acknowledgment of sin. Surrender here means full confession, without belittling or excuses. The meaning of the Greek word for confession is 'to say the same thing', that is, to see and name sin in the same way as God does.

The silence is broken and the sin is made known to God. Of course, even before David makes his sin known, God knows of its existence. But God wants the sinner to see his iniquity in the full light of the truth and no longer to keep silent and cover it up. When the sinner no longer covers his sin, God covers his sin, as it says in verse 1b.

That the sinner confesses his sin is seen here from the side of the confessor, who says "I said". David has made a decision of will. He decided to confess his "transgressions to the LORD" and did it. We see the same thing with the prodigal son. He says he will get up and go to his father to confess his sins. He does so and is received with open arms by his father (Lk 15:17-20).

David sinned against Uriah, but above all he sinned against God. We need forgiveness from God, not just from men. If the sinner acts as God says, God also acts: He forgives the guilt of the sin (cf. 1Jn 1:9). By the way David puts it here, we see that forgiveness immediately follows confession. Hardly has the sin been confessed and forgiveness is there. There is great gratitude resounding in what the sinner emphatically says: "And You forgave the guilt of my sin." What a relief, what a burden drops from him.

It is like the father of the prodigal son who longs for the return of his son (Lk 15:20). This is how God longs for the confession of our sins, so that we can once again return into the arms of our God and Father.

Psa 32:6-7 | Songs of Deliverance

*6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him.
7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble;
You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

When fellowship with God is fully restored in this way, it will have a direct effect on the prayer life of the “godly” (verse 6). David here indirectly communicates his experience to everyone who is godly and encourages them to pray to God. In this context, this exhortation to pray will primarily mean confessing sin to God in prayer. In a broader sense, it means that we will pray to be kept from falling into sin, as happened to David. That David speaks of a “godly” means that it refers to a believer who lives set apart (again) for God.

Prayer is fellowship with God, the certain consequence of which is that “a flood of great waters ... will not reach” the praying believer. The praying believer who confesses his sin gets out of the enemy’s reach. The enemy has lost his grip on him. Whatever the enemy tries to do to regain control of the restored and *praying* believer, all fails. The praying believer who prays to be kept, stands firm when powerful temptations to sin come upon him. This is not a one-time prayer, but a continuous prayer, a life lived prayerfully.

We must remain aware that we can be caught in any trespass (Gal 6:1). If that happens, the key is to confess that trespass as soon as possible (cf. Isa 55:6). As long as it is the favorable time, a person can appeal to God’s grace (2Cor 6:2). God sets a limit to the time He lets Himself be found (Lk 19:44; Jer 46:17). This means that prayer will not be in vain, but that God will let Himself be found and will answer prayer and grant forgiveness! Sin in life causes a break with God, a break that is only repaired after confession.

For the believer who walks this path of confession, God is a “hiding place” from the flood of the great waters of verse 6, preventing them from reaching him (verse 7; cf. Rev 12:15-16). He is preserved by God from trouble. He may be in trouble, but he will not perish in it.

While he is surrounded by enemies who trouble him, he does not see those enemies, but people who sing “songs of deliverance” with and for him. One who is impressed by the deliverance from his sins will feel that the entire atmosphere around him is filled with music from heaven. He is full of happiness inside and he experiences that everything and everyone around him shares in that happiness.

Psa 32:8-11 | Guidance for the Way

*8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;
I will counsel you with My eye upon you.
9 Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,
[Otherwise] they will not come near to you.
10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him.
11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones;
And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.*

After the forgiveness follows in verse 8 the promise of God that He will instruct and teach His own in the way they should go. The lessons we learn in this psalm apply to all believers who have gone the way of confession of sin, who have taken these wise lessons to heart.

God does not send the believer on the way with a road map and then withdraw. He goes with him and “instructs” and “teaches” him in that way with His wisdom. We receive this instruction and teaching in the New Testament regarding our way as members of the church (Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9-10).

It is not a way of your own choosing, but “the way which you should go”. We, New Testament believers, know that this way was prepared beforehand by God, that we would walk therein (Eph 2:10). God determines the way. For going that way He gives general instruction and general teaching, but He also gives “counsel” regarding practical situations. Therefore, we must always ask Him for advice when choices must be made. We will do so if we live in ‘eye contact’ with Him. After all, His eye is upon us. That means that the Lord is watchful, that He is watching over us and caring for us.

The comparison has been made with training a hunting dog. The nature of the dog is to chase after prey as soon as it sees it. The dog’s training is not complete until he first looks at the master before pursuing prey. Having eye contact with the Master is the mark of a mature believer (cf. Psa 123:2; Lk 22:61).

A word of exhortation follows. It may be that we do not let God's eye guide us because we do not live in eye contact with Him. Then He must treat us as wayward animals like a horse and a mule (verse 9). Both animals need bit and bridle to be restrained so that they go the way the driver wants (cf. Jam 3:3). The lesson is not to be stubborn like a dumb mule, but to choose to humble ourselves and confess our sins. Otherwise, like the psalmist, and like a mule, we will be disciplined until we have learned the lesson.

If God must deal with us in this way, it is not the method of His preference. Yet in this we see His grace, for He thereby keeps us from going a wrong, harmful way. It is a negative form of guidance. The word 'otherwise' is not in the original text. The meaning is that "they", that is the consequences of going a wrong way, "will not come near to you", that is, cannot harm us.

In verse 10, the wicked and those who trust in the LORD are contrasted. In doing so, the reader is presented with a choice. Whoever chooses the way of the wicked chooses many sorrows. He who chooses the way of trusting in the LORD will be surrounded by "lovingkindness", which means that God's lovingkindness is like a wall around him so that no calamity can strike him. Lovingkindness is Adonai in Hebrew. It implies that God is faithful to the covenant, that is, that in His faithfulness to the covenant He will surely grant forgiveness.

The "righteous ones" are called to rejoice and be glad in the LORD (verse 11). If there are any on earth who have reason to do so, it is the righteous ones. These are the believers who have confessed their sins and therefore received forgiveness. The lessons they have taken to heart individually bring their hearts together so that they can now sing songs of praise to the LORD together.

Because their sins have been forgiven, they have a God Who instructs them, teaches them, counsels them and guides them with His eye. They also have a living hope in the prospect of the fulfillment of God's promises. Surely this should make the heart full of joy (Phil 3:1; 4:4; 1Thes 5:16). That joy must be expressed and not just cherished in the heart.

A call is made to "all ... who are upright in heart" to sing joyfully. These upright in heart are those with whom there is no spirit of deceit in their hearts. They have honestly and sincerely confessed their sins. Now that

they have received forgiveness of sins, they are called to show their joy through songs of praise. It is not a call to *act* joyful, but to really *be* so. It is also a call to us. We too have every reason to do so when we consider that our sins have been forgiven and that we have received so many blessings, such as protection and guidance, in addition.

Psalm 33

Introduction

After the forgiveness in the previous psalm, we hear in this psalm once again the call for a song of praise for that forgiveness. Psalm 33 has no title. This underscores the fact that this psalm belongs to the previous psalm. The first verse follows the last verse of the previous psalm (Psa 33:1; 32:11).

In Psalm 33, God is represented in a way that encourages praise. This is especially true of the people whom God has chosen as His own (verse 12). Therefore, this psalm does not use the I-form, but only the we-form. The knowledge of being chosen is a special reason to praise God. This is certainly true of us New Testament believers, whom He has chosen to the sonship for Himself (Eph 1:3-7).

There is no mention of enemies or persecution or oppression in this psalm. God is sung of as the supreme Ruler. It is reminiscent of the time after the great tribulation, when the heathen oppressors have been driven out and Israel dwells in peace in the land. It is therefore a psalm in which we hear the feelings of thanks of the remnant.

Psa 33:1-3 | Sing to the LORD

1 Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;

Praise is becoming to the upright.

2 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;

Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.

3 Sing to Him a new song;

Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

After Psalms 1, 2, and 10, this is the fourth psalm that does not mention a poet. It immediately follows the last verse of the previous psalm (Psa 32:11). This continuation renders a heading unnecessary. Just as there, the poet here speaks to the “righteous ones” and the “upright” (verse 1). In slightly different words he repeats the call to the “righteous ones” to sing “for joy in the LORD” (Psa 32:11). Three times at the beginning of this

psalm the call to praise the LORD is heard: in verse 1, verse 2, and verse 3. To this end, the righteous ones are called in various terms to do so with musical instruments.

He says to sing for joy “in the LORD”, not “to” the LORD, although that is part of it, of course, as he says in verse 2 and verse 3. ‘In the LORD’ includes more than ‘to’ the LORD. It indicates the atmosphere and also the power in which joyful singing is done. The joyful song is the representation of a life marked by all that the LORD is and has done. Because of this, believers can be addressed as righteous. That they are righteous means that they have been made perfectly qualified to be in God’s presence with joy and thanksgiving.

It is becoming, therefore, that the righteous ones, who are also called “upright”, sing and praise. The Hebrew word for praise, *tehillah*, gave the book of Psalms its Hebrew name, *tehillim*. The “upright”, someone who stands inwardly right before God, will express his admiration for God and all His benefits through a song of praise. When you admire someone, you don’t keep it to yourself. You let the object of your admiration hear it and do so loudly, so that others may also hear how much you admire the other person.

This admiration is not expressed in general, vague words either, but in a description of everything that is to be admired. We see this, for example, in the description that the bride in Song of Songs gives of the bridegroom (Song 5:9-16). Beginning in verse 4, the psalmist gives words to his admiration of God. He describes His omnipotence and exaltation and His special relationship to the people He has chosen to be His own.

The praise and singing is accompanied “with a harp of ten strings” (verse 2). In Israelite, Old Testament worship, musical instruments play an important role. David devised and made them for this purpose (2Chr 7:6; 29:27; Neh 12:36; Amos 6:5). In Christian, New Testament worship, it is different. We sing to God in our hearts (Col 3:16). The Christian worships God in a spiritual way (Jn 4:24). Worship is spiritual, it takes place with our spirit under the working of God’s Spirit.

We may praise the Lord with ever new songs (verse 3). The new song is the song of redemption (Psa 40:3; 98:1) as a result of the forgiveness in Psalm

32. It can be sung by ‘renewed people’, that is, all who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. It will be sung especially by the Israelites at the beginning of the realm of peace (Rev 14:3).

Every new experience of Who God is gives rise to a new song. Even songs we have sung many times before are sung in a new, a more deeply experienced way after a new experience of God’s goodness. Each new discovery of God’s goodness is an opportunity for a new song and to do so with “skillfully” playing and “with a shout of joy”. It means that it is done by trumpets or horns as a delightful expression of the highest joy that is a blessing to listen to.

Psa 33:4-9 | The Power of God’s Word

*4 For the word of the LORD is upright,
And all His work is [done] in faithfulness.
5 He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD.
6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.
7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
9 For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.
According as we have hoped in You.*

The first reason for the new song of verse 3 are the *words* of God and directly related to them the *works* of God (verse 4). This is indicated by the word “for” with which the verse begins. God is “upright” in His words. In everything He says, He is ‘true’, ‘faithful’. An upright person is trustworthy, without deceit (Psa 32:2). God is always justified in His words (Rom 3:4). His words are trustworthy, He keeps His promises, which is reason for the righteous to praise Him.

Also “all His work”, all that He does, is done “in faithfulness”. His work is accomplished by His Word. His Word and His work are therefore in per-

fect harmony with each other. Just as there is no unreliability or mendacity in His words, there is nothing in His works that shows or will ever show any defect or wear and tear. Everything is stable, perfectly reliable.

Why is God reliable? Because He “loves righteousness and justice” (verse 5). This determines all His actions. His “righteousness” and His “justice” or verdict are never in conflict with His love, and conversely, His love is never in conflict with His righteousness and justice. His righteousness and justice are expressions of His love for the truth, they are expressions of His trustworthiness. He does what He says, even in enforcing justice and executing judgment. In His love, He thus makes Himself known to man so that he may bow before Him.

Everywhere we look on earth, we see a testimony of God’s “lovingkindness”. Lovingkindness is a word that implies both love and truth or faithfulness. It is due to His lovingkindness that man can live on earth and be provided with many good gifts and everything he needs to live. Everywhere we see the same love and faithfulness in God’s care of His creation (cf. Mt 6:26). This is an encouragement to His own, especially when they are in need and think that He might have forgotten them.

His Word is reliable and powerful. We see this in the creation He has created, focusing here especially on the heavens (verse 6; cf. Jn 1:1,3; Heb 1:1-2). He made the heavens. The “host” of the firmament, the entire galaxy, evokes awe (Isa 40:26). Its creation is attributed to the breath of His mouth. We may think here also of the Holy Spirit, Who is also involved in creation (Gen 1:2; cf. Psa 104:30), because the Hebrew word *ruach* can also be translated “spirit”.

Also “the waters of the sea” are completely under His authority (verse 7). He can gather the water and make a dam of it, thus heaping the waters (Exo 15:8; Jos 3:13,16; cf. Job 38:8-11). “The deeps”, the deep waters, He can lay up in storehouses as if it were an object (cf. Job 38:22; Jer 10:13). He deals with it as a farmer does with his grain when he stores it in a storehouse. Man has no grip on either the heavens or the waters of the sea. They are completely beyond his control, while God, through His Word, has complete control over them (cf. Psa 29:3; 107:25).

This should bring “all the earth”, all the nations, to a “fear”, that is, a deep awe, of the LORD (verse 8). “All the inhabitants of the world” are called to “stand in awe of Him”. This goes beyond just deep awe. There is also in this the aspect of fear and trembling at God’s power in creation (Exo 15:16; Jer 5:22). Because He created all, and rules sovereignly over the universe, the nations must acknowledge that He alone is the Creator-Ruler.

The nations, all of whom have their own idols, must know that the world did not come into being through an activity of cooperating gods. Nor was anything originated by chance. Everything in creation reflects God’s wisdom. It is the effect of His Word, which shows that He alone is trustworthy. Because He speaks a word, it happens, and what happens is what He has said, no more and no less. The theory of evolution, therefore, besides being a denial of God as Creator, is also a denial of the reliability of His Word and thereby of Himself.

Everything He speaks comes about because He speaks (verse 9). In the long enumeration of the way faith works in Hebrews 11, the first and thus most fundamental activity of faith is the actual belief that God created everything by His Word (Heb 11:3). There is no unruly element in the matter that He has created. He commands and it is there, exactly sized and in the place He wants it to be. The order in creation reflects God’s sovereign dominion. His supremacy does not frighten the God-fearing, but fills him with comfort and courage.

God’s control of the universe tells us that He also controls our lives. It also tells us that we can entrust Him with the control of our lives. That is what God taught Job and that is what we must also learn, especially when we do not understand things that happen in our lives. Job does not understand God, and this causes him to wrestle with his faith, until he comes face to face with God. Then he understands that he is too small to judge God’s government of all things. The point is that we learn to trust that He really is in control of all things.

Psa 33:10-15 | The LORD Sees All People

*10 The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations;
He frustrates the plans of the peoples.*

*11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The plans of His heart from generation to generation.
12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.
13 The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men;
14 From His dwelling place He looks out
On all the inhabitants of the earth,
15 He who fashions the hearts of them all,
He who understands all their works.*

God's supremacy concerns not only matter, but also "the counsel" and "the plans" of the nations and the peoples (verse 10). These are the immaterial things, the deliberations of the hearts of men. Those things, too, are in His power. He nullifies and frustrates those councils and plans. He will do this because the counsel and plans of the nations are directed against Him and against His people. That He nullifies and frustrates them shows His exaltation and their futility.

God not only created the universe (verses 6-9), but He also directs the course of history and is able to overthrow the counsels of mighty kingdoms. In addition to the contrast between material and immaterial things, there is also a contrast between the past, creation, and the present, the history of mankind (verses 10-15).

Opposite to the counsel and plans of the nations against Him and against His people are His counsel and the plans of His heart (verse 11). No one is able to change these, let alone nullify and frustrate them. His counsel "stands forever" (cf. Pro 19:21; Isa 40:8). The plans of His heart relate to His promises to the patriarchs. His plans of blessing to His people stand "from generation to generation". Nothing is able to undo those plans. He keeps His promises throughout the generations and will fulfill them (Psa 105:8-9).

In verse 12, a "blessed" directs attention to a special people in the midst of all the nations. It is "the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance". It can rightfully be said that a people is "blessed" when the God of that people is the God Who has been

displayed in His exaltation in the previous verses. He has chosen Israel “for His own inheritance” (Exo 19:5; Deu 4:20; 9:26,29; 32:9; cf. 1Pet 2:9).

The God of this people “looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; from His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth” (verses 13-14). His position in heaven, His exalted dwelling place, emphasizes His exaltation above all that is and is happening on earth and His untouchability to those who dwell on earth. He is not only the Almighty Who created everything and directs the course of history, He is also the Omniscient, Whose eyes are like a flame of fire (Rev 1:14b). He sees right through you. From Him nothing is hidden. “All things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13).

This does not mean that He is not intimately involved with the earth and its inhabitants. There is nothing that escapes Him. He not only sees everything that happens, but also “fashions the hearts of them all” (verse 15). Thus, as Creator, He also formed their bodies (Gen 2:7). This means that He knows people’s hearts through and through. He knows all the deliberations that take place there, which are hidden from everyone.

In this, He “understands all their works”. Both the inner considerations, the motives of men, and their outer deeds He knows. And not only that. Not only can man never thwart God’s plans, but God controls man and uses him against his will in order to work out His plans and achieve His goal. We see the same thing with the devil. This does not change the responsibility of man and the devil. They are held fully responsible for “all their works”. It only makes it clear that God is above everything and can use even man’s rebellion for His purpose.

Psa 33:16-22 | Our Help and Our Shield

*16 The king is not saved by a mighty army;
A warrior is not delivered by great strength.
17 A horse is a false hope for victory;
Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.
18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,
On those who hope for His lovingkindness,
19 To deliver their soul from death*

And to keep them alive in famine.

20 Our soul waits for the LORD;

He is our help and our shield.

21 For our heart rejoices in Him,

Because we trust in His holy name.

22 Let Your lovingkindness, O LORD, be upon us,

According as we have hoped in You.

Compared to the power of God, the most powerful people like “the king” and “a warrior” are dwarfed (verse 16). They are powerless, even though they have a “mighty army” and “great strength”, to deliver themselves from an enemy or to save themselves from a threatening situation.

If a man counts solely on the great strength of a horse for a victory or to escape defeat, he will be deceived (verse 17). His hope in it is false. Man is foolish and suffers from hopeless overconfidence if he boasts and relies on human strength for victory. Only the LORD can give victory, for He controls everything.

In contrast to people who rely on the power of human resources, on the strength of a powerful ally, stand those who fear the LORD and hope for His lovingkindness (verse 18). They know that His eye is fixed on them in loving care and that He always sees them, which means that He is watching them in goodness (Job 36:7a). This is very much better than relying on human resources.

He delivers from death (verse 19). He also keeps alive in times of famine caused by the encirclement by an enemy (cf. Isa 36:12b). In a famine, any appeal to a king, a warrior, or a horse is futile (cf. 2Kgs 6:25-27; Isa 36:9b).

Verses 20-21 are, as it were, the response of the remnant to the call to praise of verses 1-3. Those who fear the LORD expect Him, that is, they look forward to what He is going to do (verse 20). They don't take initiatives themselves, but leave it up to Him. What He determines is good. They boldly confess that He is their help and their shield (cf. Psa 28:7). He is their Helper and Protector.

They declare that their hearts rejoice in Him (verse 21). The cause of this is their “trust in His holy name”. This means that they submit to Him, that is, they want God to be Who He is: God. His holy Name guarantees that

He will work out all His plans to fulfill all His promises. When things go badly with Israel, the Name of the LORD is dishonored, and when things go well with Israel, the Name of the LORD is hallowed. When the Lord Jesus teaches His disciples to pray, the first thing He teaches them to say is: "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Mt 6:9; cf. Isa 29:23; 48:9-11).

The prayer for blessing in verse 22 is the expression of dependence on the lovingkindness of God. It is the desire that the promise of the covenant blessings be fulfilled by the LORD. By their expressed trust in and expectation of the LORD, the remnant may expect that the LORD will be faithful to His word and promise. The God-fearing ask for God's lovingkindness *upon* them, meaning that it will guard over them, protect them, and guide them through life. They hope in Him and therefore all that He is, for He Himself is all they need to continue living their lives to His glory.

Psalm 34

Introduction

The psalm is written in the form of what is known as an acrostic. That is, each verse of this psalm begins with a consecutive letter of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This form is an aid in memorizing a section. The use of this form also indicates that God's Spirit uses the entire richness of language to describe the content of the experience.

However, one letter is missing from this psalm. Between verse 5 and verse 6 the letter *vav* is missing. Verses 2-5 are a testimony of faith, but verse 6 makes it clear that David has fallen very deeply because of his behavior. This hints at the irregularity that can occur in the path a believer should walk. This is expressed by a bump, a missing letter in the acrostic. This is deliberately brought in. In Psalm 25 we see the same phenomenon (Psa 25:17,18).

Psa 34:1-3 | Call to Continually Praise God

1 [A Psalm] of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.

I will bless the LORD at all times;

His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

2 My soul will make its boast in the LORD;

The humble will hear it and rejoice.

3 O magnify the LORD with me,

And let us exalt His name together.

For "[A Psalm] of David" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

This psalm is one of the fifteen psalms that mentions the occasion of its writing (Psalms 3; 7; 9; 18; 30; 34; 51; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142). The background of this psalm is a short stay of David with Achish, who is here called Abimelech (1Sam 21:10-15). Abimelech is the title of Philistine kings (Gen 20:2; 26:1). David feels compelled to leave his land, the land over

which he will rule according to God's promises, and seeks refuge with Achish, the king of Gath, one of the five Philistine cities.

When David notices that he has been recognized, he becomes afraid. Fear is always a bad counselor and an enemy of faith and love. Indeed, perfect love drives out fear (1Jn 4:18). A person grows and achieves victories according to how much he overcomes fear by his faith. David, however, is not guided by his faith during this period. He knows that the Philistines see in him a powerful enemy whom they got hold of by his arrival just like that (Psa 56:1). He knows no other solution to this problem than to behave like a madman. He presents himself as someone who has lost his mind.

David here sinks far below the level of a believer. This is not a stratagem, but an act of desperation. A believer who deliberately behaves like an idiot sets a totally wrong example. He casts a libel on the Name of the Lord. Let's not judge David too harshly about it. How many times have we deliberately behaved differently for fear of reactions of hostility from the world and, to put it mildly, not been witnesses to the Lord Jesus?

David's downfall is great. His behavior works that Achish drives him away as we read here. Certainly, he has escaped from a dangerous situation, but how libelous is his salvation. There is much to be ashamed of. What remains is the grace of God. That God's grace also plays a role in this whole event is evident from the two psalms that arose in his heart during his stay with Achish in Gath (Psalms 34; 56). In the description of the events we see his outward behavior. In both psalms we see what went on in his heart during those events.

Psalm 34 shows what is in his heart when he is afraid of Abimelech. His heart cries out to God and He saves him, for he is brokenhearted and crushed in spirit (verse 18).

David says that He will bless, or praise, the LORD "at all times", that is, always (verse 1b). This is how a thanksgiving psalm usually begins. After his rescue from such a difficult and degrading situation, he is full of gratitude to the LORD. He resolves that praise for Him will be "continually" in his mouth. "At all times" and "continually" means that the LORD is worthy of our praising Him not only when we are living in prosperity, but

also when things are against us, i.e. regardless of circumstance (cf. 1Thes 5:16; Phil 4:4).

He does not owe his deliverance from Abimelech's grip into which he put himself, to himself, but to the LORD. Although he has acted like a madman, the LORD has worked in the heart of Abimelech not to kill him, but to drive him away. Therefore, he is still alive and free. It is the occasion for his soul to boast in the LORD (verse 2).

His experience has made him humble. The humble or lowly are people who, like him, have learned to be humble and submissive and to expect nothing more from themselves. A humble or humbled person is one whose spirit has been broken, because the Word has struck him in his distress (Isa 66:2), one who has humbled himself under the strong hand of God (1Pet 5:6).

When David was in distress, he cried out to God from the depths of his soul. His experience that the LORD takes notice of such people (Isa 66:2) is an encouragement to others in similar situations. They will hear of what God has done for David. They will recognize that and rejoice that David was thus saved by the LORD.

David therefore calls them to join him in magnifying the LORD (verse 3). They have come to know the LORD in a similar way. Therefore, they can with David exalt His Name, that is, make known the glory of His Name. His Name is His Being, it is all that He is and in which His own have come to know Him. His goodness is expressed here in the fact that He lets Himself be entreated. The moment you ask for salvation in your distress, He hears and answers that prayer (verses 4,6). That is the reason to praise His Name.

Psa 34:4-8 | Seeking, Looking to and Fearing the LORD

*4 I sought the LORD, and He answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.*

*5 They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces will never be ashamed.*

*6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him
And saved him out of all his troubles.*

7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him,
And rescues them.*
8 *O taste and see that the LORD is good;
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!*

In these verses follows the motivation for praising the LORD that David called for in the previous verses. It has become clear that the LORD is a Helper in need. In verse 4 and verse 6 David expresses a personal experience. In the subsequent verses verse 5 and verse 7, he expresses a general testimony on that basis as an encouragement to others. In the subsequent verses verse 6 and verse 8, he expresses a general testimony on that basis as an encouragement to others. Verse 8 is an exhortation based on his experience and testimony.

In verse 4, David testifies to what is often found in Psalms: his seeking of God in his distress and God's response in deliverance. The deliverance here is total, it is "from all my fears". God delivered him from everything that made him fear (1Sam 21:12).

In verse 5, David expands this to a plural "they". He does not say who these 'they' are, but we may assume that this is the little group of men who are with him. They also look forward to the LORD and "were radiant" (cf. Isa 60:5). The LORD helped them, so that their faces did not become red with shame (cf. Psa 35:4).

In them we recognize the faithful remnant. In the end time, when there are so many enemies who make them fearful, they will be looking forward to Him, yes, their faces will be shining. When one sees the Lord, one becomes glad (Jn 20:20; cf. 1Sam 6:13). They will not be ashamed in their trust in Him, for they will be delivered 'from all that they fear'.

David speaks of himself as "this poor man" (verse 6). This means that David in great distress humbled himself under the powerful hand of God (1Pet 5:6). From what David experienced, others can learn how the LORD acts again and again. Therefore, he speaks of himself in the third person. He sets himself as an example of how the LORD saves an afflicted person who cries out to Him "out of all his troubles".

In verse 7 he expands that again and speaks of "those who fear" the LORD. Around them the angel of the LORD encamps and rescues them (cf. Zec

9:8; 2Kgs 6:15-17). The Angel of the LORD is the appearance of the LORD or the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament (cf. Gen 16:7-13).

David concludes sharing his experiences with the call to “taste and see that the LORD is good” (verse 8). Verse 8b is the explanation of verse 8a. We can taste that God is good when we take refuge in Him in great distress. Those who do so are happy, blessed, because God shows His goodness at such a time. David testified of it, so everyone can taste it and see it. We can taste and see God’s goodness in what He has done in the lives of others.

Yet the real tasting and seeing of God’s goodness will not really happen to us until we ourselves have experienced God in this way in our personal circumstances. It is therefore a call to go our way in fellowship with Him, in order that this may become our experience too. This means that we take refuge in Him in everything. Then we are blessed, full of happiness.

Peter quotes this verse in connection with our spiritual growth (1Pet 2:3-4). For this we are not primarily dependent on a good intellect, but on our spiritual taste. The things Peter speaks of are not addressed to the intellect, but to the heart that has tasted and seen “that the LORD is good”.

Peter speaks of experiencing goodness – Hebrew *tov* (verse 8a) – when we come to Him, that is, in our distress, we resort to Him. He himself has tasted and seen that the Lord is good. After having denied the Lord Jesus, he is restored by Him. He is again used by the Lord in His service and may serve his brethren with the experience he has gained.

Psa 34:9-16 | Teaching the Fear of the LORD

*9 O fear the LORD, you His saints;
For to those who fear Him there is no want.
10 The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;
But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.
11 Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 Who is the man who desires life
And loves [length of] days that he may see good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil
And your lips from speaking deceit.*

14 *Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.*
15 *The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous
And His ears are [open] to their cry.*
16 *The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.*

Verses 9-10 are the explanation of verses 7-8. The “saints” (verse 9) are those who are dedicated to and set apart for the LORD because they have taken refuge in Him (verse 8). They have experienced that the LORD is a mighty Redeemer (verse 7). Those who fear Him in verse 7 and verse 9 are the same persons as in verse 8: they have taken refuge in the LORD and have experienced that He is good. And if you have the LORD, you have no want, for you have everything (Gen 33:11).

David calls God’s “saints” to fear the LORD (verse 9). He adds the motive: “For to those who fear Him there is no want.” This does not mean that they will always have plenty to eat and will always be healthy. What is meant is that they will never lack the presence of God. They say with David “the LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want” (Psa 23:1), because like him they can say “for You are with me” (Psa 23:4b).

David illustrates his words of verse 9 by drawing a comparison with predatory young lions who can always count on their speed and strength to seize prey (verse 10). Yet they “do lack and suffer hunger”. It is different for those “who seek the LORD”. They “shall not be in want of any good thing”. Even though they do lack and suffer hunger, they possess all the good the LORD has promised them because He is with them. They will not lack any of it. They may not get any of it on earth yet, but they will certainly get it in the resurrection.

David speaks as the wisdom teacher, as Solomon does in the book of Proverbs (verse 11). He calls his followers – whom, as is customary for a wisdom teacher, he calls “children” here – to listen to him, for he wants to teach them something (cf. Pro 4:1). He wants to pass on to them what he himself has learned. He wants to “teach” them “the fear of the LORD” (cf. Pro 1:7). The fear of the LORD is so important because it is the beginning

of wisdom (Pro 1:7; 9:10; Psa 111:10). This is the best thing that we too can teach our children, better than any ability for this life.

In the following verses he teaches what the fear of the LORD is, what it consists of, and in what it is to be manifested. He also points out the blessed consequences this has. The teaching concerns learning to involve Him in all things of life, in deep awe of Him Who governs all things and with confidence that He does so perfectly.

Verses 12-16 are quoted by Peter (1Pet 3:10-12). Peter quotes up to and including verse 16a. Verse 16b he does not quote because that is not yet now the issue. For he speaks of the indirect government of God, that is, of a type of government of God in which evil is not immediately punished and good is not immediately rewarded. Only when the Lord Jesus reigns on earth will what verse 16b says take place. Peter quotes these verses from Psalm 34 because what it says applies not only in the realm of peace, but also right now.

David begins by asking: "Who is the man who desires life, and loves [length of] days that he may see good?" (verse 12; 1Pet 3:10). The answer is contained in the question. Every person wants this, right? It is possible to find joy in life and see good days even during this life.

What David is saying here should be considered first and foremost in relation to earthly, temporary blessings, including the enjoyment of God's favor. For the Israelite, blessing means having a good life, enjoying all the good gifts and dying in good age, surrounded by children and grandchildren, satisfied with life (cf. Gen 25:8). The good life associated here with doing good is contrasted with the sudden, premature death of the wicked.

At the same time, we must remember that not every God-fearing Israelite grows old and dies satisfied with life, and not every wicked person dies young. Often we see the opposite. Therefore, is it not true what is written here in God's Word? Yes, it is absolutely true. For we must remember that the blessing of long life is ultimately given in the realm of peace, after the resurrection.

As to receiving blessing or judgment, we must learn to look beyond death. In the resurrection, God fulfills all that He has promised. Therefore, what

David says here comes down to faith in God's Word, even when it looks like things are different than we read here at first glance.

There are some conditions attached to a life with days where the good is seen. David lists them. Without "the fear of the LORD" (verse 11) God's goodness (verse 8) cannot be experienced. In the following verses, the fear of the LORD is worked out in words (verse 13) and in works (verse 14).

These conditions preclude a person who does not have new life to ever enjoy true life and see good days. Only by those who have new life, that is life from God, these conditions can be met. By this we see that it is about the joy of life now and forever, that is life in the realm of peace under the blessed government of the Messiah.

The conditions consist of something negative and something positive. First of all, David says, it is necessary to "keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit" (verse 13). One of the first evidences of new life can be observed in a change of speech. It remains a danger for those with new life to fall back into an old pattern in their speaking. That is why David warns against this danger, because it has a bad influence on the quality of your life (Pro 13:3). The joy in life disappears and the good of days is no longer enjoyed.

Then David tells his children, and us, to depart from evil and do good (verse 14; 1Pet 3:11). The negative is succeeded by the positive. Life is not to be characterized by all the things that they don't do, but by doing what is good. Those who only avoid the negative can be compared to a house that is empty, swept and decorated, which makes it a dwelling place of demons (Mt 12:44). Doing good involves seeking peace and doing so intensely. We must pursue it, as one hunts a partridge in the mountains (1Sam 26:20). It is done with policy, with full commitment and together.

Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is the inner peace resulting from fellowship with God in going His way, trusting that He will provide what is needed and protect against danger. This peace is under constant pressure, because circumstances try to take it away. Therefore, it must be pursued. The pursuit of peace can be done by striving for a good mutual relationship with all those with whom we interact and seeking what is good for them (cf. Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14).

The wisdom teacher has spoken (verse 11), he has given advice. Beginning in verse 15, an explanation is given as to why. This explanation is given by contrasting the righteous with the wicked (verses 16,21). To encourage us, David continues by directing our eye on the LORD (verse 15; 1Pet 3:12).

His children or his disciples or followers, whom he here calls “the righteous”, may know that God’s eyes are constantly on them. Again we read of the eyes of the LORD (Psa 32:8; 33:18). His eyes “are toward” them, which indicates His joyful involvement in all that concerns and befalls them.

He also knows that there are forces and powers that beset them that are much stronger than they are. Therefore, they may also know that in addition to His eyes, His ears are open to them (Psa 17:6). “His ears are [open] to their cry”, when they are attacked by hostile powers. He hears them and stands up for them against those who plot evil against them.

He turns His ears to His own when they cry out to Him, but He turns His face in anger against those who do evil against His own (verse 16; 1Pet 3:12). He will deal with them at His coming to earth as King and “cut off the memory of them from the earth”. Not only will there be no more remembrance of these evildoers, but it also means that these evildoers will have no descendants. There is nothing left to be remembered of them (Psa 9:6; 109:13,15).

Psa 34:17-22 | God Hears and Redeems

17 *[The righteous] cry, and the LORD hears
And delivers them out of all their troubles.*

18 *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

19 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.*

20 *He keeps all his bones,
Not one of them is broken.*

21 *Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous will be condemned.*

22 *The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,*

| *And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.*

These verses are a further elaboration of verse 15. We see in these verses that the righteous can also be hit by severe disasters, but the LORD keeps and delivers them. At the same time, the righteous experiences that the LORD is good (verse 8). What David knows from his own experience also applies to all the righteous: they “cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles” (verse 17).

Through the afflictions, through severe blows in life, the righteous become “broken-hearted” and “crushed in spirit” (verse 18). Their heart, the core of their existence, is broken. Their spirit, their life force, is crushed. This is the situation where you no longer have a prospect except the refuge of the LORD (Isa 66:2). If you then take refuge in Him, He will always give protection. These features are sacrifices for God in which He is pleased and which He does not despise (Psa 51:19). With those who have these features, He dwells (Isa 57:15). He is so “near” to them that He is ready and helps and delivers as soon as they cry out.

That “the afflictions of the righteous” are “many” (verse 19) seems contrary to the desire to see good days. The righteous is not afflicted by a little affliction, but by “many ... afflictions”. The life of the righteous is not limited to the life here and now, but continues in the realm of peace and is lived to the fullest there. The LORD delivers the righteous “out of them all”, out of all those afflictions, by allowing him to partake of the blessings of the realm of peace.

What David says in verse 20 connects to this. The LORD keeps all the bones of the righteous, “not one of them is broken”. The righteous one will not suffer substantial, irreparable damage from all the afflictions that befalls him. This special protection by God of the righteous who suffers is literally experienced in a special way by Christ when He hangs on the cross (Jn 19:36; Exo 12:46; Num 9:12). God’s protection of Christ, as well as of the martyrs of the great tribulation, transcends death.

Christ, as the only Man, has perfectly answered all that David said in verses 12-14. Yet there is no man who has seen and experienced more affliction than He (Lam 3:1-6). This makes it clear that all the blessing that accompanies a godly life is experienced inwardly on earth, and after the resurrec-

tion also outwardly. The Lord Jesus is delivered “out of” all His afflictions, not by being saved from suffering and death, but by God raising Him from the dead.

So it will be with all the righteous who have “many afflictions”. They share in the good in the resurrection because the Righteous has undergone a suffering that they could not have undergone and that is the suffering for their sins. As a result, they have been brought to God and become righteous (1Pet 3:18). Christ did not become righteous, but was always the Righteous. Therefore, He was able to do this necessary and unique work of redemption from the power of sin.

In verse 21, David returns to what he said in verse 16 about those who do evil. He speaks here of “the wicked” and of “those who hate the righteous”. By “the wicked” we can think of one who is not guided by the fear of or respect for the LORD, unlike the righteous (verse 15), the disciples of the wisdom teacher. The way of the wicked will perish (Psa 1:6). By the wicked we can also think of the antichrist. The evil he does will kill him. He is digging his own grave. The others are followers of him.

These followers are guilty of hating “the righteous”. At this point we can think of David, who is here a picture of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:30,31). Christ is the Righteous par excellence (Isa 53:11). In addition, David is also an example for believers, both in this age and prophetically for the believing remnant in the end time.

Opposite to the death that comes upon the wicked and his followers is what the LORD does to those who fear Him (verse 22). He redeems their souls. The Hebrew word means change of ownership by paying a price. The antichrist will kill many of the believing remnant, but at the same time these martyrs have gained victory over the antichrist (Rev 15:2).

David calls them “servants” of God. Ultimately, this then refers to the remnant when they have arrived in the blessing of the realm of peace. They are all Israel that will be saved (Rom 11:26). Then God’s words to His people after their deliverance from Egypt will be fulfilled: “You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exo 19:6).

It’s not that far yet. Circumstances make it necessary for those who are truly His people to “take refuge” in Him. There they are safe from the enmity

of those who hate them. “None” of them “will be condemned”. This is in contrast to those who hate them, for they will be condemned, as stated in the previous verse. They owe this “not condemned declaration” to Him Who was condemned for them and bore the judgment for their sins on the cross.

Psalm 35

Introduction

This psalm has the form of a lamentation. It consists of three sections

1. verses 1-10;
2. verses 11-18;
3. verses 19-28.

All three end with a purpose to praise the LORD.

The psalm is an urgent plea to God to act in judgment against the apostate, unmerciful persecutors of the righteous one, that is David, and those who are with him. Defamation, cunning, and violence are all used against him. We can best think of Saul and his helpers when we think of the persecutors.

What they did to David will also be the portion of the remnant in the end time. Much of it was also experienced by the Lord Jesus.

Psa 35:1-3 | Cry to God for Help

1 [A Psalm] of David.

Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;

Fight against those who fight against me.

2 Take hold of buckler and shield

And rise up for my help.

3 Draw also the spear and the battle-axe to meet those who pursue me;

Say to my soul, "I am your salvation."

For "[a Psalm] of David" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

Without introduction, without first seeking God's attention, David cries out to God in verses 1-3. The need is so great that he has no time to introduce his prayer. It is like someone who is about to drown and therefore cries out: 'Help, help!' It is an extended explanation of the statement David made when he had to flee from Saul: "The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and

deliver me from your hand" (1Sam 24:15). The psalm is also closely related to Psalm 34. Only in these two psalms do we find the phrase "the Angel of the LORD" in Psalms (Psa 34:7; 35:5-6).

David asks God to do everything possible to deal with those who oppose him. He cuts to the chase telling God in strong language to use the resources He possesses to come to his aid.

To begin with, he asks God to contend with his persecutors and accusers (verse 1b). As a reason he mentions the fact that they contend with him. The language is both military language and judicial (legal) language (verses 2-3), simultaneously and interchangeably. It is both fighting and disputing.

What the enemies of David want is extremely out of place. Nothing justifies it. He has done nothing for which they should contend with him. God must make that clear to them and therefore He must take up his cause. David asks God to be his Advocate. By doing so, He will let it be known that He is on his side. He will fight those who fight him.

Let God, he says metaphorically, take hold of buckler and shield, i.e. the small and the large shield – these are defensive weapons, sometimes carried by a shield bearer – and rise up to help him (verse 2). The small shield is the hand shield; the large shield is the shield behind which the person is completely sheltered. God must also take the spear in His hand – this is an offensive weapon to eliminate the enemy – and place Himself between him and his persecutors (verse 3). "The battle-axe" can also be translated with "to close up the path against", which means that He blocks the way for his persecutors and they cannot seize him.

In addition to His actions – the weapons speak of God's willingness to defend David – God must also let him know by His words that He is for him. He must say to his soul: "I am your salvation", with the emphasis on "I am". This will be a tremendous encouragement and comfort to him in the great distress in which he finds himself.

Psa 35:4-10 | Demand for Retribution

4 Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;

Let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me.

5 *Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the LORD driving [them] on.*
6 *Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the LORD pursuing them.*
7 *For without cause they hid their net for me;
Without cause they dug a pit for my soul.*
8 *Let destruction come upon him unawares,
And let the net which he hid catch himself;
Into that very destruction let him fall.*
9 *And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD;
It shall exult in His salvation.*
10 *All my bones will say, "LORD, who is like You,
Who delivers the afflicted from him who is too strong for him,
And the afflicted and the needy from him who robs him?"*

After what David has said in verses 1-3, God can begin His judgmental work in his favor. He asks God to let those who seek his life be ashamed and dishonored (verse 4). In the Middle East, it counts heavily when a good name is dishonored. All those people who devise evil against him, God must make them draw back and turn red with shame. David expresses himself ever more strongly in asking God to deal with his enemies.

God must drive them away (verse 5) through "the angel of the LORD", which is the Lord Jesus before He became Man (cf. *Psa 34:7*). If He strikes at them, they will drift away like chaff before the wind, becoming untraceable (cf. *2Kgs 19:35*; *Isa 37:36*). He also asks that their way be "dark and slippery with the angel of the LORD pursuing them" (verse 6). The way of his persecutors must be dark, so that they do not recognize the way. It must also be slippery so that they immediately slip as soon as they take a step. It is what happened to the Egyptians in the Red Sea (*Exo 14:23-31*). David knows that his enemies will not even be able to flee from their Persecutor when He has turned the tables.

David's demand for judgment to come on his enemies is righteous. His enemies want to catch him like a wild animal in a net and in a pit they have hidden from him (verse 7). But it is "without cause" (cf. verse 19). This is how the enemies of the Lord Jesus have been toward Him. 'Without cause'

they persecuted Him, driven by a deep hatred to kill Him. The remnant will also be oppressed “without cause”.

David asks God to cause destruction to come upon the enemy (singular) without his noticing (verse 8). This enemy in the end time is the antichrist, the future false king (Jn 5:43), who will persecute the believing remnant to death. He will be caught in his own cunning and put to death. What he has done to others will be done to him (Rev 13:10).

If God grants his request, his soul will rejoice in Him (verse 9). He will exult in the salvation God has given. All his bones, from which all strength has vanished, will be revived (verse 10). In newly gained strength he will cry out: “LORD, who is like You!” These words Israel spoke of God after the great deliverance from Egypt (Exo 15:11). We also hear them in the words of Isaiah when he speaks of the God of creation (Isa 40:25-26) and in the words of Micah when he speaks of God as the Redeemer (Mic 7:18).

David speaks of God in this way because God delivered him, “the afflicted”, “from him who is too strong for him”. David was the subjugated party, but the incomparable LORD came to his aid and delivered him. When the LORD intercedes for him, He will save him, “the afflicted and the needy”, from the power of “him “who robs him”, from the man who takes his possessions from him by force.

Psa 35:11-16 | Evil Repaid for Good

11 *Malicious witnesses rise up;
They ask me of things that I do not know.*

12 *They repay me evil for good,
[To] the bereavement of my soul.*

13 *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth;
I humbled my soul with fasting,
And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.*

14 *I went about as though it were my friend or brother;
I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.*

15 *But at my stumbling they rejoiced and gathered themselves together;
The smiters whom I did not know gathered together against me,
They slandered me without ceasing.*

16 Like godless jesters at a feast,
They gnashed at me with their teeth.

There is no mention of violence in these verses, the second section of this psalm. They are a long complaint dealing with slander, ingratitude, ridicule and hatred. There is no ground for all these forms of enmity. That makes it all unbearable for David. What David says in these verses happened to the Lord Jesus. Malicious witnesses rose up against Him to bring up something on the basis of which His enemies might condemn Him (verse 11; Mt 26:59-60). And this while He has done nothing evil. On the contrary, He has done only good and nothing else.

David says here “that I do not know”. The Lord Jesus did not say that. He can say, “But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” (Jn 8:45-46). He is fully aware that He has done only and nothing but the will of God.

How badly did the enemies of the Lord Jesus repay Him evil for good (verse 12). They have wanted to rob Him of life. He, Who “went about doing good and healing” (Acts 10:38), has been portrayed as an evildoer to get Him condemned (Lk 23:1-2,5,10).

And how was David in the midst of his people? He has participated in their suffering in a way that is truly compassionate (verse 13; cf. Mt 8:16-17). He did not inquire superficially, with a polite question such as we often ask, in terms of ‘how are you?’ He has outwardly fully and inwardly deeply cared about their suffering and has shown this. He has prayed for them time and again. His sorrow is sincere and deeply felt, as if it were his friend or brother or someone grieving for his mother (verse 14).

But what did those for whom David had been so good do when he was struggling and stumbling through life (verse 15)? They gathered around him, not to help him, but to laugh at him. That is also what the enemies of the Lord Jesus did to Him (Mt 27:27; Lk 23:1). They repaid Him hatred for His love.

The people who, when David was in distress, so gathered around him to mock him, were “smiters”. David didn’t know them. “They slandered” or “they tore” him, that is, his reputation, to pieces with their slanders. They

did it “without ceasing”. David’s enemies did not know when to quit, they just went on and on.

David also knows how they behave when they are among themselves, in their own circle (verse 16). It is a company of “godless jesters at a feast”. The Hebrew word has the meaning of people who for the sake of a small reward (a cookie) are willing to mock others.

Perhaps we can think of people who sat at Saul’s table and told Saul lies about him (1Sam 24:10). These jesters did this to be in Saul’s good graces and to take advantage of him as much as possible (1Sam 22:7). Therefore, they “gnashed ... with their teeth” at him, which means they were plotting evil (Psa 37:12). They were out to gain. That did not come because David always escaped their hands.

Psa 35:17-21 | Cry for Redemption

*17 Lord, how long will You look on?
Rescue my soul from their ravages,
My only [life] from the lions.
18 I will give You thanks in the great congregation;
I will praise You among a mighty throng.
19 Do not let those who are wrongfully my enemies rejoice over me;
Nor let those who hate me without cause wink maliciously.
20 For they do not speak peace,
But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land.
21 They opened their mouth wide against me;
They said, “Aha, aha, our eyes have seen it!”*

How long will the “Lord” – Adonai, Commander, Sovereign Ruler – continue to “look on” doing nothing (verse 17)? When will He take action, for which David has called Him in verses 1-3? While in these psalms a repetition of thoughts occurs each time as a form of poetry, this form of poetry is interrupted by the fact that this question stands alone, without repetition. This emphasizes the distress of the psalmist.

Devastating deeds are being done against His anointed king. He begs God to deliver his soul from them. “My only [life]” means “I have no more”.

This is about David's life, which was the only thing he had left. And even that was threatened by hungry, powerful, life-threatening lions.

David knows that God will stand up for him and deliver him and he intends not to be silent about that (verse 18). He will give Him thanks for it "in the great congregation", and "among a mighty throng" he will praise Him. As in Psalm 22, the LORD's deliverance extends to praise in the assembly (Psa 22:22), yes, the great assembly (Psa 22:25), the latter pointing to the fullness of Israel in the realm of peace.

But it is still not that far. The second section of the psalm ends with an intention to sing a song of praise (verse 18), but the third section (verses 19-28) begins with the present condition in which the enemy rejoices over David's condition. Hence, David again turns to God, this time with two questions (verse 19). The first is that he asks God to see to it that those who are his enemies for false reasons will not be able to rejoice over him.

The second is that those who hate him "without cause" will not have an opportunity to inform one another of their plans to kill him through sneaky signals of winks. People who send signals by winking are making up falsehoods (Pro 16:30). They are not upright; they will not openly say what they mean (Pro 6:12-13). They share secrets with each other that cannot bear the light of day and are therefore signaled to each other in the dark language of secrecy.

He does know them. These are not people who speak peace (verse 20). They are not out for peace, but for the extermination of "those who are quiet in the land". "They devise deceitful words against" them. The "quiet in the land" are those who make up the remnant, who do not impress or emphatically show themselves. They do not step into the foreground and do not assert themselves. They are modest in their behavior and are easy prey for the wicked people.

The wicked people "opened their mouth wide" against God's anointed king (verse 21). They put on a big mouth against him and certainly do not hold back in doing so. It is the picture here of a wild animal, a lion, which opens its mouth and threateningly shows its teeth (cf. verses 17,25b). Out of their mouth come the foulest accusations and curses. With great amusement they claim that they have seen what they accuse him of: "Aha, aha,

our eyes have seen it!" Now they can sue and get him convicted. The expression "aha" (cf. Psa 40:15) means that they are gloating over the psalmist's misery (cf. verse 19a).

Psa 35:22-26 | Demand to Do Justice

22 You have seen it, O LORD, do not keep silent;

O Lord, do not be far from me.

23 Stir up Yourself, and awake to my right

And to my cause, my God and my Lord.

24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness,

And do not let them rejoice over me.

25 Do not let them say in their heart, "Aha, our desire!"

Do not let them say, "We have swallowed him up!"

26 Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress;

Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me.

The enemies say in verse 21 that they have seen "it", but David says to the LORD, "You have seen it" (verse 22). And that's what it's all about. The LORD does not let Himself be heard, but David knows that He has seen it. He calls on Him to break His silence. He asks the "Lord", Adonai, not to stay far from him, by which he means that the Lord will come close to him to actually help him (cf. Psa 22:11).

David calls on God to awaken (literally, to rise up) and wake up (verse 23; cf. Psa 44:23). He knows that God has seen everything. But because God does nothing, it seems to David that He is keeping Himself asleep. It is, according to David, high time for God to act to bring justice to His anointed king. He passionately appeals to God, whom he calls "my God and my Lord", to take his court case. Then He can silence the accusers.

David's concern is that God is doing him justice according to His, that is God's, righteousness (verse 24). Only when God, Whom he emphatically addresses again, this time as "LORD my God", does justice to him with His righteousness, will any accusation be definitively dismissed. The accusers will have been deprived of the reason to rejoice over him. He will be vindicated and redeemed by God.

They should not even get the inner satisfaction of his condemnation and not be able to say “in their hearts” that they have their way (verse 25). Nothing must come of their intention to swallow him up (cf. Lam 2:16). They must trickle off in shame and humiliated altogether, all those people who rejoice over his calamity (verse 26). God must clothe them with shame and dishonor (cf. verse 4), all those people who magnify themselves over him to get him out of the way.

Psa 35:27-28 | The LORD Be Magnified

*27 Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication;
And let them say continually, “The LORD be magnified,
Who delights in the prosperity of His servant.”
28 And my tongue shall declare Your righteousness
[And] Your praise all day long.*

David asked God to justify him to his accusers and put them to shame. He ends the psalm by asking God for those who find joy in his vindication (verse 27). There are those people. They are his faithful followers who favor his vindication and rejoice in it. They suffer with him the reproach that is done to him. For them David asks that God turns things around for the better so that they will shout for joy and rejoice.

When justice is done to God’s anointed king, which is ultimately the Messiah, God’s people will “say continually, “The LORD be magnified””. God will receive all the glory. God’s delight will be great “in the prosperity of His servant”. Again, this is all about the Lord Jesus. He is the true Servant of God, the Servant of the LORD.

The peace of God’s Servant, the Messiah, is the peace He has wrought through His work on the cross. Through this He enabled peace with God (Rom 5:1; Jn 14:27a). This is the peace that the sinner partakes of when he converts to God and accepts in faith the work of the Lord Jesus as also accomplished for him. The Lord Jesus then gives His own peace, which is the peace of God, to all who, like He has always done, walk their way in trust in God (Jn 14:27b; Phil 4:7). Then there is a third form of peace. That is the peace that will soon reign everywhere on earth (Isa 9:6).

That peace, according to verse 24, is based on “Your righteousness”, that is God’s righteousness. Now that same righteousness is proclaimed and magnified by David (verse 28). God’s righteousness guarantees the eternal duration of peace. It is peace as the fruit of righteousness, that is, of God’s righteousness (Jam 3:18). God judges the enemies of His people and of David and of the true David in justice. After that, there will be peace on earth.

David’s enemies have used their tongues to say wicked things. David will use his tongue to “declare” God’s “righteousness”, God’s “praise all day long” or God’s “praise every day”, that is continuously. Throughout the time of the realm of peace, God will be praised for His righteousness all day long.

The expression ‘justice will prevail’ is then fulfilled in its full sense, for *God’s* justice, the true justice, has then been manifested. Its result, peace, will then be enjoyed everywhere. This will always be expressed in praise of God by all who enjoy this peace.

Psalm 36

Introduction

From this psalm we cannot discern a direct occasion that led to its being written. We hear the language of a believer who has insight into the nature of the ungodly, into what characterizes and drives him. That insight drives him out to the excellence and greatness of God as his refuge and the abundance of blessing enjoyed with Him. The psalmist looks first at the 'greatness' of the ungodly and then at the greatness of God. We recognize here the experience of the believing remnant in the end time when they have to deal with 'the ungodly', that is, the antichrist.

That the believers will be driven out to God through their knowledge of the ungodly is exactly what God wants. We see here an application of the riddle that Samson gives up: "Out of the eater came something to eat, and out of the strong came something sweet" (Jdg 14:14a). The threat of the ungodly makes us all the more aware of all that we have received in Christ. As a result, 'food' and 'sweetness' come to us out of "the eater" and out of "the strong", that is, the wicked.

The psalm can be divided as follows:

1. The characteristics of the ungodly (verses 1b-4).
2. Praise of God's covenant of faithfulness and the joy over it (verses 5-9).
3. Prayer to be preserved from the ungodly (verses 10-12).

Psa 36:1-4 | Characteristics of the Ungodly

1 For the choir director. [A Psalm] of David the servant of the LORD.

Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart;

There is no fear of God before his eyes.

2 For it flatters him in his [own] eyes

Concerning the discovery of his iniquity [and] the hatred [of it].

3 The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit;

He has ceased to be wise [and] to do good.

4 He plans wickedness upon his bed;
 He sets himself on a path that is not good;
 He does not despise evil.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “[a Psalm] of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

For “the servant of the LORD” see at Psalm 18:1. There this expression occurs in the heading the first and only other time.

In Hebrew, this psalm begins with the word *ne’um*, which means that what follows is an oracle from God. What follows is a description of the ungodly as God sees him. The characteristics described here show that there is not the slightest restraint in committing sins.

It is not limited to a particular enemy in the psalmist’s life, but applies to every ungodly person. It is his nature, he lives according to it. It involves his whole being, his thinking, his words and his deeds, in short it is man under the power of sin (cf. Jer 17:9; Eph 2:1-3). “The transgression” here means that sin has taken the place of God in the heart of the ungodly.

His life consists of “transgression” of all that God has forbidden (verse 1b). God knows what the ungodly speaks “within his heart”. That man does not have the slightest “fear of God”. His eyes are not fixed on it. With the ungodly, the speaking of God in the heart or conscience has been replaced by the desire to transgress all that God has forbidden. This is not a heathen, but one who is consciously in rebellion against the covenant of God. It is about an apostate Jew, who will eventually find his full fulfillment in the antichrist (cf. 2Thes 2:3-4).

Instead of awe for God, the ungodly has something else in mind and that is himself. He considers himself great. He boasts of his transgression, he justifies it, and flatters himself with all that he is able to do and is in his own eyes (verse 2). In doing so, he deceives himself and others. There comes a time of “the discovery of his iniquity [and] the hatred [of it]” (cf. Num 32:23). This means that the ungodly will ultimately face his iniquity before the great white throne and will be judged, but here we are talking about the government of God here and now.

Whoever does unrighteousness will be punished for it by God. He will be hated by God and all who love Him. Then the doers of unrighteousness will be convinced that they have loved unrighteousness and thereby sinned against God and their own lives. Without defense, they will see that the punishment they receive is deserved and just.

His transgression – that is, not just doing wrong, but it is violating a prohibition – is evident in the words of wickedness and deceit that come from his mouth (verse 3). There is no acting wisely and doing good with him. In his words and deeds there is nothing to discover that is true and good. This is the result of the lack of awe for God. If that is lacking, there can be no wise acting. Here it says “ceased”. This indicates that he knows better, but does not do it, fails to do it. It is a culpable omission. The next verse shows that.

From verse 4 it is clear that the ungodly intentionally and knowingly does evil. It is willful, premeditated sinning (Heb 10:26). It is rebelling against the covenant of God. “He plans wickedness upon his bed.” At night the desire to do wickedness occupies him. When he gets out of bed, “he sets himself on a path that is not good”. On such a path it is not possible to do good. “He does not despise evil” means that he knows evil but does not despise it.

Psa 36:5-9 | Precious Lovingkindness

5 Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens,

Your faithfulness [reaches] to the skies.

6 Your righteousness is like the mountains of God;

Your judgments are [like] a great deep.

O LORD, You preserve man and beast.

7 How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!

And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

8 They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house;

And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights.

9 For with You is the fountain of life;

In Your light we see light.

Without transition, without introduction, suddenly the LORD is there (verse 5). How is that possible? The answer is: His lovingkindness, or His covenant faithfulness. For us, the LORD's actions are based on the blood of the new covenant, which is for us. His faithfulness is based on the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. This psalm, as noted at verse 1b, is an oracle of God, indicating that everything here is seen from God's point of view. Therefore, here in verse 5 we can have the abrupt transition into a song of praise to God's covenant faithfulness.

In contrast to the glorification of the ungodly of himself in verse 2, is the glorification of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness by the God-fearing (verse 5). God's "lovingkindness, ... extends to the heavens". This means that God's lovingkindness will accompany the righteous on earth until he is in heaven. Also, the righteous counts on the faithfulness of God that goes beyond the earthly events and reaches "to the skies".

It means that the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God are immeasurably great (cf. *Psa* 57:10). As far as the eye reaches, they are visible. Lovingkindness is the source of God's acting and provides comfort in difficult circumstances. Faithfulness is the anchor to which the believer clings. Faithfulness offers security.

Attached to God's lovingkindness and faithfulness is His "righteousness" (verse 6). It is unshakable "like the mountains of God", like the mighty mountains. His righteousness is manifested in His government which is for judgment to the ungodly and for redemption to the righteous. He always acts in accordance with Who He is, in accordance with His holiness and His love.

In His judgments in the great tribulation, which are like "a great deep", He preserves "men and beasts". This recalls God's judgment of the flood (*Gen* 7:11), that men and beasts are preserved in the ark and then come out of the ark onto an earth cleansed by the judgments (*Gen* 8:18-19). So it will be in the realm of peace after the great tribulation (*Rom* 8:20-21).

In the realm of peace, it will become clear "how precious" God's "lovingkindness" is, for everything enjoyed then is a result of it (verse 7). This principle applies not only to the realm of peace. God's lovingkindness is already now the reason, "for the children of men to take refuge in the

shadow of Your wings" (cf. Rth 2:12; Psa 17:8; 57:1b; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). God offers protection and safety. We see a foreshadowing of this in nature with chicks crawling under mother's wings when danger threatens (Mt 23:37; Lk 13:34).

In the shadow of God's wings, the children of men find not only protection, but also an abundance of blessings: "They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house" (verse 8). The blessings here are to be permitted to eat of the peace offering that speaks of fellowship with the LORD and with one another.

God gives them there to drink from "the river of Your delights" or, as it is translated in the Dutch translation, to drink from "the brook full of delectable gifts" (cf. Eze 47:1-5). This is characteristic of the joy of all who partake of the Divine nature. Where God has His joy, that is where His own have their joy. By the "delights" or "delectable gifts" we can think of all the gifts we have received in Christ, both spiritual and material. For both gifts apply: what do we have that we have not received (1Cor 4:7)? All gifts find their summary in the one great gift of God: Christ. "Thanks be to God for His indescribable Gift!" (2Cor 9:15).

This abundance of blessings may be enjoyed by us New Testament believers in a higher way than is possible for believers associated with God's earthly people. Christ has become our life. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. We have been given eternal life. Our fellowship is by the Spirit with the Father and the Son and with one another. This causes complete joy (1Jn 1:1-4).

We can enjoy all this because we have been put in connection with Him with Whom is "the fountain of life" (verse 9). Fountain means well of water. Life means a well of living water, water that gives life and refreshment. For us it goes even further. That well is not only "with" us, but *in* us (Jn 14:16-17). We have that well in Christ, Who dwells in our hearts through faith (Eph 3:17), and in the eternal life – that is He Himself (1Jn 5:20) – that we have received (Jn 4:14). We also have that well within us through the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us, enabling us to become a well of water for others in turn (Jn 7:37-39).

In addition to being the fountain of life, God is also "light", and in His light we "see the light". Seeing the light is connected with "life" (Psa 49:19).

This means that they receive life in the light of God. Life and light belong together. This is seen in Christ: “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (Jn 1:4). In the context in which it appears here, it means that the light shows the believer the way in the darkness in which the world is shrouded. It is about the light of God giving light in the darkness.

The deeper meaning is that the light shines into dark human hearts and reveals what is in them. It reveals the sinner and also shows Who God is and what He has done to save the sinner.

Psa 36:10-12 | Lovingkindness and Righteousness

*10 O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,
And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.*

*11 Let not the foot of pride come upon me,
And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.*

*12 There the doers of iniquity have fallen;
They have been thrust down and cannot rise.*

Here we come to the third section of the psalm. In the first section we have seen the features of the ungodly. In the second section, we heard a song of praise about the covenant faithfulness of God, of His lovingkindness. In this third section, the psalmist asks if the LORD will show His lovingkindness on those who know Him. They call themselves those who know the LORD and are upright.

Who the ungodly is and Who God is has been clarified. Now David can pray for the lovingkindness and righteousness of God for the righteous (verse 10). Here, as in verses 5-6, lovingkindness and righteousness are linked together.

When David thinks of God’s lovingkindness and righteousness, he cannot just think of himself. He asks if God will also extend His lovingkindness and righteousness over His own. This makes one think of protection and security. Therein lies, both for David himself and for those who are with him security against the enemy.

He speaks of “those who know You” and “the upright in heart”. They are the “we” of verse 9. Those who know God are those who live in fellowship with God. It means they trust Him and are faithful to Him. In the heart of

the upright in heart are no curves, side paths, or ulterior motives (cf. Psa 7:10; 11:2; 32:11). They are distinguished from those who deny God in their heart and have no awe of Him (verse 1).

Following on from verse 10, David asks in verse 11 to be kept from the proud and wicked (cf. Mt 6:13). He speaks of “the foot of pride” and “the hand of the wicked”. He does not want to be trampled by the foot of the proud or chased away by the hand of the wicked. He would like to enjoy God’s lovingkindness and righteousness undisturbed and serve Him. Therefore, he does not want to be overrun by the boasters and have to wander around to stay out of the hands of the wicked.

David concludes his prayer by expressing the certainty that “the doers of iniquity” will meet their end (verse 12). He sees the future as present. When the God-fearing takes shelter in the shadow of the LORD’s wings, the wicked cannot stand (Psa 1:5). They have fallen because they have been cast down, which also prevents them from rising again to start committing iniquity again.

Psalm 37

Introduction

This psalm instructs the believing remnant about the ways of God in the time when Israel is being purified (Mal 3:3a). It is a wisdom psalm, comparable to the book of Proverbs. Its form is the acrostic, because each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is not quite perfect in form, as an indication that the perfect is yet to come.

The instruction is given by comparing the ways and characteristics of the wicked with those of the righteous. It is the recurring theme of Psalm 1. In terms of content, this psalm can be compared to and is thus a continuation of Psalm 36.

The psalm is an encouragement to the remnant in the end time, and also to the believers now, to wait for God. Then they will not let themselves be confused by paying attention to the temporary prosperity of the wicked who surround them. The psalm shows that eventually the wicked will be exterminated and the righteous will possess the earth as an inheritance given to them by God. It will go well for the righteous and bad for the wicked. The emphasis is on the faithful remnant of Israel who will ultimately inherit the realm of peace (verses 3,9,11,22,34).

Psa 37:1-6 | Trust in the LORD

1 [A Psalm] of David.

Do not fret because of evildoers,

Be not envious toward wrongdoers.

2 For they will wither quickly like the grass

And fade like the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD and do good;

Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

4 Delight yourself in the LORD;

And He will give you the desires of your heart.

5 Commit your way to the LORD,

Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

6 He will bring forth your righteousness as the light

And your judgment as the noonday.

For “[a Psalm] of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

David begins the psalm without introduction or polite phrases. If there is danger, like fire for example, you immediately start shouting ‘fire, fire!’ Here the believers are exposed to a great danger: to envy the unbelievers (cf. Pro 23:17; 24:1,19).

The psalmist begins directly with the core of his theme by exhorting the righteous not to fret because of evildoers and not to be envious toward wrongdoers (verse 1b; Pro 24:19). When we fret, it shows that we do not trust God. When we become jealous of someone, envy someone for something, it is even worse, because then we are thinking only of ourselves. Deep down, it means that we have no understanding of the ways of God. This is elaborated in Psalm 73 (Psa 73:1-17).

It is necessary to live with the peace of God in our hearts in the midst of evil. We are living in the midst of people who seem to be able to go their way undisturbed at the expense of others, without being stopped. The righteous can get upset about this. But, says David, he should not do that.

It is unnecessary and pointless, because evildoers are only allowed a short stay on earth and then it is over and done for them (verse 2). They will wither quickly like the grass, and they will fade like the green herb (Psa 103:15-16; 1Pet 1:24; Jam 1:9-11). The grass is a picture of the unbelieving part of the people, looking green and prosperous (Isa 40:6-8). David here highlights life from the perspective of eternity and from the perspective of the indirect government of God in view of the prophecies.

David has not only a negative warning in verses 1-2, but also a positive encouragement to trust in the LORD and walk with Him (Isa 26:4). He directs the eye of the righteous above the earthly scene to God in verse 3. Let him trust Him and do good. This is the proper response to the prevailing evil. First, it is important to trust in God and then to do good. Doing good in the midst of evil gives glory to God. It is what Christ did in His life on earth. To us it is said: “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary” (Gal 6:9).

Instead of harboring self-pity or bitterness, wisdom points us to growing confidence in the LORD. The Old Testament believer – as well as the faithful remnant in the future – is encouraged to “dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness”. “Cultivate faithfulness” means to feed or to give food to faithfulness that it can grow. Faithfulness is not food with which a person can feed himself. Faithfulness is a fundamental attitude in which a person has to grow, which becomes visible in his comings and goings.

He who cultivates or feeds faithfulness, who grows in faithfulness, will not worry about the wicked around him or envy them. His task is to see the land given to him by God as his home. He cannot yet fully enjoy it, but he lives there. For us, we live in the heavenlies and there we can enjoy all the blessings that have been given to us. This will keep us from focusing on the prosperity of this world.

He who cultivates faithfulness will have rest and peace in his heart in the midst of evil. This is true for all believers in all times. Faithfulness is the most important thing in the life of the believer and is rewarded by the Lord with giving him entrance into His joy (Mt 25:21,23).

That joy can be enjoyed right now. We hear that in the encouragement to “delight yourself in the LORD” (verse 4). That is our strength (Neh 8:10c) and also gives rich reward. For God then gives what our heart desires. If the heart delights in God, the desires of the heart will not be selfish, but will be aimed at honoring and glorifying God.

The third encouragement is to commit our way to the LORD and trust in Him (verse 5; 1Pet 5:7). The Hebrew word implies the rolling of something that is large and heavy. This makes it clear that it is not easy and light to trust in the Lord in the midst of our problems.

If we roll our life’s journey with all its burdens and difficulties, with everything that weighs on us, on Him, He will bear it all. It is also important to commit it to Him with the confidence that it is in good hands. We can then let go, even if it seems that something is not going well. The way He determines is good. Added to that we may trust that He will do it, that is, that He will do what He has promised, even if sometimes it seems that things are going completely the wrong way.

What He has promised is to bring forth our righteousness as the light (verse 6). That happens when the LORD starts acting in accordance with His purposes and promises. That is as certain and as shining as the coming of the morning light. He will make our judgment shine as the noonday. Now it is still our portion to be treated unjustly and to endure injustice. Until He openly justifies us, we may, following the Lord Jesus, surrender everything and ourselves to Him Who judges righteously (1Pet 2:23).

Psa 37:7-11 | The Humble Will Inherit the Land

7 Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him;

Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,

Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

8 Cease from anger and forsake wrath;

Do not fret; [it leads] only to evildoing.

9 For evildoers will be cut off,

But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.

10 Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more;

And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be [there].

11 But the humble will inherit the land

And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

Because the situation promised in verse 6 is delayed, there is a great danger that the believer will pay attention to the prosperity of the wicked (Psa 73:3). He should not do that. It is important to rest or be still in confidence in God's presence and to wait patiently for Him, that is, to wait for His time (verse 7). It is a silence of quiet confidence in the presence of God in the expectation of His intervention (cf. Psa 62:5-6). Complaining turns into unbelief, doubt and bitterness when the eye is no longer on God, but on the wicked and their prosperity. Those people have made cunning plans and they also carry them out successfully (Psa 73:4-9).

Don't let what you see around you make you mad, says David (verse 8). Stop being angry with God, regain your composure, calm down. Let go of your grimness, don't give it any more attention. Come to yourself. Becoming angry accomplishes nothing. On the contrary, it leads "only to evil-doing". In your anger you say things or do things that harm others and

yourself and bring dishonor to God. You only make things worse by doing so and become equal to the evildoers.

Now follows a promise with two sides: judgment on evildoers, they will be cut off, and blessing on those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land, that is, enter the realm of peace (verse 9). What we need to do is trust God in His Word. He has said that the wicked will be cut off. It doesn't look like it yet at first glance, but He will do it. In contrast to this is what the humble will possess. That is, according to His promise, to "inherit the land". Do we trust Him? If so, that will determine our attitude toward evil.

To underscore and elaborate and deepen what he said in verse 9, David repeats in other words in the next two verses how it will end with the wicked man on the one hand and with the humble on the other. As for the wicked man, it is "yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more" (verse 10). Literally, 'just a moment, and the wicked man is gone'. Take another good look at his place and consider that it will soon be empty. Nothing will remain of him and all his power, possession and prestige. There will be nothing left of him. Not only will the wicked man himself disappear, but so will everything that reminds one of him. So, just bear with the wicked man for a little while longer that they are doing well. The end of their prosperity is in sight.

As for the humble – Hebrew *anawim*, those who are oppressed but nevertheless put their trust in the LORD – it is just a little while before they "will inherit the land" (verse 11). For them, that will mean that they "will delight themselves in abundant prosperity". Therefore, just a little while persevere, just a little while longer endure suffering, and then the time of joy and peace will begin that will last a thousand years and continue for eternity. It is a great peace, an atmosphere of only peace, and in that atmosphere they delight; it is all joy.

The Lord Jesus quotes the first line of verse 11 in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:5). Humbleness, or gentleness, is the feature of the remnant in the end time (Zep 2:3). It is also what should characterize us. We can learn this from the Lord Jesus (Mt 11:29). It means that in the midst of tribulation we do not rebel, but put our trust in Him, in quiet expectation of His redemp-

tion, having the conviction that the promised inheritance will be given to us (1Pet 1:3-5).

Psa 37:12-22 | The Wicked Opposite to the Righteous

*12 The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.
13 The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.
14 The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.
15 Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken.
16 Better is the little of the righteous
Than the abundance of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked will be broken,
But the LORD sustains the righteous.
18 The LORD knows the days of the blameless,
And their inheritance will be forever.
19 They will not be ashamed in the time of evil,
And in the days of famine they will have abundance.
20 But the wicked will perish;
And the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures,
They vanish—like smoke they vanish away.
21 The wicked borrows and does not pay back,
But the righteous is gracious and gives.
22 For those blessed by Him will inherit the land,
But those cursed by Him will be cut off.*

So far everything is abstract, the contrast between the ungodly and the righteous is discussed in a doctrinal way. Verses 12-26 are practical, the contrast is now made tangible in everyday life.

This section takes a closer look at the contrast described in verses 10-11. This deals with the actions of the wicked and God's response to them. The first contrast is in verses 12-13. The wicked is continually devising vicious plans "against the righteous" (verse 12), which is the same as the humble

one of verse 11 and verse 14. As he plots to kill the righteous (verse 14), he gnashes with his teeth at him (cf. *Psa 35:16*). This indicates that inwardly he is very angry with him, he is full of hatred toward him.

The Lord, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler, is totally unimpressed by what the wicked plots and does against the righteous one (verse 13). While the wicked gnashes with his teeth, He laughs at him, so ridiculous is what the wicked is doing (cf. *Psa 2:1-4*). After all, it is supreme folly to turn against Him and utter shortsightedness because the day of judgment is coming on his foolish schemes. The Lord sees “his day”, his end (cf. *Psa 73:17b*), which is the day when the wicked will be judged, ahead and the righteous must continue to see it.

The second contrast is in verses 14-15. The wicked begin the execution of their plans. They “have drawn the sword and bent their bow” (verse 14). This speaks of the power of the wicked: the sword to kill nearby and bow and arrow to kill at a distance. However, the power (arm) of the wicked will be broken (verses 15,17).

Their intention is to “to cast down the afflicted and the needy” and “to slay those who are upright in conduct”. ‘Slay’ is a word often used for the slaughter of cattle. This is how the wicked see the righteous (cf. *Psa 44:22*). But God ensures that “their sword will enter their own heart” and that “their bows will be broken” (verse 15). Their own hearts will be affected because that is where all their wickedness comes from.

The third contrast is in verses 16-17. In verse 16, “the little of the righteous” is compared to “the abundance of many wicked”. The outcome is also given directly: What the righteous has is “better” than what the wicked have. The reason is given in verse 17: “The arms of the wicked will be broken”, so that he has no power to use sword and bow against the righteous, nor to bring any more of his abundance with his hand to his mouth. In contrast, the righteous enjoys the support of God in the little that he has. He does not need to have a powerful arm, for his God helps him. Surely it cannot be a question of who is better off, can it?

The fourth contrast is in verses 18-20. “The LORD knows the days of the blameless” because they live with Him (verse 18). They are upright, they desire to do His will. God watches their lives day by day with His loving

care. He is interested in everything that happens in their lives every day and helps them.

Their days have no end. The LORD sees the day (singular) of the wicked (verse 13), but of the righteous, the pious, the upright, He knows their days (plural). What they have been promised by the LORD in terms of inheritance “will be forever”. They will enjoy their inheritance fully and all days in the realm of peace.

This also means that “they will not be ashamed in the time of evil” (verse 19). After all, the LORD knows them. Also “in the days of famine they will have abundance”. This does not mean that they will always have enough bread, but that they will experience His fellowship in their need. They are not dependent on external circumstances; even disasters cannot prevent the LORD from continuing to provide for them (cf. Psa 1:3). It is not primarily about material satisfaction, but spiritual satisfaction.

Completely different it will be with the wicked (verse 20). They will perish. For them there is no realm of peace, but eternal judgment. They are called “the enemies of the LORD”, for that is what they are in their mind and attitude. What remains of them is smoke that vanishes. Just “like the glory of the pastures”, i.e. the flowers of the field. The wicked are compared to grass and the flowers of the field (verse 2; Isa 40:6). This speaks of perishability.

The fifth contrast is in verses 21-22. The wicked never have enough. They borrow and keep borrowing, without paying back a cent (verse 21). Very different is the case with the righteous. He gives, and not only that, he gives with his heart, for he gives out of compassion to those in need. Here it is not important whether he is materially rich or poor. He gives because he is a righteous person. He desires to give because he has God’s nature, and God is a Giver (cf. 2Cor 9:7,15).

They can be generous because they have been “blessed by Him” and will “inherit the land” (verse 22). This verse means that God will ultimately fulfill His promise of the land in accordance with His covenant. What will we worry about accumulating a lot of property now and keeping it for ourselves when we know that we will soon receive an entire inheritance? The wicked live only for themselves and pretend to own the earth. They

do not realize that they are “cursed by Him” and “will be cut off”. This too is in accordance with the covenant: that the curse comes upon those who break the covenant.

Psa 37:23-28 | Not Forsaken

*23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.*

*24 When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong,
Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.*

*25 I have been young and now I am old,
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
Or his descendants begging bread.*

*26 All day long he is gracious and lends,
And his descendants are a blessing.*

*27 Depart from evil and do good,
So you will abide forever.*

*28 For the LORD loves justice
And does not forsake His godly ones;
They are preserved forever,*

But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off.

It is a great blessing to know that “the steps of a man”, that is of the righteous man, are “are established by the LORD” (verse 23). God sees to it that the righteous is led by Him in circumstances in which the way is no longer visible. In the way of that righteous, He finds His joy. God has found this joy perfectly in the way the Lord Jesus went on earth. He has let Himself be guided by His God in everything. Therefore we can be called upon to follow in His steps (1Pet 2:21).

If we realize to some extent that the world is full of traps and pitfalls, the knowledge that God is establishing our steps will fill us with great thankfulness. We are then in His way. We go that way when we let ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Then, like Moses, we will ask God: “Let me know Your ways” (Exo 33:13). Moses does not ask for *a* way, but *Your* ways, God’s ways.

Even though the righteous may fall (verse 24), he will not be hurled headlong, for the LORD is the One Who holds his hand (cf. Pro 20:24; 24:16a; Deu 33:27). When a person goes God's way, he may stumble in it, or commit a sin. But he will not remain laying down, for the LORD will restore him. He will not be cast away, for he may count on the support of God.

David is speaking from experience (verse 25). He is "old" now, but has not forgotten that he has also "been young". Throughout his life, he has "not seen the righteous forsaken". It does not mean that a believer has no problems. God has not promised us an easy journey, but He has promised us a safe arrival. This is a great encouragement for a believer to persevere. All the while David is being pursued by Saul, God has always provided him and his men with what they need. The same is true for their children.

To experience God's provision is to experience His mercies. Those who realize this will themselves begin to act that way toward others (verse 26). Whoever is blessed and gives God the credit for that, will distribute his blessing to others. He doesn't do that now and then, but "all day long". He "is gracious and lends" and continues to do so all the time. This will be continued by "his descendants". The blessing that the righteous receives goes from generation to generation. His children have seen how he has lived in fellowship with God. They follow him in this and in turn are also "a blessing". They are blessed and a blessing to others.

There is also another side to this: there must be a departing from evil (verse 27). Evil in this context consists of not keeping the covenant of God, thereby forfeiting the promised blessing. To depart from evil must be followed by doing "good". This includes keeping God's covenant with Abraham. Doing good means doing what God expects. For the faithful remnant, the consequence is that they will abide forever, which means they will inhabit the earth forever, which is the fulfillment of the land promise God made to Abraham. For us it means that we will receive the inheritance that has been reserved for us in heaven.

Abiding forever is, as it were, a reward from the LORD. He gives it, because He "loves justice" (verse 28). By virtue of right He gives it to them. At the same time, He abides with His godly ones. This expression makes it clear that they are objects of His favor, of His grace. They receive the

blessing, not because they are better than the wicked, but because He has spared them according to the election of His grace.

Again, we find the Hebrew *chasidim*, godly ones, namely those who are faithful to the covenant with the LORD. These are the ones who will receive the blessings of the LORD, from generation to generation. And since the LORD also is faithful to His covenant, He can never forsake His godly ones. In accordance with the same covenant, the wicked, those who violate the covenant, will be cut off.

Being a godly one of the LORD entails even more blessing: “They are preserved forever.” He also holds His protective hand over them and preserves them so that they will be able to enjoy what He has promised them. What happens to “the descendants of the wicked” is in sharp contrast to this: they “will be cut off”. Anyone who sees this contrast well will not envy or get excited about the temporary prosperity of the wicked.

Psa 37:29-33 | Features of the Righteous

*29 The righteous will inherit the land
And dwell in it forever.*

*30 The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom,
And his tongue speaks justice.*

*31 The law of his God is in his heart;
His steps do not slip.*

*32 The wicked spies upon the righteous
And seeks to kill him.*

*33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand
Or let him be condemned when he is judged.*

David – in fact the Holy Spirit – shows the righteous in detail what their real blessings and features are. Once again he points out to the righteous that they will inherit the land and dwell in it forever (verse 29). As so often, this is about the fulfillment of the promise of the land as promised in the covenant with Abraham.

The fulfillment takes place when the Messiah has come and reigns. All the enemy powers have been judged. There is no longer any threat that they

will be chased out of their land again. There is no threat around them or in them, for in their heart is the law of God, as verse 31 says.

That perspective will guide the righteous in his life now, while he is still living in the midst of evil. His “mouth ... utters wisdom” (verse 30). The wisdom of the righteous is that he looks to the end of the wicked (Psa 73:17b). Therefore, he does not become envious of his short-lived prosperity. This is expressed in the following verses. The wise man knows what to say. It is worthwhile to listen carefully to what he says, because it helps to choose the right path. In what he says, nothing is twisted or crooked, for “his tongue speaks justice”. He tells what is just to God and to men.

The righteous speaks this way because “the law of his God is in his heart” (verse 31). Only when the heart is full of the law – the Word of God – can a person open his mouth and utter wisdom and justice (verse 30). The heart is the center of existence, from which everything he does flows (Pro 4:23). God’s law governs him in all his thinking and deliberations and in all his speaking and acting.

Here we think immediately of the Lord Jesus, Who says: “Your law is within My heart” (Psa 40:8). He is the Righteous par excellence. We see here that this is true of every righteous person. To us, New Testament believers, it is said: “Let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you” (Col 3:16).

The “steps” of him in whom the law i.e. the Word of Christ or of God is in the heart, “do not slip”. He who is guided by God’s Word, walks with steady step the way God says he should go. He may still experience so many difficulties and hostility, but he will not be shaken, because he is held up by God’s Word that is in his heart.

The wicked are guided by very different principles (verse 32). He is, under the inspiration of the devil, who is “a murderer from the beginning” (Jn 8:44), out to kill the righteous. To that end, he lurks on him and brings a lawsuit against him. We see this in Judas, who is out to deliver up the Lord Jesus, and the false religious court that makes use of Judas. Thus, many have been inspired by the devil to kill believers through false charges (cf. 1Kgs 21:1-16). This is still happening today and will certainly also happen in all its intensity during the time of the great tribulation.

Then David says: “The LORD will not leave him in his hand or let him be condemned when he is judged” (verse 33). We need to see this from God’s perspective. He will never hand over a righteous person into the hand of wicked people who will do anything with him that they want. The fact that it may look like this has to do with the fact that the world is now satan’s sphere of power. He controls his subjects and sets them up against the righteous. This is not done without the permission of God, but not with His consent. He allows it because it is in accordance with His plan. To see that plan we must look at the end of the righteous.

What man does and thereby fulfills God’s plan is a problem for our thinking, but not for God. We find this problem summed up in one sentence in Peter’s speech in Jerusalem when the church was formed. In it he says the following about what happened to the Lord Jesus: “This [Man], delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put [Him] to death “ (Acts 2:23).

This cannot be explained by us. It is understandable by us only if we let these two truths stand side by side and consider each one separately. We must realize that our knowing is “in part” (1Cor 13:9) or ‘piecewise’. It is not possible for us to see the whole truth of God at once. It is only possible for us to get to know God’s Word by examining one piece of the truth at a time.

We then begin to see more and more connections, but there are also things that remain hidden from us. One of those things is that the counsel of God is partly fulfilled by man’s sin. It is nonsense to say that God did not foresee the Fall. It is just as nonsensical to say that He wanted the Fall. We must let God be Who He is: God. If we do that, we will realize that we are puny little creatures who cannot judge God, but must bow to Him and His counsel. That will be our wisdom and it will also lead us to worship (Rom 11:33-36).

Psa 37:34-40 | The End of the Righteous

*34 Wait for the LORD and keep His way,
And He will exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you will see it.*

35 *I have seen a wicked, violent man
Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil.*
36 *Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more;
I sought for him, but he could not be found.*
37 *Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;
For the man of peace will have a posterity.*
38 *But transgressors will be altogether destroyed;
The posterity of the wicked will be cut off.*
39 *But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
He is their strength in time of trouble.*
40 *The LORD helps them and delivers them;
He delivers them from the wicked and saves them,
Because they take refuge in Him.*

The righteous will possess the land as inheritance (verses 9,11), but that time is not yet. Therefore, they are called to wait for God (cf. verses 7,9) and keep His way (verse 34). They need patience. They are waiting for Someone for Whom time and haste play no role. He knows the right time to act and will do so at that time. The earth is His (Psa 24:1) and He is therefore the One Who can give the inheritance. He will then “exalt” the righteous “to inherit the land”. At that time, the righteous will also be eye-witnesses to the fact that “the wicked are cut off”.

In verses 35-36, David relates another experience he has had in his life concerning “a wicked, violent man” (verse 35). He has seen how this wicked has prospered. In poetic language, he describes this man’s prosperity, comparing him to “a luxuriant tree”, spreading himself “in its native soil”. It all seems great and impressive.

But the life of that man “passed away, and lo, he was no more” (verse 36). It ended abruptly and radically with him. David still sought for him, “but he could not be found”. This is how it goes with the wicked. They have prosperity, but they will soon disappear untraceable. They do not endure in the judgment (Psa 1:5).

This is a great contrast to “the blameless man” and “the upright” (verse 37). David advises the listeners to pay attention to that blameless man. They can learn from his example, take courage from it. They should also

behold “the upright”. How different is the end of that man. As with the wicked (Psa 73:17), we must also watch the end of the righteous. His end “will have prosperity”. He will die in peace, enter the realm of peace in peace in the resurrection, and live a thousand years in peace. Thus we can look at who lead the believers, consider the result of their conduct, and imitate their faith (Heb 13:7).

In contrast to this, once again he points to the end of the transgressors and the wicked (verse 38). “The transgressors will be altogether destroyed”, nothing remains of them. As for the wicked, their “posterity ... will be cut off”. Cutting off is done by a knife, the knife of judgment. “Posterity” is literally “end”. That means here that the descendants of the wicked are also cut off.

As a final conclusion, David says what the portion of the righteous will be (verse 39-40). Their “salvation ... is from the LORD” (verse 39). Since salvation is from the LORD, there can be no doubt that it is sure and certain to come. And when the righteous, while waiting for salvation, are in time of trouble, He is “their strength” during that time. This refers to the believing remnant in the time of the great tribulation, which is called “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30:7). He will assist them in that distress with His strength.

The LORD will “help” them in that time of trouble and eventually “deliver” them from it (verse 40). One more time David says that the LORD will “deliver them from the wicked and save them”. They can surely count on that “because they take refuge in Him”. This means that they trust in Him, which removes all despair and doubt.

Thus, this psalm makes clear how the LORD will purify the people during the great tribulation (Mal 3:2-3). Can there be an even more powerful guarantee of the ultimate blessing of the righteous? Has not all fret and envy of the prosperity of the ungodly now disappeared? Who wants to change places with the wicked when he considers all of this?

Psalm 38

Introduction

This is the third of the seven so-called penitential psalms (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). It is prayed by the Jews on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, the day of repentance and confession of sins. The psalm is spoken by the individual, by David, but is fully applicable to the faithful remnant in the trials of the great tribulation in the end time.

They realize that the affliction that comes upon them is the result of their sins. They also confess this, without any reservation. They accept what comes upon them from the hand of God as righteous discipline. That is why they also turn to Him, because He alone can take away that discipline. They know that He will do it. But when will He do it? The need is so great. As long as His hand rests on them, there is that agonizing question: When will redemption come?

Prophetically, the psalm describes the situation of the believing remnant. David has committed two sins, adultery and murder. Israel has also committed two sins: they have committed adultery by serving idols and they have murdered Christ. The adultery will reach its nadir with the choosing of the antichrist as their king.

Psa 38:1-8 | Confession

1 A Psalm of David, for a memorial.

*O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath,
And chasten me not in Your burning anger.*

*2 For Your arrows have sunk deep into me,
And Your hand has pressed down on me.*

*3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation;
There is no health in my bones because of my sin.*

*4 For my iniquities are gone over my head;
As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.*

5 My wounds grow foul [and] fester

Because of my folly.

6 I am bent over and greatly bowed down;

I go mourning all day long.

7 For my loins are filled with burning,

And there is no soundness in my flesh.

8 I am benumbed and badly crushed;

I groan because of the agitation of my heart.

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

The expression “for a memorial”, which appears only here and in the heading of Psalm 70 (Psa 70:1), connects to the time of trouble. The expression means “to call to remembrance”. It is a call to God to remember their affliction and to remember what He has said in His covenant and His promises. To remind God of something is an indirect demand to intervene.

The entire psalm is a prayer. David is addressing God, not the reader (verse 1b). He is so completely focused on God that he sees nothing but his own deep sinfulness. As a result, he is also convinced that God must “rebuke” and “chasten” sin in His wrath and burning anger over it (cf. Psa 6:1b). The rebuke is that for sin, the burning anger is the chastening that aims to restore him in his fellowship with God.

David sees his illness as a result of God’s rebuke of his sin. Prophetically, the believing remnant will also experience this. For example, Joseph’s brothers see their captivity as a result of their sin against Joseph (Gen 42:21-22).

David feels that God’s arrows have sunk deep into him and that God’s hand has pressed him down (verse 2; cf. Job 6:4; Lam 3:12). Both the piercing pain of the arrows and the heavy pressure under which he is weighed are the work of God. David speaks of “Your arrows” and “Your hand”. The “arrows” point to the inner pain David experienced, in which God is seen as his adversary, who has fired arrows at him because of his sins. The order then is: David’s sin causes anger with God, and God’s anger causes pains and sickness with David. These are the means of God’s discipline by which a person suffers physically.

His flesh or body is ravaged by God’s indignation (verse 3). His bones know no peace because he is aware of his sin. Because of the intensity of

God's discipline, all joy in life is gone from him. His whole body is sick, "there is no health in his bones" (cf. Isa 1:6). The word "soundness" is also related to the suitability to sacrifice. David indicates here that the indignation of God is affecting his relationship with Him. He sees himself as totally depraved and unworthy to draw near to God. This is at the same time evidence of his uprightness and the beginning of restoration (cf. Lev 13:12-13).

He does not belittle his iniquities, but sees them as waters in which he is going down and in danger of drowning (verse 4). He became aware of his sins when he experienced the indignation of God, just as the conscience of Joseph's brothers only awoke in prison. This is about the awakening of his conscience. He came to realize that he himself was responsible for the disciplining hand of the LORD.

The wounds God has inflicted on him stink (verse 5). The smell is repulsive. It is the smell of death. It only now really dawns on him how foolish he was to sin so heavily. David expresses the disgust of his sin. Is our abhorrence of our sins also that great? Sometimes we can tell about our past sins 'flavorful' and are admired for it. Then we do not have the abhorrence of it that we should have.

The wounds are not cleaned, but fester. 'Fester' means that his wound has become infected, that pus and punk have formed. It indicates that sin is in the process of bringing forth death (Jam 1:15). The cause of his sin lies in his folly. Folly is doing something that you know will go wrong. David was aware that his sin would torment him, yet he committed that sin.

No longer able to walk upright, he goes his way "bent over and greatly bowed down" (verse 6). It is killing him. It is not just a physical attitude, it is primarily his soul that is very deeply weighed down. The condition of his soul is visible for others: "all day long" he goes "mourning". He walks around mourning in black clothing. The severe rebuke and chastening have seized him and can be seen on him.

His "loins are filled with burning" (verse 7). In the loins is the strength to walk. When they are "filled with burning", every walking motion hurts violently. Once again he says, what he also said in verse 3, that there is "no soundness" or flawlessness in his flesh or his bones. The repetition makes

it clear that David has not put forward any mitigating circumstance. He suffers, and fully acknowledges the righteousness of this.

He is also spiritually completely wrecked. He is “benumbed and badly crushed” (verse 8). This acknowledgment prompts God to come and dwell with him (Isa 57:15). He feels feckless, tired, and wracked. Everything hurts. His heart does not stop pounding, it throbs, due to stress and possibly fever. There can be a lot of turmoil around a person, while there is peace in the heart. But when there is turmoil in the heart, there is no peace anywhere. He cannot bear it anymore. Desperately he cries out.

Psa 38:9-14 | Desire

*9 Lord, all my desire is before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.
10 My heart throbs, my strength fails me;
And the light of my eyes, even that has gone from me.
11 My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.
12 Those who seek my life lay snares [for me];
And those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction,
And they devise treachery all day long.
13 But I, like a deaf man, do not hear;
And [I am] like a mute man who does not open his mouth.
14 Yes, I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth are no arguments.*

David can only do one thing in this hopeless situation and that is to go to Him Who brought this suffering upon him. And that is exactly God’s intention with suffering that He brings upon us. All the pain and trouble does not alienate David from God, but drives him out to Him.

He addresses God as “Lord”, that is Adonai, the sovereign Ruler of the universe (verse 9), and tells Him that all his desire is open before Him, it goes out to Him. As all his iniquities are manifest before God (verse 4), so does God see, hear, and understand his sighing. Sighing is an expression of distress without words. The distress is so great that David can no longer put it into words; he can only sigh (cf. Rom 8:26).

In his desire for God, he now speaks not of his iniquities, but of his powerlessness (verse 10). His heart is filled with fear and trembling and knows no rest. It throbs, so that he has no strength to do anything. He can't see anything anymore either, he has no view and doesn't know how to continue living. It is as if he has no eyes, for he sees no light. He has lost sight of God as the God of the covenant and walks in darkness.

So far David has spoken of his own physical and spiritual condition. Beginning in verse 11, he speaks of his surroundings. The illness and the thought of possible sin behind it create a deep rift between David and others. Even his loved ones, his closest relatives, and friends are distant. This makes the pain and misery all the more poignant. From his loved ones and friends he doesn't have to expect help (verse 11; Job 19:13-14). Those, with whom he has had a good relationship, his kinsmen, stand afar off.

This is the case both literally and figuratively. They literally stand at a distance watching, and figuratively there is distance because they do not want to share in his suffering. They want nothing to do with him and avoid him. This is a bitter pain, even more bitter than the physical pains. Even his closest relatives do not come near him to relieve his pains, but keep a safe distance.

While his friends and family stand at a distance, his enemies come closer and closer (verse 12). He has spoken of his sin in the foregoing. Now he is going to speak about his enemies surrounding him. These enemies will also be spoken of by the believing remnant in the end time. His enemies "seek" his life, they "lay snares" for him. They are treacherously, maliciously out to kill him.

They seek "to injure" him and therefore they "have threatened destruction", that is, words intended to harm him. And it does not stop there. While he goes in black all day long because he is so miserable, they "devise treachery" against him "all day long". They are constantly thinking about how to get him out of the way.

Instead of protesting about so much injustice, David keeps himself "like a deaf man" (verse 13). He closes his ears to it and does not hear. He cannot defend himself, for he is defenseless, and he does not want to defend him-

self, for he knows that he deserves this misery through his sin (cf. 2Sam 16:10-13). Therefore, he is “like a mute man who does not open his mouth”. This is similar to something said of the Lord Jesus (Isa 53:7). But there is a big difference. The Lord was not “like a mute man” because He was powerless, nor because He was aware of any sin of His own, but because He went through the agony to the cross trusting in God. At the same time, however, the Lord was also aware that He would suffer vicariously for the sins of others (Psa 69:4).

In verse 14, David says again in different words the same thing as in verse 13, emphasizing it a bit stronger (cf. Isa 53:7; 1Pet 2:23). Whatever is said to him, he pays no attention to it and pretends not to hear it. Nor does he respond and keeps his mouth shut. He has no arguments.

Through all the suffering, God does His purifying work with him (Mal 3:3). David does not reproach God about it, but keeps silent. He regards his inner suffering because of his sin as God’s work; he also regards what the enemies do to him as God’s work (cf. Isa 10:5). Therefore, in the next verse he does not address his enemies, but his God.

Psa 38:15-20 | Hope

15 For I hope in You, O LORD;
 You will answer, O Lord my God.
 16 For I said, “May they not rejoice over me,
 [Who], when my foot slips, would magnify themselves against me.”
 17 For I am ready to fall,
 And my sorrow is continually before me.
 18 For I confess my iniquity;
 I am full of anxiety because of my sin.
 19 But my enemies are vigorous [and] strong,
 And many are those who hate me wrongfully.
 20 And those who repay evil for good,
 They oppose me, because I follow what is good.

For the third time, David turns to God (verse 15). He realizes that the LORD is at work with him. Through his enemies, he experienced the disciplining hand of the LORD. It is clear to him that this is happening as a result of his

sin. That sin he confesses (verse 18). Therefore, he has confidence that the LORD will forgive his sin. The disciplinary rod of God is then no longer needed, and David trusts that the enemy will also disappear.

David himself does not listen to the enemies or respond to them, but turns to God because he knows that God answers. In verse 1 he asked Him not to chasten him in His burning anger. In verse 9, he expressed his desire for Him. Now he tells God that he hopes in Him. He even expresses assurance that God will answer. He calls Him "Lord my God", that is, the sovereign Ruler, Adonai, of the universe is *his* all-powerful God.

David does not speak to his enemies, but speaks about them to God. He asks if God will make sure that his enemies will not rejoice over him anyway (verse 16). They will rejoice over him and even magnify themselves against him if his foot should slip. And that risk is high. He is in danger to fall, because he is plagued by his sorrow (verse 17). It is continually before him. He must constantly think of the fact that he is such a great sinner.

He is in God's presence and there he is overwhelmed by his iniquity (verse 18). He does not cover it up, nor does he excuse himself, but makes it known. He cannot and will not do otherwise. He is troubled by his sin. This tortures him and renders him powerless. This is a sorrow which is according to the will of God (2Cor 7:9).

His distress is increased when he looks at his enemies (verse 19). All seems to be going well for them (Psa 73:2-15). They are living life to the fullest and no one is putting any obstacle in their way, not even God. They even become strong. His enemies are also his haters. God rightly chastens him because he has sinned against Him. But his enemies hate him for false reasons, for he has done nothing wrong to them. They do not diminish in number, but become numerous, while he is without strength and stands alone.

We see David going back and forth between what God does to him and what his enemies do to him, between the pressure of his sins and the pressure of his enemies. This will also be the case with the believing remnant in the future. They must come to realize that the enemies are the rod of chastisement of God. This remains the case as long as there is no assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

Then there is another category: people who repay him evil for good (verse 20). He has done good to them. Prophetically we see this with the Lord Jesus, Who always did good, and yet they have repaid Him evil for good. They turned against him instead of being grateful to him for that and become his opponents. And this, because he follows what is good. The good is to follow the LORD, Who is the Good (cf. Mk 10:17-18). But that reminds his enemies too much of God and they don't want that. They want to live their own lives. Therefore, they want to silence him forever.

Psa 38:21-22 | Prayer for Help

*21 Do not forsake me, O LORD;
O my God, do not be far from me!
22 Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!*

David is utterly dependent on God. His health, both physical and mental, has failed him; his family and friends are distant; his enemies approach to give him the deathblow. All he can do is flee upward.

David cries out three times in these verses: to the LORD, to his God, and to the Lord. In his distress he begs the LORD, the God of the covenant, not to forsake him (verse 21). We have the promise that He will not desert us nor forsake us (Heb 13:5b). David also appeals to God as "my God". Surely God is his God, isn't He? Then He cannot be far from him, can He?

The need is great, the situation very threatening. Help must come from God soon (verse 22). For this he appeals to the "Lord, my salvation". All his confidence for his salvation, his redemption is placed in the "Lord", Adonai, the sovereign Ruler. He not only *brings* salvation, but *is* his salvation, his redemption. It is not an act, but a Person Who will perform the act of salvation in His time. His name is Jesus, which means "the LORD redeems, saves".

Psalm 39

Introduction

Psalm 39 continues the subject of Psalm 38, the difference being that in this psalm David hardly speaks of his enemies, but primarily of his illness as a result of his sin. He acknowledges that God gives man a short life. Therefore, he pours out his heart to God as his only hope and asks Him to end His chastisement so that he may enjoy the remaining days of his life.

His illness, as a result of his sin, has brought him to awareness of his futility as a human being and of the transience and brevity of his life (verses 1b-6). This awareness leads him to ask the LORD to deliver him (verses 7-13).

Psa 39:1-5 | Life Is Short

1 For the choir director, for Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

*I said, "I will guard my ways
That I may not sin with my tongue;
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle
While the wicked are in my presence."*

*2 I was mute and silent,
I refrained [even] from good,
And my sorrow grew worse.*

*3 My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned;
[Then] I spoke with my tongue:*

*4 "LORD, make me to know my end
And what is the extent of my days;
Let me know how transient I am.*

*5 "Behold, You have made my days [as] handbreadths,
And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight;
Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The psalm is “for Jeduthun”. The name “Jeduthun” also appears in the heading of Psalm 62 and Psalm 77 (Psa 62:1; 77:1). The psalm shows that sin is the cause of the transience and brevity of life and man. He also shows that the heart of the righteous learns to accept that. That is why, despite its dark subject, the psalm is also “for Jeduthun”, which means “choir of praise”.

Jeduthun is a Levite who, along with Asaph, Heman and Ethan, is commissioned by David to praise God (1Chr 16:41; 2Chr 5:12). He instructed his sons in the same work (1Chr 16:38; 25:1,3,6; Neh 11:17). David commissioned Jeduthun to teach and sing this psalm.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David tells what is on his mind. He describes the state of mind he is in. He says that he will guard his ways, which means that he will pay attention to which ways he is going (verse 1b). It shows that he intends not to deviate from God’s ways again. By his ways he means his entire life’s journey, his attitude and behavior. He focuses on his speaking. Keeping his ways means, above all, to guard his mouth. He will pay attention to what he says and above all what he should not say.

At all costs he wants to avoid sinning with his tongue. Here we see a continuation of what David intended (Psa 38:13). He feels the urge to speak rebellious words when he sees the “wicked” in his presence. He sees how the wicked live and speak and how things are going with himself compared to that. That gets right to him, it does touch him.

But he does not want to be tempted to ventilate his frustration with the great danger of saying wrong things. For this he will guard his “mouth as with a muzzle”. This is strongly said, but that is how radical he is, and that is how radical we must also be when it comes to restraining our tongue (cf. Mt 5:29-30). We often think that we should say whatever comes to mind. This is also encouraged by the people of the world around us, but here we see that this is inappropriate for the believer.

He is mute and keeps quiet in the presence of wicked people (verse 2). He sees their prosperity and untroubled lives, but restrains himself from saying anything about it. No rebellious words come out of his mouth. He refrains, literally keeps silence, from good, that is about the prosperity of

the wicked. His misery and illness, the sorrow of his soul, is aggravated by seeing the prosperity of the wicked and by his attack on him.

His self-control is an inner struggle that gives no rest. By suppressing his feelings, his inner suffering becomes more severe. It does not mean that he has made a wrong decision to remain silent. A good decision can produce new struggles. David is no longer inwardly displeased with the wicked, but he is deeply troubled with his own life.

His heart begins to burn and becomes hot within him (verse 3). His sighing, that is complaining without words, becomes more intense and a fire is kindled. Then he can no longer restrain himself (cf. Jer 20:9) and he speaks with his tongue, that is, he speaks aloud. He does not speak to his enemies, but to the LORD; he does not speak of his enemies, but of himself (verse 4).

David's earlier words he speaks within himself and he does so because he sees the wicked facing him. Now he is in God's presence. That changes a person. What he says are not rebellious words, but are about the shortness of life. Nowhere does a man see his perishableness more clearly than when he is in the presence of God, where he also realizes how sinful he is (cf. Isa 6:1-5).

In this prayer he speaks of the transience of life and the perishableness of man. Transient means to cease to be here, to pass away. David wants to know his end, how it will end for him, and how many days he has left to live. He would like to know when his days will be fulfilled. Then he will know how transient he is, how perishable, that is, he will know that his life is over, finished. He answers his questions himself in the following verses.

He knows that his days are determined by God and that God made his days only "[as] handbreadths" (verse 5; cf. Exo 25:25). A handbreadth is four fingers (Jer 52:21) and is one of the smallest units of measurement in ancient Israel. It indicates the brevity of life. Here David acknowledges that this measure applies to him as well. His life span, the number of days allotted to him, is "as nothing" to God, Who is the eternal God.

What is true of David is true of every man, for the life of "every man at his best is a mere breath" (cf. Psa 62:9a; Job 7:7a). The Hebrew word for "breath" means vapor, mist, air. Life is altogether vanity, a vapor seen for a short time and then no longer there (Jam 4:14). Man in his conceit may

think that he is “at his best”, literally “standing firm”, that nothing can shake his life, let alone make it disappear. It shows short-sightedness and blindness to the truth that David professes here. Any man who is wise will confess this with him.

Psa 39:6-11 | Hope for Deliverance

6 *“Surely every man walks about as a phantom;
Surely they make an uproar for nothing;
He amasses [riches] and does not know who will gather them.*
7 *“And now, Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in You.*
8 *“Deliver me from all my transgressions;
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*
9 *“I have become mute, I do not open my mouth,
Because it is You who have done [it].*
10 *“Remove Your plague from me;
Because of the opposition of Your hand I am perishing.*
11 *“With reproofs You chasten a man for iniquity;
You consume as a moth what is precious to him;
Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah.*

After the “surely” that every man standing firm is altogether vanity in verse 5, there follows in verse 6 the “surely” of every day’s practice: “Surely every man walks about as a phantom.” The Hebrew word means ‘image’ or ‘shadow’. This is man who does not say “surely” to the truth that he is nothing more than a breath. That man chases after shadow images. It looks like reality, but it is to live in the lie. Today we can apply this to the virtual world, where a person pretends to be the person he would like to be but is not. He must become aware of the fact that his existence and future are filled with uncertainties.

With another “surely”, David points out how people restlessly chase in vain after more possessions. This is closely connected to the worrying about the things of this life, which the Lord Jesus speaks about. That doesn’t help a person either. Nor does it add anything to the length of his life (Mt 6:27). “He amasses [riches]” but he can take nothing of it with him after this life. Added to this is the frustration of not knowing who will run

off with his collection of goods after his death (cf. Ecc 2:18-19). God calls someone who lives this way a fool (Lk 12:16-21).

David's expectation is of a different kind. The vanity of transient life drives him to the solid rock of the eternal God. His hope is in the Lord, Adonai, the Ruler of the universe (verse 7). From his hope in the Lord, David asks if He will deliver him from "all" his transgressions (verse 8) and thus put an end to His disciplinary actions. He knows that God is able and willing to do that. He does not resist God's discipline, but longs for its end.

His demand for deliverance from all his transgressions is a profound confession that he has committed them. He does not demand deliverance, but longs for grace. This is what God wants to bring a person to, including the believer who has sinned. David adds that God's deliverance results in the fact that he will not become "the reproach of the foolish", that is, to the wicked person of verse 1b. One who lives without God is a fool (cf. Psa 14:1; 53:1).

The deep awareness of his futility and especially of his transgressions toward the great God kept David from criticizing God's doing (verse 9). He does not complain about what God has done to him. God has His purpose with what He works or allows in a human life. David will "not open" his "mouth" about it. He knows and acknowledges that *God* has done it (verse 10; cf. Amos 3:6). God is not the Author of evil or sin, but uses it in carrying out His plans with man and with creation and in disciplining His own.

When he asks in verse 10 if God will remove His plague from him, it is not a rebellious question. God has brought His plague upon him and only God can take that plague away from him as well. As a motive, he argues that he is perishing because of the opposition of God's hand. There is no strength left in him. Has God then not yet achieved His purpose with His discipline? Is His combating of the sin he has done then any longer necessary?

The chastisement with which God has chastised him for his iniquity has destroyed what is precious to him (verse 11). The Hebrew word for "precious", *hamudo*, means "his desire, his lust". The Lord's disciplining purifies the heart, causing the transgression to lose its attractiveness to the heart. God has pulverized him with His chastisement as if he were a moth. As in verse 5, David comes to realize the futility of man through the disci-

pline of God. Here he bows down deeply before God and acknowledges that there is nothing left of him. What David is to God, every human being is to God: a breath, vanity.

Psa 39:12-13 | Cry for Help

12 "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry;

Do not be silent at my tears;

For I am a stranger with You,

A sojourner like all my fathers.

13 "Turn Your gaze away from me, that I may smile [again]

Before I depart and am no more".

David, under tears, makes an urgent appeal to God to listen to his prayer and cry for help (verse 12). He doesn't ask for much, only that God will make his life bearable in the short time he is still here. Let God not remain silent.

David presents himself to God as "a stranger ..., a sojourner" with Him. This means that the LORD is the Owner of the land (Lev 25:23) and that as a stranger he expects help from Him. That he is a "sojourner" means that he is a pilgrim merely passing through, which emphasizes the temporality of his existence. He points to "all my fathers". They have been strangers and sojourners in the world, just as he is now, while they have lived with God. He will have thought of Abraham and the patriarchs and all who have lived in the faith (1Chr 29:15; Heb 11:13). For us, too, we are aliens and strangers in the world (1Pet 2:11).

How long that situation will last, God alone knows and determines. That is not determined by the wicked. They do boast that they have the future in their own hands, but that is unbridled presumption.

Now that he has acknowledged his iniquity (verse 9), he asks God to turn away from him His chastening, angry gaze that now rests on him (verse 13). Then he can smile again (cf. Job 10:20), which means that his vitality and joy of life return. Then he will be able to enjoy a few more days of rest and peace before his already short life on earth comes to an end and he departs and is no more. That he is no more means that he is no longer on earth. It does not mean that he would cease to exist.

He wishes to be delivered from his sufferings during his short life and to die in peace, with the assurance that God's discipline is over and God has accepted him. It is his wish to leave the world not in gloom or with a gloomy and discouraging outlook, but with a joyful look back at the past and the glad expectation of the world to come.

Psalm 40

Introduction

David asked the LORD if He would deliver him from the anger of God that he was suffering because of his iniquity (Psa 39:8). In Psalm 40, the LORD answers David's request. The answer comes through Christ, the Son of David, Who came to this world (verse 7) to do the will of God, namely, to save David and all of us.

This is a Messianic psalm. It is about the Lord Jesus. This is clear from Hebrews 10, where verses 6-8 of this psalm are not listed as a quote from David, but are attributed to Christ. He speaks these words at His coming into the world (Heb 10:5-7). The psalm represents the Lord Jesus Who becomes the obedient Servant on earth in the body God has prepared for Him. On earth He is afflicted and needy, while He waits patiently on God for help.

Chronologically, it seems that verses 1b-4 should be at the end of the psalm. This first section of the psalm deals with the resurrection of Christ and its consequences. From verse 6 to the end, it is about the coming of Christ and His sufferings. It is different in this psalm than in numerous other psalms where the depth of suffering is described first and ends with a song of redemption and victory.

We see that in this psalm Christ endures the sorrows of His people and is being tested in order to be an encouraging example for them. He waits for deliverance by His God as He submits to the will of God. In this psalm it is occasionally about the atoning suffering as substitute for His people. The main idea is the suffering of Christ as encouragement for the faithful remnant in the great tribulation to follow Him in it.

Psa 40:1-5 | A New Song

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

I waited patiently for the LORD;

And He inclined to me and heard my cry.

2 He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,

And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.

3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;

Many will see and fear

And will trust in the LORD.

4 How blessed is the man who has made the LORD his trust,

And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood.

5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders which You have done,

And Your thoughts toward us;

There is none to compare with You.

If I would declare and speak of them,

They would be too numerous to count.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

There is no direct point of reference in David’s life that could be an occasion for writing this psalm. The Spirit of Christ inspired him to write this psalm with Christ in mind.

David or rather the Spirit of Christ begins the psalm by pointing out that he has “patiently”, in the sense of very strongly, “waited for the LORD” (verse 1b). It has not been merely a weak expectation, but he has waited intensely. With him, perseverance has been a perfect work (Jam 1:4). He has continued to trust in God while he suffered deeply, and God did not intervene.

This was particularly true of Christ. His life on earth was suffering, especially during the last week of His life on earth. His example will be a special encouragement to the believing remnant when they suffer in the great tribulation.

Christ experienced how God bowed down to Him. God has, as it were, kept His ear to Christ’s mouth. In this way He listened attentively to His cries for help. We hear this cry for help from Him when He offers prayers and supplications in Gethsemane to Him Who is able to save Him from death. And He is heard because of His piety (Heb 5:7), after He has gone the whole way of obedience to God.

A first answer to His supplications happened at the moment He commits His spirit into the hands of the Father. Then the work is finished. After the three hours of darkness in which the Lord Jesus is forsaken by God, there is again fellowship with His God. He is then brought up “out of the pit of destruction” (verse 2; cf. *Psa 69:2,14*). By this is meant the water of God’s judgment that has come upon Him. He has been submerged in the miry clay of our sins.

The further fulfillment of the answering occurs, when the glory of the Father raises the Lord Jesus from the dead (*Rom 6:4*), and sets His “feet upon a rock”. The resurrection is the solid, unshakable ground on which every believer stands who is connected to Christ through His work on the cross. On that way, the footsteps are made firm. There is no danger of falling into the pit again and sinking into the miry clay again.

This dealing of God in favor of Him in His deliverance is followed by the new song He puts into Christ’s mouth (verse 3). It is the song of complete deliverance from judgment because it was borne by Him. The new song is always connected with redemption (cf. *Rev 14:3*).

The new song that is in His mouth becomes “a song of praise to our God”, which is a song of praise sung by all who call God “our God”. They belong to the Lord Jesus by faith in Him. Through His work, His God has also become their God (cf. *Jn 20:17; Heb 2:12*).

From what God has done in the resurrection of Christ, a testimony goes forth that is seen by many. As a result, they will fear God and trust in Him. This will also be true in the end time, when the believing remnant will sing the new song of salvation, having suffered with and for the sake of Christ, and have also been heard as He was heard. It is a testimony to all.

The same is true for us. Our lives are connected with the risen Lord. The new song we sing, the song of the Lamb, is also based on the sacrifice of Christ. It is a testimony to those around us, through which there will be those who will come to trust in God.

We are the first of the many who will sing the new song in heaven (*Rev 5:9; 14:3*). We are already singing the new song on earth as a song of thanksgiving for the redemption given to us in Christ. Surely it is not possible to

remain silent about His surrender to God, through which we have been saved from judgment and have received countless blessings, is it?

Those who, following Christ, put their trust in God are “blessed” or happy in the fullest sense of the word (verse 4; cf. Psa 1:1). The circumstances in which this occurs are mentioned in the second part of the verse. It is a time when many turn to people who are proud. Proud people trust in themselves and not in God. These are people who want to take the place of God; this is the very heart of the devil’s sin (1Tim 3:6), who wanted to be like God.

We see these proud people in the mass of apostate Jews. They reject the truth in Christ and resort to the lie (2Thes 2:11). Proudness and falsehood are the characteristics of the antichrist and his followers. Those who do not go along with this, but trust in God against the current, are blessed.

David, through the Spirit of Christ, expresses his marvel about the wonders the LORD his God has done to all who are of the remnant (verse 5). Every believer who is kept from being carried away in the apostasy is a wonder worked by God. This applies to the believers in the great tribulation. He has kept them.

In fact, this is about the many wonders that the LORD has done for us in the past, especially in connection with Christ’s coming to earth. God’s wonders for His own are evident in every believer in all ages and in His people as a whole, both in the Old and New Testament.

Not only has God done many wonders, but He also has His thoughts about His own. These include His counsel, His purposes to bless all His own. His blessings include taking away our sins and allowing us to share in all the effects of Christ’s work. All of these thoughts have been accomplished by Christ. They are so numerous that they cannot be counted. They are also so great that they cannot be comprehended.

The meaning is that it is not possible to place them in any particular order or also that nothing can be compared to Him. We simply do not have the words or the knowledge for it (cf. 1Cor 2:9). We know in part or piece by piece (1Cor 13:9). We cannot comprehend the entire picture and can only see blessing after blessing, marvel at it, and honor Him for it.

Psa 40:6-10 | Behold, I Come

6 Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired;

My ears You have opened;

Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.

7 Then I said, "Behold, I come;

In the scroll of the book it is written of me.

8 I delight to do Your will, O my God;

Your Law is within my heart."

9 I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation;

Behold, I will not restrain my lips,

O LORD, You know.

10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;

I have spoken of Your faithfulness and Your salvation;

I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great congregation.

Verses 6-8 are not about David, but can only refer to Christ. This is clear from the quotation of these verses in the New Testament (Heb 10:7-9). By "sacrifice" (verse 6) is meant the peace offering. Of this offering the offeror may eat together with God and everyone who is clean. The "meal offering" is a non-bloody offering. In these sacrifices as such, God found no joy. They are only a shadow image. What God finds joy in is what these sacrifices refer to, which is Christ (Heb 9:11-14; 10:5-9).

God has found joy in Him of Whom He has "opened" the ears – literally "dug the ears" – that is the Lord Jesus. He is the true peace offering and the true meal offering. Through Him, fellowship between God and the repentant sinner has been restored. Of this the peace offering speaks. As the true meal offering, Christ lived completely to God's glory. That is what the opened ears speak of.

In Hebrews 10, "ears pierced [better: dug]" is quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It says that God "prepared" Him "a body" (Heb 10:5). Ears indicate hearing and obedience. His body is, so to speak, all ears for the will of the Father. He became a Slave and became completely obedient in all things, to death, yes, to the death of the cross (Phil 2:7-8).

We read three times about the ears of the Lord Jesus and each time it relates to His obedience:

1. "My ears You have opened" (Psa 40:6) points to the Lord Jesus becoming Man in order to obey and die.
- 2 "Opened My ear" (Isa 50:4-5), speaks of His life on earth being marked by obedience.
3. "Pierce his ear", is about the ear of the Lord Jesus in the picture of the Hebrew slave (Exo 21:5-6). This refers to the end of His service and life on earth, which are characterized by obedience. Also, this speaks of the fact that He will serve forever (Lk 12:37).

Of burnt offering and sin offering, Christ says that God has not required them. Did God not then prescribe or require the sin offering? After all, it says so time and again in Leviticus 4 (Lev 4:2-3,13-14,22-23,27-28). Certainly they were offered because He commanded it. But it does not mean that He found any joy in doing so or that in bringing them the requirement of His righteousness was fulfilled. The LORD could only find joy in those offerings because they are shadow of the offering of Christ. Therefore, He could pass over the sins of the offerors (Rom 3:25).

Those offerings could not take away sins and could be brought with insincere hearts. God has never required them as offerings by which anyone can be brought into His presence, for that is impossible. An animal burnt offering cannot make a man acceptable to God, and an animal sin offering cannot take away any sin from a sinful man.

The word "then" with which verse 7 begins has the meaning "because this is so", referring to the observation of the previous verse. Then the Lord Jesus speaks the impressive words "behold, I come". He offers Himself to fulfill what no animal sacrifice has been able to do and to fulfill what all sacrifices have been pointing to: to Himself as the true Sacrifice.

He does so in accordance with what is written "in the scroll of the book" about Him (cf. Lk 4:17-21). It is impossible to apply this to David. No one but the Lord Jesus can say this. Of no one but the Lord Jesus can it be written that He said something "when He comes into the world" (Heb 10:5). God established in His counsel that Christ would come. He is the Lamb

foreknown before the foundation of the world (1Pet 1:20). David says this prophetically of the Lord Jesus.

He not only offers Himself willingly, but also joyfully to do God's will, which for Him means to "delight to do Your will" (verse 8). He knows that in doing God's will He is carrying out His good pleasure. He is also fully capable of doing so, for God's law is within His heart. His obedience is not only an outward, but also an inward matter. He carries out the whole law of God from His innermost being. We may well ask ourselves whether we are not merely doing the right things outwardly, and also whether God's Word is within our heart so that from there all our thoughts, words and actions can be governed.

With the Lord Jesus, God's law worked in His heart to proclaim "glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation" (verse 9). He does this while He goes His way on earth in "the great congregation" of Israel. We can think, for example, of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 which He spoke before a large crowd (Mt 5:1).

He testified in great faithfulness of God's righteousness as "glad tidings". God's righteousness is a glad tidings to the repentant sinner. He has not restrained His lips from speaking of it. He cannot and will not do otherwise and can therefore say that the LORD knows (cf. Jn 17:4,6,8,14,26)!

What He utters, what He testifies to, is nothing but what is peculiar to God: *His* righteousness, *His* truth, *His* salvation, *His* lovingkindness and *His* faithfulness (verse 10). God's law is in His heart, but God's "righteousness" He has not hidden in His heart. He has proclaimed God's "faithfulness" and God's "salvation". God's truth about man and the holiness of God have been preached by Him. He also pointed out the love of God by presenting God's salvation, which is the way to be saved.

God's "lovingkindness" connects to God's salvation. Lovingkindness is the Hebrew Adonai. It means covenant faithfulness. These are the blessings, the good things, that the LORD wants to give, either on the basis of the faithfulness of the people – which is not the case – or on the basis of the work of a Mediator Who fulfilled the requirements of the covenant, the requirements of the law, by dying on the cross.

In Christ, “the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared” (Tit 3:4). The entire life up to and including Christ’s death is the proclamation of God’s lovingkindness. God’s truth connects to God’s faithfulness. The Lord Jesus showed that God is completely faithful and worthy of trust.

Christ has revealed all these features of God in righteousness, that is, what He does is in accordance with Who God is. He did not hide God’s righteousness in the great congregation of Israel. Always and everywhere He spoke of Who God is, for the purpose that God’s people would return to God.

Psa 40:11-16 | Cry for Help

*11 You, O LORD, will not withhold Your compassion from me;
Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me.*

*12 For evils beyond number have surrounded me;
My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to see;
They are more numerous than the hairs of my head,
And my heart has failed me.*

*13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
Make haste, O LORD, to help me.*

*14 Let those be ashamed and humiliated together
Who seek my life to destroy it;
Let those be turned back and dishonored
Who delight in my hurt.*

*15 Let those be appalled because of their shame
Who say to me, “Aha, aha!”*

*16 Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let those who love Your salvation say continually,
“The LORD be magnified!”*

David, and also those imitating him, that is the faithful remnant, takes refuge in the God of the past (Deu 33:26,27). Some translate “LORD” as “eternal God”, literally “the God of yesterday”, that is, the God Who has shown in the past who He is and what He does. Now that the remnant has seen what God does (verses 1-10), they go and ask the LORD for salvation

(verses 11-17). We too ask God for help based on what He has done in the past through the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus, in verses 9-10, testified in great faithfulness to some of the features of God in the great congregation of Israel. Now He makes an appeal to some of the features of God for Himself (verse 11). He asks that He not withhold His mercy from Him because of His misery (verse 12).

The psalmist, and that also applies to the believing remnant, also asks if He will preserve him with His lovingkindness and truth. He has made these known and now asks if God will also fulfill them to him. He also asks that God do so "continually". David is here a type or shadow of Christ as the true Man Who asks for preservation during the enormous work He has to do.

The occasion of the psalmist's question, and that of the remnant, are the evils beyond number which surround him, that is, which surround him from all sides (verse 12). He is surrounded by them, completely enclosed by them. These evils are the result of his faithfulness to God. The same is true of the "iniquities" that have overtaken him.

It is about the iniquities of Israel, the two sins of the people: the rejection of Christ and the receiving of the antichrist. When we think of Christ, it is exclusively about the iniquities He took upon Himself for those who believe in Him, to suffer God's judgment therefore (Heb 2:17; 2Cor 5:21). They are the iniquities of all the redeemed. By taking these upon Himself, He has executed the will of God to the fullest.

The evils and iniquities that will come upon the remnant in the great tribulation constitute an uncountable number. The hairs of the head indicate a quantity that cannot be counted by us (cf. Psa 69:4). God is able to do so (Mt 10:30). What comes upon the psalmist, and upon the remnant, has so affected him that his heart has failed him.

As for the application to Christ, God knows perfectly what sins Christ had to bear. For Christ, all that He has had to bear is immeasurably more than any man can possibly conceive.

In his great distress, the psalmist cries out that it may please God to deliver him and come to his aid soon (verse 13). In view of this unfathomable

suffering, of a gravity beyond human imagination, the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane “offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety” (Heb 5:7). At the same time, His perfect obedience in surrendering to the Father’s will is also evident (Jn 18:11).

Verses 14-16 distinguish between the faithful and the apostate masses of the Jewish people. The touchstone will be the attitude taken toward the suffering Christ. The mass has sought Christ’s life and killed Him and delighted in His hurt (verse 14).

Christ’s rightful question to God is to make them ashamed and humiliate them together. They must be turned back and be dishonored, for they have sought to prevent Him from doing God’s work and testifying of God. Such adversaries, as wages for the reproach they have poured out on Him, must become appalled, or desolated, that is, become like a field where nothing grows (verse 15).

They have laughed mockingly at Him Who came to them from God to save them. Christ has become an object of mockery, especially at the end of His way of obedience. When He hangs on the cross, His adversaries amuse themselves with gloating over Him. Those who mock the lovingkindness of God in this way deserve judgment.

For those who seek God, Christ asks the opposite (verse 16). He never seeks His own glory, but always that of His God. He wants those who seek God to rejoice and be glad in God Himself. All who love the salvation of God are those who rejoice in the way of salvation that God has given in Christ. They have accepted that salvation and rejoice in being saved from the bondage of sin. They cannot help but “continually say, The LORD be magnified!”

Psa 40:17 | The Lord Is Mindful of Me

*17 Since I am afflicted and needy,
Let the Lord be mindful of me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
Do not delay, O my God.*

This verse brings us back to all the sufferings the Lord endured. When He asks for us that we will rejoice in God's salvation and the glorious results of His work, we must never forget the circumstances in which He has been. He Himself never forgets that He has been "afflicted and needy". We know that He has been so for our sake, that through His poverty we might become rich (2Cor 8:9). The same is true of the "afflicted and needy" believing remnant (Mt 5:3).

In all circumstances, He knows that God is mindful of Him. He may be forsaken and forgotten by everyone, but not by God. He clings to that. He knows that God is His Helper and Deliverer. He turns to Him and asks Him not to wait any longer for His salvation. This does not speak of despair, but of a perfect trust. He always continued to trust in His God.

He is the example for the believing remnant in the time of the great tribulation. He is also the great example for us in the trials and sufferings we experience for His Name's sake. We can endure all tribulations if we trust that God has not forgotten us, but is mindful of us, even if everyone forsakes us. God never stops being mindful of us.

Psalm 41

Introduction

In this psalm we hear the Spirit of Christ speaking in the remnant. There is much in which we see Christ. Many verses apply to Him. This is certainly the case with verse 9, which is quoted by the Lord Jesus. In that verse the Spirit of Christ speaks of what Judas will do to Him (Jn 13:18).

This psalm is about the effect of the iniquities of the previous psalm (Psa 40:12). That is, it is about the purification of the souls of the remnant. The purification takes place through an illness resulting from the iniquities of the psalmist, who is also a type of the believing remnant. The enemies are those who rejoice because of the illness and hope that the psalmist will perish because of the illness.

Psa 41:1-4 | Blessed Are the Merciful

*1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
How blessed is he who considers the helpless;
The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.
2 The LORD will protect him and keep him alive,
And he shall be called blessed upon the earth;
And do not give him over to the desire of his enemies.
3 The LORD will sustain him upon his sickbed;
In his illness, You restore him to health.
4 As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "a Psalm of David" see at Psalm 3:1.

The circumstances under which David wrote this psalm are not known.

This last psalm of the first book of Psalms begins with "blessed" (verse 1b). The first psalm also begins with this (Psa 1:1). In Psalm 1, the man is called "blessed" who loves God and His Word. In Psalm 41, the man is called

“blessed” who loves his neighbor and proves it by paying attention to him and dealing with him wisely. This reminds us of the two manifestations of the new life of the New Testament believer that John describes in his first letter: loving God and loving the brother (1Jn 4:20-21).

The “helpless” of whom David speaks is first of all the Lord Jesus. “Helpless” here means “weak”, “poor”. Every one “who considers the helpless” is concerned with His fate and identifies with Him. Here it is about the poor (2Cor 8:9) Helpless Who by His wisdom can give deliverance and protection (Ecc 9:15). “He who considers” is the one who “understands”, the *maskil*, one who has been taught by God (Mt 11:29). Such a person has an eye for the one on whom God’s eye rests with favor. By this he shows that he has the mind of Christ, that he belongs to Him. He displays His features, including the feature of a helpless or poor person (cf. Mt 5:3; Lk 6:20).

Such an understanding one, like Christ, will be delivered by God “in a day of trouble”. God will do to him in accordance with what he has done to others (Mt 5:7; cf. Mt 25:40; 10:42). The “day of trouble” is the time when the one who considers the helpless is an object of the hatred of the enemies and experiences their enmity particularly. They hope that the psalmist will die (verse 5). For the faithful remnant, it is the time of the great tribulation, which is also accompanied by enmity from within.

In verse 2, David tells of the God-fearing faithful that God will “protect him and keep him alive”. We can apply this to the spiritual condition of the remnant, which is comparable to an illness. The promise is that God will heal the faithful and thus keep him alive (cf. verses 3-8).

He “shall be called blessed upon the earth” that is in the time of the realm of peace when the Messiah will reign. The earth is specifically the land of Israel. The prayer not to be given over “to the desire of his enemies” is answered. God always answers the prayer of the God-fearing. His enemies always draw the short straw.

The faithful believer is given the assurance that God “will sustain him upon his sickbed” (verse 3). To sustain means to give inner strength to bear his illness and that God will give him the assurance that he will be healed. Everything may seem to be against him when he lies powerless on

his sickbed, felled by an illness. The enemies see in this a proof that God is against him and wait for an opportunity to put him to death.

But David encourages the ill person and addresses God directly for him. Confidently, he expresses that God “in his illness”, will “restore him to health”. The sickbed is caused by sin. “You restore” is literally “You turn all his bed”. The entire sickbed is made different, that is, everything is transformed and reversed, by the support of the LORD. The LORD gives that support because there is repentance and confession of sin. On that basis there is forgiveness and healing (Psa 103:3).

The remnant will be aware of their sins, of which illness is the result (verse 4). They will speak out and acknowledge that they have sinned against God with a twofold sin: rejecting Christ and accepting the antichrist. For this they appeal to grace. Not only their body, but also their soul, their whole being, is ill by the realization that they have sinned. By the grace of God, they will see that the Messiah has borne their sins, which will heal their souls and bring them peace (cf. Gen 45:5b).

Psa 41:5-10 | The Enemies

*5 My enemies speak evil against me,
“When will he die, and his name perish?”
6 And when he comes to see [me], he speaks falsehood;
His heart gathers wickedness to itself;
When he goes outside, he tells it.
7 All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt, [saying],
8 “A wicked thing is poured out upon him,
That when he lies down, he will not rise up again.”
9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me.
10 But You, O LORD, be gracious to me and raise me up,
That I may repay them.*

While the God-fearing in the previous verses puts his trust in God, there are enemies around him who speak against him and wish him to die and

his name to perish (verse 5). The hatred is deep within the enemies. They want and expect that he – that is David and in his following the faithful remnant – will die as soon as possible and that he will be forgotten as soon as possible. Then it will be over and done with his influence forever, for it threatens their position.

One of the enemies has come visiting the sick one to see how he is doing. He inquires, but the conversation is about nothing. Meanwhile, he collects false facts, so that he can gossip about them later. In his sickbed the psalmist finds no comforter; on the contrary, his false friends are in fact hostile toward him.

The Lord Jesus also experienced that people came to Him with falsity in their hearts (verse 6; cf. Pro 26:24). They flattered Him and tried to trap Him with trick questions (Mt 22:16-18). Their hearts have gathered wickedness; it is a secret repository of deceitful deliberations and mendacious intentions. They have tried to find something to accuse Him of (Jn 8:6). They have talked to others about their accusations and used them for their depraved plans (Mt 26:59-60).

The hatred is especially great among the religious leaders of the people. They “whisper together against” Him and over and over again “they devise” against Him his “hurt” (verse 7). Regularly we read about it in the Gospels that they conspire against Him to put Him to death (Mk 3:6; Mt 12:14; 22:15; 26:3-4).

They see in His sickbed (Isa 53:3-4,10) an occasion for spreading slander about Him. Someone struck by an illness must be out of favor with God. They tell everywhere that “a wicked thing is poured out upon him” (verse 8). Wicked practices are literally “practices of Belial”. For example, the Lord Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of casting out demons through the chief of demons, Beelzebub (Mt 12:24). Before Pilate, He was accused by the chief priests “of many things” (Mk 15:3; Lk 23:2).

Most profoundly, the Lord was affected by the betrayal of Judas, for verse 9 is about him. This is evident from the Lord’s quotation of this verse in the Gospel according to John, where He applies it to Judas (Jn 13:18). His deep disappointment about this betrayal is echoed in the word “even” with which the verse begins. He had always lived in peace with Judas,

given him His trust and shared His bread with him. Is there anything more painful than being betrayed by someone like that?

The Lord Jesus here calls Judas “my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread”. The Lord never did anything evil to Judas, but dealt with him in peace. He gave him His trust, as evidenced by the purse He gave him (Jn 12:6). The Lord gave him of His bread and shared with him what He had. The Lord’s whole dealings with Judas show that He had good intentions for him. And precisely that man “lifted up his heel against” Him (Mt 26:47-50).

In verse 10, the Lord again (verse 4) asks God to be gracious to Him and to raise Him up. He knows that Judas’ betrayal is the introduction to His deliverance into the hands of the enemies and that He will be killed by them. Here He asks for His resurrection. Several times the Lord has spoken both of His being delivered and of His death and resurrection (Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). Here He attaches to His resurrection the right to repay His enemies for the evil they have done to Him.

Psa 41:11-12 | Exaltation of the Righteous

*11 By this I know that You are pleased with me,
Because my enemy does not shout in triumph over me.
12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And You set me in Your presence forever.*

Here the psalmist states that only then is he assured that God loves him when God has healed him causing the enemy to be silenced (verse 11). Outwardly, evil seems to prevail when the Lord Jesus is crucified in weakness. The enemies think they have won the victory. But God raised Him from the dead and glorified Him. Because of this, Christ knows that God is pleased with Him and that His enemy will not shout in triumph over Him.

Despite his iniquities, the psalmist can still say that the LORD upholds him in his “integrity” (verse 12). “Integrity” in Hebrew is ‘with all the heart’. Christ is fully assured of the support of God as far as He Himself is concerned. In everything He was complete in His integrity, which means that He was wholeheartedly devoted to God. There has never been anything

wrong in Him. Because of this He knows that in the resurrection He will be set by God in His presence, and that “forever”.

Psa 41:13 | Praise

*13 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting to everlasting.
Amen and Amen.*

The psalmist ends with a praise to “the LORD, the God of Israel”. That praise will be “from everlasting to everlasting”. It is a praise right through all the trials. Nor will it ever end, for there will never be an end to the presence of Christ before God, Who is there “forever” (verse 12). The double affirmation “Amen and Amen” underlines this result. With this, the first book of Psalms also ends.

Psalm 42

Introduction

With Psalm 42 a new book in Psalms, book 2, begins, with Psalms 42-72 as its contents. In the first book of Psalms (Psalms 1-41), the remnant is in the midst of the enemies in the land. In the second book of Psalms, they have fled from the land (Mt 24:15-16) and are in the midst of foreign enemies.

This difference in the position of the remnant is evident, among other things, in the use of two names of God in the two books of Psalms. These names say something about the relationship of the remnant to God. The first Psalm book primarily uses the name Yahweh, rendered in the NASB as LORD (all capitals). This name, which occurs 272 times, indicates the covenant relationship between God and His people. The name *Elohim*, God, occurs 15 times. This name is more general and, compared to the name Yahweh, more distant. In the second book of Psalms, the name *Elohim*, God, is used primarily, and occurs 164 times therein. The name Yahweh, LORD, occurs 30 times in it. See, for example, the difference between Psalm 14 and Psalm 53.

Another distinction between the first and second Psalm book is seen in the use of illustrations used in both Psalm books. The first Psalm book uses illustrations that come primarily from Genesis, such as in Psalms 8, 19, and 33 which speak of creation. The illustrations of the second Psalm book come primarily from Exodus, as in Psalm 68.

This second book of Psalms consists of a collection of psalms that come from multiple sources:

1. The sons of Korah, the temple musicians: Psalms 42-49.
2. Asaph, another musician: Psalm 50.
3. David: Psalms 51-65; 68-70.
4. Solomon: Psalm 72.
5. Finally, there are three anonymous psalms: Psalms 66; 67; 71.

Psalm 72 is not *for* Solomon, as the Septuagint and Calvin translate, but *of* Solomon, as it says literally and is rendered here in the NASB (Psa 72:1). We can therefore broadly make the following division:

1. The psalms of the musicians: the Korahites, concluding with Asaph.
2. The psalms of David, concluding with Solomon.

The first three psalms of this second book of Psalms, Psalms 42-44, bring us to the time of the great tribulation. The faithful remnant must flee from Jerusalem where they served the LORD in the temple rebuilt in unbelief. This is the time of Jacob's distress. It is the time when the abomination of desolation stands in Jerusalem, as the Lord Jesus Himself makes clear. For this He refers to what the prophet Daniel says about the events of the future (Mt 24:15-16). That time has not yet come; however, it will not be long before that time comes.

In Psalm 42 we look into the heart of the remnant. In it we see how much they long to be with God in Jerusalem and also their trust in Him. In Psalm 43 we see the cause of their distress: the antichrist, the man of deceit and injustice (Psa 43:1). This man comes "in his own name" and is accepted by the unbelieving mass of the Jews as their king (Jn 5:43b). In Psalm 44, the faith of the remnant is tested and purified in the fire of tribulation.

The first two psalms of this second book of Psalms, Psalm 42 and Psalm 43, form a whole. Psalm 42 deals primarily with the enemies from without. Psalm 43 deals with enemies from within, from within their own people. Psalm 42 is more a lament, while Psalm 43 is more a prayer to God. In Psalm 42 we hear the longing for the Living One (Psa 42:1b-5) and the Life-giving One (Psa 42:6-11). In Psalm 43 we hear the longing for the Light-giving One (Psa 43:1-5).

Psalm 42 has the background of Korah's sons being cast out of the place where they were allowed to serve God in His sanctuary. There is a great homesickness for that time (verse 4). They have been driven from it by the enemies (verses 9-10). Historically, it may refer to David's escape from Jerusalem, in which the sons of Korah accompanied him.

Prophetically, this second book of Psalms is about the faithful remnant of Israel who fled to the mountains in a time of distress (Dan 12:1; Mt 24:16)

because of the abomination of desolation (Mt 24:15). In the second book of the *Torah* (the five books of Moses), the book of Exodus, the people of Israel are in a foreign land, far from the promised land. There they are oppressed. The land of Egypt is a type of the world on which the judgments of God are coming. When redemption comes and the enemy perishes in the Red Sea, the people sing the song of redemption.

Psa 42:1-5 | Longing for God

1 For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.

As the deer pants for the water brooks,

So my soul pants for You, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;

When shall I come and appear before God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night,

While [they] say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me.

For I used to go along with the throng [and] lead them in procession to the house of God,

With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And [why] have you become disturbed within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him

[For] the help of His presence.

For "for the choir director" see at Psalm 4:1.

There are thirteen psalms that have "a Maskil" in the heading. The first "maskil", which means instruction, is Psalm 32. The content of that psalm is the basis of all instruction. That basis is the forgiveness of sins (Psa 32:1-2). A person must first know that in order to receive and pass on instruction. There David, as a forgiven sinner, also learns about the way to go. We must first know the experience of Psalm 32 in order to take in the instruction of the following "maskil" or instruction psalms. For a detailed explanation of "a maskil" see at Psalm 32:1.

The second "maskil" psalm is this psalm "of the sons of Korah". This is the first of eleven psalms that mention this in the heading. Of their father

Korah, Scripture records that he rebels audaciously against Moses and Aaron. Korah wants the priesthood because he is not satisfied with his task as a Levite, which is already a privileged task (1Chr 6:31-33,37-38). As punishment for this rebellion, he dies an extraordinary death (Num 16:1-3,8-11,30-33; Jude 1:11). The sons, however, did not die (Num 26:10-11). It seems that they did not join their father's rebellion and therefore were not judged.

The Korahites are followers of David (1Chr 12:6) and gatekeepers from generation to generation (1Chr 9:17-20). The sons of Korah are also singers (2Chr 20:19). One of David's three choir leaders is Heman, a Korahite (Psa 88:1). Singing is a form of prophesying (1Chr 25:1,3; Col 3:16). The "maskil psalms" of the Korahites are a form of prophesying. We can think of them as prophetic psalms in two ways: they relate to the faithful remnant in the future and they have a message for us here and now.

The word for instruction, *maskil*, comes from a word for being wise or understanding. To instruct is to make wise or understanding. Instruction comes from the understanding ones and serves to make others wise (Dan 11:33).

The instruction begins with the believer crying out to God that he intensely longs for Him (verse 1b). It is a cry out of an emptiness and because of an emptiness. Every person, no matter how religious, experiences this emptiness when he lacks God. This emptiness can only be filled by the living God Himself. It is an emptiness, a thirst, that every creature in hell will experience eternally because he will be eternally separated from God. It is an emptiness, a thirst, that the Lord Jesus experienced in the three hours of darkness, forsaken by His God, when He took the place of everyone who believes in Him.

The psalmist compares his longing to the panting – the Hebrew word means "gasp", "yearn", "very strong desire" – of a deer for the water brooks (cf. Jer 14:6). A camel can go several days without water, a deer cannot. By the way, since the verb "pant" is feminine, it is better to translate 'deer' as 'hind'. The psalmist chooses the feminine 'hind' because 'my soul' is also feminine, so there is a parallel.

Any animal that is thirsty pants (Joel 1:20). A deer or a hind is a graceful, skittish animal and an attractive prey for wild animals. This makes the deer or hind an appealing example of the God-fearing. The believer longs with all his soul, all his inner being, all his feelings, for God's presence, for fellowship with Him, and longs for God directly and personally with the exclamation "for You, O God!"

He continues the making known of his longing for God, saying: "My soul thirsts for God" (verse 2; cf. Psa 143:6; Isa 55:1; Jn 19:28; Rev 21:6; 22:17). He then expresses his longing for Him (cf. Psa 84:2) more strongly by calling Him "the living God" (Deu 5:26; Hos 1:10). This Name of God reminds us that He is "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13; 17:13).

The thirst for God is quenched only when he "shall ... come and appear before God", which is to say when he enters the temple, the place where God dwells. The desire to appear before God emphasizes his intense longing for God. The expression "appear before God" is used for the appearance of the people of Israel three times a year in Jerusalem on the feasts of the LORD.

The great question that torments him is when that will happen, when he can go to God's altar, to God, his gladness and his joy, to praise Him with the lyre (Psa 43:4). For the God-fearing members of God's earthly people, fellowship with God is intimately connected with the place where He dwells, in His house in Jerusalem.

The God-fearing has been driven away from that place that is so precious to him. This causes him great sorrow. He lives in a foreign land. After the tormenting question of when he will come to God, he is now assailed by his enemies with the mocking and challenging question where his God, for Whom he longs so much, is (verse 3). After all, God does not stand up for His expelled people. He definitely seems to lack power.

This mockery adds to his torment. It makes his grief over the lack of fellowship with God in His house more intense. Over this he weeps "day and night", for he is tormented by this very question. That his tears are food for him means that he is so overcome with sorrow that he takes no food.

The psalmist looks back in his life, at his experiences with God, to draw hope from them. He thinks back with great homesickness to the time when

he went up with God's people to God's house (verse 4; Psa 122:4). About that, his soul becomes disturbed within him, which is to say that his emotions stir violently when he reflects back on it. Every year he went up to Jerusalem with the pilgrims. They were supposed to go to Jerusalem on the occasion of the three great feasts: the Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths (Exo 23:17; 34:23; Deu 16:16).

What a great procession went up! He hears again, as it were, the loud thanksgivings and songs of praise that were sung by the procession. There he walked with them; he was one of them. Together they formed "a throng". Everyone was looking forward to meeting God in His house.

But now? The God-fearing turns to himself. He asks himself a question that he will ask twice more (verse 5; verse 11; Psa 43:5). It is a desperate question to himself why his soul is in despair and has become disturbed within him. He wonders if God has something to say to him, or if he truly loves God (cf. Jn 21:15-17). At the same time, he urges himself to put his hope in God. He does so from the certainty that he will again praise God in the place where He dwells.

God has not given an audible answer, but the God-fearing's trust in Him gives him that hope. Hope means waiting for God until He acts. In the foreign land, he continues to trust in God. He trusts that there will be "the help of His presence" or, as it also can be translated, "the saving acts of His presence". This will happen through the appearance and presence of the Messiah. The "the saving acts" (plural) means not only a saving act by the power of God from the enemy, as at the Red Sea, but also involves a return to God's dwelling place.

Psa 42:6-11 | Why Have You Forgotten Me?

*6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me;
Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan
And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.
7 Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls;
All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me.
8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime;*

*And His song will be with me in the night,
A prayer to the God of my life.
9 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"
10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me,
While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
11 Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why have you become disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.*

In the first stanza of the psalm (verses 1-5), the God-fearing thinks of the pilgrimages to God's house in Jerusalem (verse 4). In this second stanza (verses 6-11), he thinks of God Himself. He speaks to God in verse 6 and calls Him "my God". Thus he knows God and lives in fellowship with Him though he is in a foreign land. Yet despite his memories of what he has experienced of God's faithfulness in the past (verse 4), he remains desperate. He makes God part of his inner despair. The word "therefore" with which the second line of the verse begins indicates that these feelings of despair are at the same time the trigger to think of God from the land to which he has been driven.

He is in "the land of the Jordan and the peaks of Hermon" and "Mount Mizar" or "the low hills". By the land of the Jordan is meant the land east of the Jordan. That is where they fled to. This is what will happen in the, now near, future when the antichrist reigns and in alliance with the restored Roman Empire has erected an idol in the temple. That's why God will bring the king of the North as a disciplinary rod over His apostate people (Dan 9:26b-27). In His prophetic end time address, the Lord Jesus refers to this and tells the remnant to flee at that time (Mt 24:15-16).

Instead of being able to quench his thirst at God, the fountain of living water, the God-fearing is overwhelmed by the deep, the waterfalls, the breakers and the waves that all come from God (verse 7). The desirable water of refreshment and invigoration he so longs for (verse 1b), turns into the treacherous and deadly waters of the floods of the wadis. The psalmist speaks of "Your waterfalls" and "all Your breakers and Your waves". He experiences the difficulties as the disciplining hand of God. He has

no grasp of his present circumstances and feels himself undergoing God's judgment. How can that be possible? Where will that end?

The remnant will discover that the waters of judgment are not there to kill them, but to cleanse them (Psa 60:8a). This is because the Lord Jesus was in the waters of God's judgment when He bore their sins – and those of all who believe in Him. Jonah, as a type of the remnant in the great tribulation, also expresses this (Jona 2:5-6). The Lord Jesus applies what happened to Jonah to Himself, and especially to His days in the tomb, after He bore the judgments of God on sin (Mt 12:40).

The faithful are plunged into a sea of affliction. They are overwhelmed by it. Yet despair does not win. The faithful one finds himself in severe trial, but from there his trust in God rises (verse 8). He expresses assurance that "the LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime".

Suddenly the name of the LORD, the name of God in connection with His covenant, is used! The basis of "His lovingkindness" – that is His covenant faithfulness, Hebrew Adonai – is His covenant, because the Mediator, Christ, has taken judgment upon Himself. He can say to God: "All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me", while yet He was the Sinless One.

The God-fearing can say in the night in which his life is now enshrouded that "His song" will be with him (cf. Acts 16:25). That song consists of "a prayer to the God of my life". He acknowledges God as the God of his life, as the One Who is fully in control of his life. Knowing God as the God Who is in complete control of our lives gives peace when circumstances weigh heavily on us.

The peace that is experienced can also be put under pressure again. The God-fearing speaks to God about this (verse 9). He calls God "my rock", indicating that he trusts in the unshakable faithfulness of God. What he struggles with is that God has "forgotten" him. This is how he experiences it. How can the faithful God forget him? He does not blame God for anything, but in confidence he turns to God with questions that torment him.

He also asks why he goes "mourning". Because of "the oppression of the enemy" he is "dressed in black", as another translation renders. The enemy, the nations in the midst of which the remnant has fled and who are

hostile to them, makes his life difficult and also makes it impossible for him to go to God's house. This causes a deep sadness, which he shows by his black clothing. He is mourning.

He is surrendered to his adversaries and they do not spare him (verse 10). "All day long" they revile him with words that are "as a shattering" of his bones. This indicates that what they say takes away his strength to walk. And what do they say all day long? "Where is your God?" This really cuts to the quick. That is how paralyzing and even deadly words can be (cf. Pro 12:18a). This is especially the case when they are constantly repeated and also connect to his own struggle with the question: Why has God forgotten me?

The God-fearing, after his back and forth between despair and hope, has returned to the point where he also arrived earlier in this psalm (verse 11; verse 5). But he now expresses a stronger confidence in salvation. In verse 5 he says he "shall again praise Him [for] the help [or: saving acts] of His presence". Now he says he will praise God because God Himself is "the help [or: saving acts] of my countenance". Here he also calls God "my God".

Psalm 43

Introduction

Psalm 43 is a continuation of Psalm 42 and forms a whole with it. Psalm 43 has no heading, which makes it plausible to view this psalm as a continuation of Psalm 42. Also, the refrain that occurs three times in both psalms is a strong argument for the unity of the two psalms (Psa 42:5,11; 43:5). Also, the question occurs in both psalms: “Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” (Psa 42:9b; 43:2b).

There is a distinction, however. The enemies in Psalm 42 are the nations; the enemies in Psalm 43 are the unbelieving compatriots. The latter is an even greater distress. Psalm 42 is a lamentation related to memories of the past. Psalm 43 is a supplication to God in connection with the enemy within the people, the antichrist, who will also exercise his evil influence on the Jews in the dispersion outside the land.

Psa 43:1-5 | Send Out Your Light and Your Truth

*1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation;
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!*

*2 For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*

*3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your dwelling places.*

*4 Then I will go to the altar of God,
To God my exceeding joy;
And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.*

*5 Why are you in despair, O my soul?
And why are you disturbed within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.*

The God-fearing further expands his need before God. He now asks that God vindicates him and pleads his case (verse 1). God can do that by delivering him from “an ungodly nation” which is the ungodly mass of God’s people, and “from the deceitful and unjust man”, which is the antichrist. The ungodly mass is the large part of God’s people who reject the covenant that God has made with His people and do not keep it. The antichrist is the leader of this ungodly mass. He takes the place of Christ – as Absalom took David’s place (2Sam 15:1-14) – and is therefore the man of deceit and injustice.

The God-fearing calls God “the God of my strength” (verse 2), by which he means that he counts on God to use His strength against his enemies. But it seems that God is using His strength against him, His faithful servant. In any case, God did not use His strength to stop the enemy. After all, God rejects him. This is a more powerful expression than being “forgotten” by God, as he says in Psalm 42 (Psa 42:9a). And that while he goes “mourning because of the oppression of the enemy” (cf. Psa 42:9b). Surely then God does notice that he is mourning because he misses fellowship with Him so much, doesn’t He?

God can do something else for him and that is to send out His “light” and His “truth” to lead and bring him to God’s holy hill, which is Zion, and to His dwelling places, which is His temple (verse 3). In doing so, the remnant, without realizing it themselves, is asking for the coming of the Lord Jesus as Messiah. He is “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12) and He is “the truth” (Jn 14:6). This is in sharp contrast to the antichrist who claims of himself that he is God, which is a lie. His true nature is that of a liar. The Lord Jesus is the One Who has revealed the truth about God (Jn 1:1-18). When He is sent by God, He will bring back His people into God’s presence.

We can also think of the Word of God which is a light and the truth (Psa 119:105; Jn 17:17). The God-fearing is not primarily concerned with returning to the land and his possessions, but with the presence of God. He already experiences it when God leads him by His light and His truth. His goal with that is to be brought to God’s “holy hill”, Mount Zion, and God’s “dwelling places”, the temple. He longs very much for the dwelling place of God to be with Him there.

If God does, then he can “go to the altar of God” to sacrifice there (verse 4; cf. 2Sam 6:17). He can go to God Himself, Whom He calls “my exceeding joy” and he can “praise” Him “upon the lyre”. God is the source of his joy; he finds all happiness in Him. Here the God-fearing is in the direct presence of God Himself. We hear his deep joy when he says to God: “O God, my God.” Then his heart is at rest and he can give thanks to God in all keys. After all, God is enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3b).

There is an ascension in verses 3-4:

1. God’s holy hill,
2. God’s dwelling places,
3. God’s altar,
4. God, his exceeding joy.

The psalm ends with the refrain that appears twice in the previous psalm (verse 5; Psa 42:5,11). He says here, as in Psalm 42, that he will praise God because God Himself is “the help [or: saving acts] of my countenance” (Psa 42:11). He also calls God “my God” here.

Psalm 44

Introduction

In Psalms 42-43, the faithful remnant is outside the land and is in great distress there. Their greatest distress is that they cannot go to God in His sanctuary. Psalm 44 further describes that distress. Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 are an individual lamentation. Psalm 44 is a lamentation of the people. Although the people trust in the LORD, they are still in great distress because of what the nations are doing to them.

A division of the psalm:

1. First they remind God of the past, of what they themselves have heard about the occupation of the land (verses 1b-3).
2. They confess God as their God and express their trust in Him (verses 4-8).
3. Then they speak of their current situation: they are terribly persecuted (verses 9-16).
4. Then they confess their faithfulness (verses 17-22).
5. They conclude the psalm with a cry to God to rise up and be their help (verses 23-26).

The content of the psalm can also be divided with a few key words:

1. *Trust*: because of God's actions in the past (verses 1b-8).
2. *Dejection*: because of the defeat by enemies. The slaughter in the land by the king of the North, although the remnant itself escapes the slaughter because they have taken refuge abroad (verses 9-16).
3. *Confusion*: how faith trust and hardship can go together (verses 17-22).
4. *Request*: whether God will grant salvation after all (verses 23-26).

Psa 44:1-3 | Remembrance of the Past

| 1 For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.

*O God, we have heard with our ears,
 Our fathers have told us
 The work that You did in their days,
 In the days of old.
 2 You with Your own hand drove out the nations;
 Then You planted them;
 You afflicted the peoples,
 Then You spread them abroad.
 3 For by their own sword they did not possess the land,
 And their own arm did not save them,
 But Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence,
 For You favored them.*

For “for the choir director”(verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Maskil” see at Psalm 32:1.

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

Here they are speaking to God (verse 1b) and not to the LORD, the God of the covenant. This is true of most of the second book of Psalms (see the Introduction to Psalm 42). They are removed from the sanctuary and therefore feel removed from the covenant. They think of the work and wonders of God in overcoming mighty enemies and the promised land that has been given to them. This is what their fathers told them about (cf. Jdg 6:13). God has repeatedly commanded that His great deeds must be told by the fathers to their children (Exo 10:2; 13:14; Deu 4:9; cf. Exo 12:26-27).

For us as members of God’s New Testament people, the church, His great act is the redemption of our sins. He accomplished this by sending His Son, Who accomplished redemption through His work on the cross. The Son suffered, died and rose again and is now glorified with God in heaven. We may tell about this to our children.

When we read “in their days” and “the days of old” we can think of the deliverance from Egypt, but here especially of the taking possession of the land. God did a great “work ... in their days” by helping them drive out the nations of the land and giving it to them. They lived there and enjoyed the blessing. Now this work seems to become undone, for they have been driven out of the land.

God “drove out the nations” with His hand (verse 2; Deu 7:1). In their place He “planted” His people (cf. Exo 15:17; Psa 80:8; Amos 9:15). Nothing is said here about the unbelief of the people. The faithful only want to speak about what God has done and thereby remind Him of His earlier dealings with His people. He “drove out” the nations who were then in the land because the measure of their iniquity was complete (Gen 15:16). His own people He has showered with blessing and “planted them” (cf. Psa 80:8-11).

They are aware that it was not in their own strength and by their own means that they drove the enemies out of the land (verse 3). It is all due solely to God’s power (Deu 8:17-18; 9:3-6). They speak of “Your right hand and Your arm”. It is a double display of power, for both speak of God’s power. On top of that, the light of God’s presence was present with them and guided them. It means that He “favored them”. This is evident from the fact that He chose them to be His own people.

Psa 44:4-8 | Boasting in God

*4 You are my King, O God;
Command victories for Jacob.
5 Through You we will push back our adversaries;
Through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us.
6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor will my sword save me.
7 But You have saved us from our adversaries,
And You have put to shame those who hate us.
8 In God we have boasted all day long,
And we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah.*

Although the psalm is a collective lamentation, we find several times that the psalmist nevertheless speaks in the singular (verses 4,6,15). They acknowledge no other King but God (verse 4; cf. Psa 5:2). By contemplating the deeds of God in the past, the faith of the remnant has been strengthened. As a result, they now dare to declare individually that not the anti-christ, but the LORD God is their King: “You [with emphasis] are my King, O God.”

From Him, the God, the Angel Who redeemed Jacob from all evil (Gen 48:16), they expect the complete deliverance of Jacob from Jacob's distress. Therefore, they ask Him to "command victories for Jacob". He will certainly do that in His time. Then, to their amazement, they will see that God, their King, is none other than the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Earlier they spoke of God using His right hand and His arm to deliver them. Now they speak of themselves that they in God's power push back their adversaries (verse 5; cf. Deu 33:17). It is both true. Those who rise up against them to do them harm, they shall trample down in His Name (cf. Rom 16:20; Mal 4:3). God will give His people the strength to defeat their adversaries (cf. Zec 12:5-6). They do not rely on their bow to take out the enemy at a distance, nor do they rely on their sword to deliver themselves from the enemy nearby (verse 6). They realize that there is no strength in them.

There is no reliance on their own strength, but on God (verse 7). In faith they count on Him to deliver them from their adversaries. He causes their haters to be put to shame by making all their cunning plans fail completely. Christ will totally break the works of the devil and deliver His people.

When the gaze is thus fixed on God, the result is that the believing remnant boasts in Him "all day long" (verse 8). This boasting will culminate in the giving thanks to His Name "forever". The praise of His Name will continue endlessly.

Psa 44:9-16 | Complaint of the Rejected People

*9 Yet You have rejected [us] and brought us to dishonor,
And do not go out with our armies.*

*10 You cause us to turn back from the adversary;
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.*

*11 You give us as sheep to be eaten
And have scattered us among the nations.*

*12 You sell Your people cheaply,
And have not profited by their sale.*

*13 You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scoffing and a derision to those around us.*

*14 You make us a byword among the nations,
A laughingstock among the peoples.*

*15 All day long my dishonor is before me
And my humiliation has overwhelmed me,*

*16 Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,
Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.*

In verse 9, the tone of the psalm changes. This change is introduced with the word “yet”. “Yet” implies: despite the daily thanksgiving in verse 7 in response that God was kind to them. Embedded in this is the question, how the God of the fathers can now reject their children (cf. *Psa 89:38*).

The faithful – who identify with the rest of the people, as, for example, Daniel does (*Dan 9:5*) – look at the circumstances in which they now find themselves. They then note that the God Whom they praise and glorify has “rejected [us] and brought us to dishonor”. That He has rejected them, they describe in verses 10-12; that He has put them to shame, they describe in verses 13-16.

The enemy has come, but God did not go with the armies of Israel. As a result, they have turned back from the adversary (verse 10). God has given the enemy the upper hand over them, and now they are being plundered by those who hate them to benefit from it.

They complain to God that He gives them to their enemies “as sheep to be eaten” (verse 11; cf. *Zec 11:4,7*). This “eaten” is done by the enemies of God’s people. The remnant has fled from the enemy, but nowhere are they safe. They experience what they as a nation did to their Messiah at the time. Their Messiah was sold by the people for little money (*Zec 11:12-13; Mt 26:15; 27:9*). Now they themselves are sold for little money (verse 12; cf. *Deu 32:30; Jdg 2:14; Isa 52:3*). They despised Him and now they themselves are despised.

They are reaping the fruits of their rejection of their Messiah. What they are experiencing, the Lord Jesus, their Messiah, also experienced during His days on earth. They are reaping what they have sown. God makes them a reproach to their “neighbors” (verse 13), which are primarily their neighboring peoples of Edom, Ammon and Moab.

“The nations” – where we can think of the nations among whom they are scattered, a wider circle therefore than the “neighbors” in the previous line – make them a byword (verse 14; Deu 28:37; Jer 24:9). They are a laughingstock among peoples. The remnant sees in the actions of the nations and the peoples the actions of God. Time and again they speak of “You”, “You”, “You”.... He works this mocking behavior. They don’t sue God about this, but acknowledge that they deserve it.

In verse 15, the king is speaking – he is the “me” in this verse. Literally he says “the shame of my face has covered me”. This goes further than “my humiliation has overwhelmed me”. In fact, it says: Shame has totally surrounded and covered me. This happens all day long. This is a great contrast to “all day long” boasting in God (verse 8). The cause of this is “the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, because of the enemy and the avenger” (verse 16). In this we recognize the antichrist, who has a big mouth and speaks blasphemies (Rev 13:5-6,11).

Psa 44:17-22 | Confession of Faithfulness

*17 All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten You,
And we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant.*

*18 Our heart has not turned back,
And our steps have not deviated from Your way,*

*19 Yet You have crushed us in a place of jackals
And covered us with the shadow of death.*

*20 If we had forgotten the name of our God
Or extended our hands to a strange god,*

*21 Would not God find this out?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.*

*22 But for Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.*

The remnant utters that even though “all this” has happened to them, they still have not forgotten God and have not dealt falsely with His covenant (verse 17). The severe trials do not result in them ceasing to think about Him. On the contrary, they focus all the more on Him because they know that He alone can give salvation. That is trusting in faith.

Their heart has not turned back to adhere to other gods (verse 18), but have remained faithful to God. Nor have their steps deviated from the way God wants them to go. Their walk and behavior are in accordance with His will. The severe trials do not result in them ceasing to serve God. They are keeping His commandments.

God has disciplined them so severely through the trials that they feel in the midst of their enemies as if they were “in a place of jackals” or a desolate place (verse 19; cf. Jer 9:11; 10:22). There they are crushed by Him. What a contrast with their “homeland”, the land flowing with milk and honey. While they would expect God to shelter them in the foreign land, they find that God “covered” them “with the shadow of death”.

If it were indeed the case that they had forgotten the Name of their God and had extended their hands to a strange god to ask its help (verse 20), God would certainly find out and discover it (verse 21). “For He knows the secrets of the heart” (cf. Jer 17:9-10a). To forget the Name of God means that they do not call upon Him, but they do nothing else than call upon His Name continually. Still less have they forgotten His Name by calling on a strange god, for they address Him exclusively.

They are constantly attacked by their enemies. The fact that they speak in the we-form indicates that they are united with each other as the people of God in this situation. They tell God that for His sake they “are killed all day long” (verse 22; cf. verses 8,15). Surely this proves that they have not forgotten Him. Their enemies see them as “sheep to be slaughtered” precisely because of their faithfulness to God. But if the people are not unfaithful to the covenant, then it seems that *God* is unfaithful to His covenant. How can that be? The psalmist is now confused. This leads to the prayer in verses 23-26.

Paul quotes this verse to show the believers in Rome – and us as well – the close connection that exists between the believers and Christ (Rom 8:35-36; cf. 1Cor 15:31; 2Cor 1:8-10; 11:23). Believers undergo trial and tribulation because of their connection with the Lord Jesus. They suffer what He suffered. In the world they suffer tribulation. “But” says the Lord to them, “take courage, I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33b).

Psa 44:23-26 | Cry for Help

23 Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord?

Awake, do not reject us forever.

24 Why do You hide Your face

[And] forget our affliction and our oppression?

25 For our soul has sunk down into the dust;

Our body cleaves to the earth.

26 Rise up, be our help,

And redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness.

They do not believe that God sleeps (cf. Psa 121:4; 1Kgs 18:27b). They express themselves in this way because sleep is a human representation of the absence of any activity. They perceive that God is keeping Himself dormant because He does not act and intervene on their behalf (verse 23). They cry out here to the “Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler. The remnant is afraid that He will “reject” them “forever”, that is, for all eternity.

The disciples of the Lord Jesus have a similar experience to the sons of Korah. When a storm overtakes them in the ship with the Lord, Who is both Man and God, they wake Him up, for He is asleep. They awaken Him asking if He does not care that they perish (Mk 4:35-41).

God hides Himself from the believing remnant (verse 24). Because their affliction and tribulation last so long, it seems as if He forgets them. It seems as if the antichrist and the ungodly mass can have their way and kill them at their will (cf. Dan 7:25; Rev 13:7). But God cannot forget them. They are “inscribed ... on the palms” of His hands (Isa 49:16) and are written “in a book of remembrance” before Him (Mal 3:16). They are in the melting pot of purification, where He heats the fire just as hot as it takes to make them a pure silver (Mal 3:2-3).

They feel like the dead, which they indicate by saying that their souls have sunk down into the dust (verse 25; cf. Psa 22:15). Their body cleaves to the earth, they say. By this they compare themselves to reptiles who cannot lift themselves up. It indicates the great humiliation and tribulation they suffer.

God is the help of His people (Hos 13:9). Therefore, they call upon Him to rise up and to be their help (verse 26). He is their help in trouble (Psa 46:1)

and in this they find themselves. He is the Only One Who can help. There is no one else. They appeal to His “lovingkindness” to deliver them and not to any righteousness or faithfulness on their part or their suffering for Him. How God answers their prayer is the subject of the next four psalms (Psalms 45-48).

Psalm 45

Introduction

Psalm 45 and the next three psalms (Psalms 46-48) are God's response to Psalms 42-44, which describe the suffering of the remnant. The great need in suffering is experiencing the absence of God. In the coming psalms, God responds to this distress. In Psalm 45, the answer is that He does not take away the suffering, but that He brings the Beloved to them in their circumstances.

God's response is particularly connected to the cry of the remnant in the last verses of the previous psalm (Psa 44:23-26). It is an exceptional answer: not only does God answer prayer, He comes Himself in His own Person! As a result, the tone changes. Affliction changes to joy and victory. God gives the believing remnant a special view of the Messiah. He is their King and will come to deliver them. That sight of Him and His tender love for the bride (cf. Hos 2:19-20), and that He will come, give perseverance in enduring suffering.

In Psalm 44, God is their king (Psa 44:4). In Psalm 45, Christ is the King, the true Son of David. This is evident from the quotation of this psalm in Hebrews 1, where the glory of Christ is described (Heb 1:8-9). Ancient Jewish writings, such as the Targum – an explanatory translation of the Old Testament – also recognize that Psalm 45 is about the King Messiah. The Targum translates verse 2 as follows: "Your beauty, O King-Messiah, is greater than the sons of men." The psalm is not directed at God, but at the King. The phrase "king" occurs five times in this psalm.

This is an encouragement to every suffering believer. God does not always take away suffering, but in the midst of suffering He does come to His suffering child in a special way. He participates in it and helps bear it. Christ, Who is God, walked the path of suffering Himself, encouraged by the joy that lay before Him. Now believers may walk the same path, facing Him, Him Who loves us.

To us comes the exhortation “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb 12:2-3).

We can divide the psalm as follows:

Verse 1a Heading

Verse 1b Introduction

Verses 2-5 The bride speaks to the King

Verses 6-9 The glory of the King

Verses 10-12 The King speaks to the bride/queen

Verses 13-15 The glory of the bride

Verses 16-17 Conclusion

The psalm begins in verse 2 and ends in verse 17 with “therefore” and “forever”. The glory of the King is the very reason (“therefore”) for the permanent character (“forever”) of the blessings in His kingdom.

Psa 45:1-2 | Fairer Than the Sons of Men

1 For the choir director; according to the Shoshannim. A Maskil of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love.

My heart overflows with a good theme;

I address my verses to the King;

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 You are fairer than the sons of men;

Grace is poured upon Your lips;

Therefore God has blessed You forever.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The phrase “according to the Shoshannim” or “upon lilies” points to the loveliness of the type of music. It refers to the tone, melody and music type of this psalm. “The Shoshannim” or “lilies” refers to the faithful remnant in their connection with Christ. The faithful are to Him as the lilies in the midst of the thorns (Song 2:1-2). Thorns are a picture of sin (Gen 3:18). It is

human nature as it became through the Fall. The King sees the faithful as these tender field flowers in an environment that is full of sin, threat and violence for them and against which they cannot protect themselves. But He can. He does so by connecting them to Himself in love.

After Psalms 42-44, this psalm is the next “maskil” or “teaching”, or “instruction”. The subject is the Messiah, the King, Who He is to God and to His own. This instruction will be for the encouragement of the remnant in the time of the great tribulation in a special way. For “a maskil” see further at Psalm 32:1 and Psalm 42:1.

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

It is “a Song of Love”, literally “a song of the beloved” (plural). This is already indicated in the division of the psalm. It is a unique song in the book of Psalms. This song is about the love between the King, the Messiah, and His bride, which is the earthly Jerusalem.

When we are in need, the Spirit of God always wants to direct our hearts to the love of God. Then He wants to remind us that for those who love God “all things work together for good” (Rom 8:28), even though sometimes we do not understand why certain things must happen to us.

When the Beloved, the King in His beauty, is presented, the poet’s heart is moved (verse 1b). It is the working of the Holy Spirit, the Author of Scripture, Who fills the poet’s heart with wonder and amazement when he beholds the beauty of the great King, the Beloved of God. His heart is full of Him and overflows or bubbles over with good words. The word “overflows” is used for something that boils over because it is cooking, or for a fountain that bubbles up water and pushes it out. In this way, the poet’s “good theme” comes out.

His inner strong feelings are not expressed in ecstatic expressions, but are put into words in a controlled way in “a good theme”. A good word is a word about Christ, the King, Who is anointed over Zion (Psa 2:6).

Christ is King of His earthly people. His relationship with His heavenly people, the church, is not that of a King. Nowhere in Scripture is He called the King of the church. To those who belong to the church, He is Lord. We

confess Him as Lord. We did so at our conversion (Rom 10:8-9), and we have confessed this since we came to faith (1Cor 8:6).

The poet brings forth the good theme in the form of addressing “my verses to the King”. The word “verses” is literally “works” or “occupation”. It refers to being busy with the King, thinking about Him and expressing oneself about Him (cf. Isa 5:1). Saying verses is done with much emotion, but always controlled and never frantic.

He expresses things with his tongue reminiscent of “the pen of a ready writer”. With a pen, things are recorded for future generations (cf. Job 19:24). His readiness is evident in his adeptness in the use of language, explanation and communication. It means that he does not have to search for words. The words come naturally from an overflowing heart, inspired by the Holy Spirit, as he comes to admiration by beholding the beloved King.

He speaks words that are inspired in him. His tongue is used as the pen of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always speaks of Christ (Jn 16:13-14). He does so not in an uncontrollable flow of words, but in full awareness of what He is saying. Part of “the fruit of the Spirit” is “self-control” (Gal 5:22-23a; cf. 1Cor 14:32).

First, the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, speaks in the poet about the days of Christ in the flesh on earth. God presents His Beloved to the suffering remnant. He is Man, but at the same time far more beautiful than all other men (verse 2). He is the Man par excellence. “My beloved is dazzling and reddish, outstanding among ten thousand” (Song 5:10). This is seen only by the eye of faith (Jn 1:14). He is God’s answer to the need in which the believer may be. By looking at Him, the inner distress is removed.

David is said to be of handsome appearance (1Sam 16:12; 17:42). Of Solomon it is said that he is outstanding among ten thousand and that he is wholly desirable (Song 5:10,16). But of this King it is said that He is fairer than the children of men because “grace is poured” upon “His lips” (cf. Jn 1:16). His beauty is not outward, but is seen in a special way in His words (Lk 4:22a; cf. Pro 22:11; Ecc 10:12a).

He is the Son of Man. He became Man, He came to earth, born of a virgin and walked on earth doing good. He was rejected and crucified, killed,

rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. This Son of Man will come in answer to the prayers of the believing remnant.

“Poured out” means that His words of grace flowed like water from His mouth to His hearers. It refers to the way of speaking, a way that is consistent with the beauty of His Person and which makes Him exceedingly attractive. Of Him is given the testimony that “never a man has spoken the way this man speaks” (Jn 7:46).

“Therefore”, that is, because He is like that and has spoken like that, God has “blessed” Him “forever”. The latter is also an indication that this psalm transcends a mere king such as David or Solomon, and points to Christ, Who said of the Scriptures: “It is these that testify about Me” (Jn 5:39).

This “blessed forever” began after Christ completed the work on the cross. Then God raised Him up and glorified Him and gave Him the Name that is above all names. He blessed Him forever with every imaginable blessing, including that of His dominion over the world. This will be evident at His second coming in judgment.

The redemption of His people and the judgment of His enemies take place then, not through an angel or a human redeemer, but through the LORD Himself appearing as King. This is what the poet speaks of in the following verses where he speaks of the King and Bridegroom.

Psa 45:3-9 | King and Bridegroom

*3 Gird Your sword on [Your] thigh, O Mighty One,
[In] Your splendor and Your majesty!*

*4 And in Your majesty ride on victoriously,
For the cause of truth and meekness [and] righteousness;
Let Your right hand teach You awesome things.*

*5 Your arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under You;
[Your arrows are] in the heart of the King's enemies.*

*6 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.*

*7 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You*

With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

*8 All Your garments are [fragrant with] myrrh and aloes [and] cassia;
Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad.*

9 Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies;

At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

King David in his victories is a type of the Christ Who will triumph over all His enemies. The beauty of the Lord Jesus in verse 2 is evident not only in His words, but also in His deeds, which are mentioned from verse 3 onward. From verse 3 on, it is about the second coming of the Lord Jesus to earth.

It begins with an urging from the believing remnant for the Lord Jesus to gird His sword at the thigh and ride on for the cause of God's truth and meekness and righteousness. The purpose here, as with the grace of verse 2, is the enforcement of the honor of God and the display of the beauty of the King. He will enforce this and shape God's kingdom in the realm of peace.

Christ is the "Mighty One", the Man with power and ability to overcome anything and anyone. Against Him no one can stand (Isa 42:13). The sword of His splendor and majesty at the thigh is His Word, with which He strikes down and subjects to Himself all that opposes God. The picture is that of a king going to war with his sword girded. The sword means that the King now comes not only as Savior, but also as Judge. That the sword bears the marks of His splendor and majesty refers to the King's past victories.

It is said to Him to ride on victoriously (verse 4). It is a wish and at the same time a prophetic description. He is always prosperous and surrounded by glory, both in His humiliation and in His exaltation. It is now about the King Who goes to war and will be prosperous in His warfare. When He appears in glory, He rides "for the cause of truth and meekness [and] righteousness". His word, what He says, is His strength. Meekness recalls His first coming (Zec 9:9). He has not lost the features of that when He acts in majesty.

By His word He created the worlds (Heb 11:3). By His word He will reclaim His right to the world fallen into sin (cf. Rev 19:11,15a) and judge sin (Jn

12:48). He will, when He returns, reign in truth, meekness, and righteousness. "Truth" means that He is absolutely trustworthy in word and deed and that any falsehood or mendacity is absolutely absent. "Meekness" or 'humble of spirit' is necessary to be with God (Isa 57:15). "Righteousness" means that everything He says and does is in complete accord with God's holy requirements and His covenant.

Our task already now in the kingdom of God – which is now a kingdom in secret, the world does not see – is to serve Christ in meekness (Rom 14:17-18).

We see the power of judgment in the right hand. The right hand is the hand of power and of honor. He will control His right hand to do awesome deeds. What He does in judgment will evoke astonishment and wonder. These are feats of strength and bravery never before displayed in any war. It describes the great victories of the Messiah by which He subdues the whole world to Himself.

He goes to war and will completely destroy all His enemies. Then He establishes His reign which is grounded on truth. He rules in perfect righteousness and does so not as a ruthless ruler, but in meekness.

The sharp arrows He shoots are His words that strike the hearts of His enemies and by which the hostile nations will fall under Him (verse 5; cf. Jn 12:48b). The Word of God is sharp and therefore deeply penetrating and deadly to what is inconsistent with it (Heb 4:12). No people will stand before Him.

All His enemies, whereby we may mention the king of the North, which is the Assyrian, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth, which are the dictators of respectively restored Europe and the apostate mass of Israel, and the prince of the extreme north, are all enemies who will fall down under Him. It is the victory of the truth of the Word.

God says to His King that His throne "is forever and ever" (verse 6). He addresses Him as "O God". The writer of the letter to the Hebrews quotes this verse and the next as evidence that the Man Christ is the Son of God and therefore is God and thus is exalted far above the angels (Heb 1:8-9). God speaks of His throne. It is an eternal throne because righteousness is its foundation.

As Man, He sits on the throne. Right now He is not sitting on His own throne, but on the Father's throne (Rev 3:21). In the future, He will sit on His own throne (Mt 25:31). On whatever throne He sits, His throne stands unshaken, and He Who sits on it cannot be removed from the throne by any power in the world. It is His throne on earth upon which He has sat after what is described above in verses 4-5. He has taken rightful possession of the throne.

The Messiah exercises His rule, of which the scepter is the symbol, in a righteous manner. It is "the scepter of uprightness". No one can question the justice of His government. Any ground for doing so is lacking, for He rules according to the righteous law of God. All that Christ possesses, He possesses righteously. What the bride possesses and what the faithful possess, they possess by grace, which is based on His very own righteousness imputed to them.

God speaks to His Son and says to Him that He will sit on His own throne. His love of righteousness and His hatred of wickedness are the reasons why He is given such a special place (verse 7). "Wickedness" is rendered "lawlessness" in the quotation in Hebrews 1 (Heb 1:9). Lawlessness is the essence of sin, for "sin is lawlessness" (1Jn 3:4). It is not merely breaking the law of God, but denying any authority whatsoever, especially God's. This is what the Lord Jesus hates, Who has always perfectly acknowledged and upheld the authority of God.

Christ is absolutely unique in His love of righteousness and His hatred of wickedness. He is the Only One on all earth of Whom that can be said by God. "Therefore", for that reason, He has been given such a unique place by God. Is He not then worthy to be given that unique place in our hearts as well?

His anointing with the oil of joy is the expression of Who He is to the heart of God. It is not just a question of oil. With it He is already anointed as King. Here we have a special anointing, which takes place "with the oil of joy", because it is the day of His wedding. He is anointed "above Your fellows". His fellows are prophetically the faithful remnant. They first shared suffering with Him and now they share in His glorification and joy (cf. Rom 8:17). His anointing shows that He is the First among them (Heb 1:9).

Every believer longs for justice to be done to Him, Who was done so much injustice in His life on earth.

Myrrh and aloes (verse 8) are components of the holy anointing oil that is special to God (Exo 30:22-25,31-33). The Bridegroom's garments are fragrant with this (cf. 2Cor 2:15). The Messiah is there first and foremost for God. He is described in His glories. We also find those spices on the Bride when she is described by the Bridegroom in Song of Songs (Song 4:14).

In these garments He appears when He comes out of "the ivory palaces". Solomon had a great ivory throne (1Kgs 10:18), but He Who is more than Solomon dwells in ivory palaces. Ivory speaks of the precious things that emerges because the death of another has taken place. Here He appears differently than in the war costume in the previous verses (verses 3-5). In addition to being surrounded by the precious fragrance of the oil of joy, He is filled with joy because of the anointing with oil of joy.

The "king's daughters" surround the bride (verse 9). The king's daughters are highly placed representatives of the nations that will come into the realm of peace. The daughter of Tyre (verse 12) is one of them. She represents the wealth of the nations. The nations come with gifts and share in the general joy of the wedding.

The queen has a separate place. She rules together with the Messiah. The word for queen here is the word used for a woman who becomes queen through her marriage to the king. The queen is the earthly bride of the Messiah, which is the faithful remnant, the Jerusalem that is on earth. The earth will be submitted to Christ and to His earthly bride. There are two exceptions to that submission: God (1Cor 15:27) and the church, His heavenly bride (Eph 1:22-23).

The queen stands at the right hand of the King. The right hand, besides being a symbol of power, also symbolizes an exalted place, a place of honor (cf. 1Kgs 2:19; Mk 16:19; Heb 1:3). The queen has yet to be brought to the king (verses 14,15), but the psalmist already foresees this scene. She is clothed "in gold from Ophir". The gold refers to the glory of God. The bride looks so glittering because God has put His own glory on her (Eze 16:14).

Psa 45:10-15 | The Bride

*10 Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear:
Forget your people and your father's house;
11 Then the King will desire your beauty.
Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.
12 The daughter of Tyre [will come] with a gift;
The rich among the people will seek your favor.
13 The King's daughter is all glorious within;
Her clothing is interwoven with gold.
14 She will be led to the King in embroidered work;
The virgins, her companions who follow her,
Will be brought to You.
15 They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing;
They will enter into the King's palace.*

Now the bride is addressed directly (verse 10). The first thing that is said to her is to listen. God has something to say to her. Any change begins with listening. What is said, she must “give attention”, in the sense of consider, and incline her ear to it, tune her ear to it. It is namely about something important: God tells her in what way she can show her beauty, so that the King's desire will go out to her.

She will be attractive to Him in her beauty if she forgets her past. The faithful remnant is to forget the sins committed by the people in the past (Psa 103:12). The judgment for it, borne by the Messiah, has caused a break with the past. Her full devotion to Him will be proof of that.

Everyone who repents knows this. He breaks with the past and starts a new life. With respect to the past, there is nothing the remnant can boast about or claim a right to. Through their unfaithfulness they have forfeited all right to the promise.

We see this presented in Ruth, the Moabitess. As a Moabitess, she has no right whatsoever to stay in the land, let alone inherit it (Deu 23:3-6). However, she leaves her people and makes herself dependent on grace. This brings her into connection with Boaz, a type of the Lord Jesus, giving her all that he possesses (Rth 1:7-17; 4:9-10).

The connection with Christ breaks all the natural connections that were there and establishes entirely new ones (cf. Gen 12:1; Mt 10:37; 12:48-50; 2Cor 5:17). “Your father’s house” refers to the strong earthly bond that is present in the family relationships. This too must be given up when it comes to the connection with the Messiah (cf. Lk 9:59-60). The King’s desire is determined by the attachment to Him at the expense of every natural connection.

When He notices this, He will desire her beauty (verse 11). The beauty of Jerusalem can begin to shine, “when the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning” (Isa 4:4). Instead, the Bridegroom has given her the adornments of a bride (Isa 61:3; cf. Gen 24:53a).

For us, it means that we walk in such a way that the Lord finds His joy in it. That is what we do when we break the connection with natural relationships. It is also what Christ has done. The old connections have been removed by His work on the cross, through which He formed new ones. Any boasting in the flesh must be given up. Paul says: “Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know [Him in this way] no longer” (2Cor 5:16).

The acknowledgment of this will be seen in submission to His authority or to His being Lord. The bride’s awe for her Bridegroom is evident in her bowing down to Him, which is to give Him the due respect. This attitude of awe should also characterize the wife toward her husband in our day (Eph 5:33b; 1Pet 3:6).

The bride will receive from “the daughter of Tyre”, that is, the inhabitants of Tyre, “a gift” (verse 12). Tyre was the richest city in the Near East at that time. This city, as well as other rich nations, will bring their contributions to Jerusalem (cf. Isa 60:5-7; Rev 21:24,26). They will do so in order to thereby seek the “favor” of the bride. Israel or Jerusalem will then no longer be despised and trampled upon, but will be recognized as the city on which they depend for every blessing.

The bride is “the King’s daughter”, meaning she is of royal descent (verse 13). “All glorious within” means ‘inside’, that is in the interior of the house

where she is. It means that she is not yet visible to everyone. In the house she is “all glorious”, for “her clothing is interwoven with gold”. Her wedding clothing is artfully embroidered of gold thread. There is nothing that recalls her past. Her appearance has the radiance of the glory of God (cf. Rev 21:10-11a). She is ready to meet the Bridegroom.

Then the bride is “led to the King in embroidered work” (verse 14; cf. Eze 16:10,13) to be united with Him (cf. Gen 2:22). In her entourage are the “virgins, her companions”. In them we can see a picture of the cities of Judah (Isa 40:9), which come to honor the King. What a contrast there is between the treatment of the King when He was crucified and this scene. Now honor is brought to Him. The whole world will rejoice over this connection. The book of Song of Songs will be fulfilled.

The whole wedding procession enters the King’s palace in joy (verse 15). Now the bride with her entourage comes to the King. All who are with her are received as it were as king’s daughters. This cannot but work the utmost joy with them. There is great joy in all. This is expressed in the bride’s companions. They too are full of joy for the grace that was given to all.

The church, too, will be made stand in the presence of Christ “with great joy” to the glory of God (Jude 1:24; Eph 3:20-21; 5:27). Then the call will sound through heaven: ““Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride [lit wife] has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright [and] clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev 19:7-8).

Psa 45:16-17 | The Sons

*16 In place of your fathers will be your sons;
You shall make them princes in all the earth.
17 I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.*

In verse 16 the Messiah is addressed. “Your sons” are the sons who are led by God to the Son in glory (Heb 2:10,13). “Your fathers” are the fathers after the flesh (Rom 1:3; 9:5). They are replaced by a new generation (Psa 22:30; Isa 53:10), by the “youth as the dew” (Psa 110:3). The sons partici-

pate in the reign of the Messiah in the realm of peace and are appointed by Him as “princes in all the earth”. It is the payment of wages for what someone has done for Him (Mt 19:28; Lk 19:17; 1Cor 6:2-3; Rev 20:6).

In verse 17, the Messiah speaks to God. He will cause God’s Name “to be remembered in all generations” (cf. Psa 72:17). Christ will always do everything to the glory of God. He did that on earth, He does that now, and He will continue to do that. What He does in the realm of peace will work thanksgiving among the nations that will continue “forever and ever”. This praise will never die away. There will never be a time when God’s Name will not be honored. Blessed are those who partake of that thanksgiving!

Psalm 46

Introduction

After the Messiah has appeared in the previous psalm, in this psalm and the next two psalms the complaint of the remnant turns into a song of praise. God is their refuge. The voice of the enemy, which at first had said scornfully, "where is your God?" (Psa 42:10), is silenced. Peace flows like a river, with no chance of disturbing it, because the weapons have been rendered useless.

We see the enemy in this psalm in three forms:

1. The violence of nature (verses 1b-3).
2. The political violence (verses 4-7).
3. The violence of war (verses 8-11).

In this we have at the same time a division of the psalm. The threefold division is supported by a triple 'selah' (verses 3,7,11) and a (not complete) refrain (verse 7 and verse 11).

This psalm is for Israel itself, which is evident from the expression "our" in verse 1b, verse 7 and verse 11. "The LORD ... is with us (or for us)" (verse 11) is the Name of Christ for His own: Immanuel, which means "God with us".

Psa 46:1-3 | God Is a Refuge, Strength and Help

1 For the choir director. [A Psalm] of the sons of Korah, set to Alamoth. A Song.

*God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.*

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change

And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;

3 Though its waters roar [and] foam,

Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride. Selah.

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

The psalm is “set to Alamothe”. The word *almah*, the singular of “alamoth”, is used for ‘virgin’ in Isaiah 7: “Behold, a virgin will be with child” (Isa 7:14). The idea is similar to the song on the occasion of the redemption from Egypt. Miriam praises the LORD with all the women – so it is a *female* choir (Exo 15:20) – because of the redemption. The sons of Korah do the same here. They sing of redemption.

In 1 Chronicles 15, in the section about the singers, the word “Alamothe” also occurs. There is talk of two kinds of pitches there (1Chr 15:20-21). As indicated above, this word is related to the word “virgin”. Hence the idea that the pitch is ‘high tuned’, that of the soprano. We could also say that this song was written to be sung by girls (soprano).

That God is a refuge means that He Himself is a place of protection for His own from danger (verse 1b). This points to His presence with them. He is Immanuel, God with us. They may flee to Him and hide with Him. He takes upon Himself their defense, for besides protection, He is also their strength against the enemy. In this way God has often shown His help in the distresses in which His own have found themselves.

God is a “refuge and strength” and “a very present help” (or support, assistance) for His own. This idea is reinforced in verse 7 and verse 11 by the phrase “stronghold”. This formidable God is “the LORD of hosts”, the warrior name of God, by which He is mentioned in those verses.

Trouble is anything that can happen to us that makes us anxious or sad. He has proved to be “a very present” help in every trouble, enabling us to rely on Him for any new situation in which we need His help. He is always available and always helps at the right time and in the right way (cf. Heb 4:16).

If faith firmly holds that God is a refuge, strength and help, it will banish all fear from the heart (verse 2). In verses 1b-3, the psalmist speaks of the coming of God to judge. When God appears, it is accompanied by impressive natural phenomena, such as earthquake and storm (cf. Psa 18:7-19; Exo 19:16-18; Isa 64:1-3).

How frightened a person can become by natural disasters (Lk 21:25-26). If the earth were to change location, we would lose all orientation. And suppose the mountains were moved to the heart of the seas. It would mean an end to all stability on earth. But those who have God as their refuge retain their orientation and stability.

The waters of the seas can roar and foam, causing fear (verse 3). The mountains may tremble due to the turbulence of the waters. But the believer is not afraid, for He is with God in a stronghold. We can think by the waters of the seas of hostile nations and by the mountains of political systems of power. They can rage so much that all orientation and stability disappear from society.

Hezekiah saw this in his days when the land was overrun by the armies of Assyria. Assyria is the disciplinary rod of God for His people (Isa 10:5a). We too, as His people, have to deal with the disciplinary rod of God. We have deviated as a whole and by His discipline He wants to bring us back on His way. The question is whether we recognize His discipline and what our response to it is (cf. Amos 4:6-12).

Psa 46:4-7 | God Is a Stronghold

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,

The holy dwelling places of the Most High.

5 God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;

God will help her when morning dawns.

6 The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;

He raised His voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.

The judgments of God have been like a mighty flood (cf. Isa 8:7-8). Now rest has come. This is portrayed in verse 4. In contrast to the furious rushing of the seas “there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God”. “Streams” is literally “branches”, that is, channels and streams that are tributaries to the great river.

“The city of God” is one of the titles of Jerusalem (Psa 48:1b; 87:3). “The city of God” is a superlative in Hebrew. Nineveh is literally called a great

city of God in Jonah 3, which NASB translates as “an exceedingly great city” (Jona 3:3).

The raging waters are calmed down in “the city of God”, as it were, by Him Who dwells there (cf. Lk 8:22-25). Jerusalem therefore resembles a second paradise (cf. Gen 2:10-14; Isa 51:3; Eze 36:35). The river reminds us of the river that goes out from the throne of God in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 22:1; cf. Eze 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Zec 14:8).

It is not a literal river, but it is peace, flowing, as it were, like a river through the city (cf. Isa 48:18). Unlike, say, the Nile, Jerusalem does not have a literally branched river. A branched river speaks of abundance and fertility (irrigation), in this case not of water but of peace. Then Jerusalem will finally be truthfully according to the meaning of its name a city of peace. Because of the river of peace, there is an invigorating gladness in the city of God.

It is the city of God because “the dwelling places of the Most High” are there (cf. Psa 76:1-2). By “dwelling places” we can think of the holy place and the holy of holies. The name “Most High” is the Name of God in connection with the realm of peace (cf. Gen 14:18-24).

It is a special encouragement to the sons of Korah to know that “God is in the midst of her” (verse 5; cf. Isa 12:6; Zep 3:17). Then Jerusalem is truthfully “the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling” (Deu 12:5,11,14,18,21,26). This also makes the city the city of God. Here the thirst of the soul of the God-fearing for God, for the living God, is quenched (Psa 42:1b-2).

The church that gathers around the Lord Jesus can also say that He is in her midst. Only through His presence a local church is a dwelling place of God (Mt 18:20). The Korahites, by their run out of Israel, were distanced from the sanctuary, but not from the God of the sanctuary. Because of their sight of the Messiah in the previous psalm, it is as if they are reimbursed for the lack of the temple in seeing Him Who dwells there.

Because God is in her midst, “she will not be moved”. “God will help her” in the battle against overpowering enemies. This occurs “when morning dawns” (cf. Exo 14:24; Isa 37:36). His help consists in judging the enemies of His people, after which “a morning without clouds” (2Sam 23:4), that is,

the realm of peace, will dawn. Then “the sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2), that is the Lord Jesus, will rise.

Against the roaring nations and the tottering kingdoms, God makes His voice heard (verse 6). God does not use His hand here, but the sword from His mouth, His voice (cf. Psa 2:4-5; Rev 19:15a). He spoke once, and then everything came into being (Psa 33:6,9). When He speaks in judgment, the earth melts away. Such is the power of His voice, impressively described in Psalm 29 (cf. Psa 29:3-9).

In the face of the roaring nations and the tottering kingdoms, faith places “the LORD of hosts” (verse 7). The enemies do not see Him, but the impotent believing remnant looks in faith upon Him, Who is the Commander of all the hosts (cf. 2Kgs 6:14-17). They now speak of God as “the LORD”, which is the name of God in connection with His covenant. He is “the LORD of hosts”, which is His mighty warrior name.

At the same time, He is “the God of Jacob”, the God Who in grace helps the failing, helpless Jacob when he is in need. In Jacob being in trouble, we see the faithful remnant of Israel in the “time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30:7). When the nations and kingdoms surround and oppress them, they will have “a stronghold” in Immanuel, God with us. As a result, they will be untouchable from the enemies.

Psa 46:8-11 | God Makes Wars to Cease

*8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.
9 He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.
10 “Cease [striving] and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth”.
11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. Selah.*

The psalmist calls for us to “come” and “behold the works of the LORD” (verse 8). “Behold” means to ponder, resulting in the abandonment of resistance to God followed by wise action. It is about looking over the bat-

tlefield. There lie the defeated enemies as the result of His actions (cf. Isa 37:36). Because of the great tribulation, He “has wrought desolations in the earth”, the results of which will be visible (Isa 66:23-24). As the stone loosened without the intervention of human hands, He has destroyed the statue of states representing the world’s empires (Dan 2:44-45; cf. Isa 34:2-4). When that time comes, the time of judgment will be over.

In bringing about His destructions, the LORD has made “the wars to cease to the end of the earth” (verse 9; Zec 9:10). The Prince of peace is seated on the throne in Jerusalem. The time of peace has come. What meetings and conferences of whatever powerful rulers have never been able to accomplish, He has brought about: world peace.

He has also brought about total disarmament, something governments have always tried to achieve. They never succeeded because they did so on the basis of a misplaced trust in man. Through the Lord Jesus, all military means are broken or shattered and turned into useful instruments (Isa 2:4; Mic 4:3). He has burned “the chariots with fire” and thus rendered useless (Isa 9:4; cf. Eze 39:9). They are also no longer required.

To this perspective God attaches the message for man to cease his efforts to arrange things himself (verse 10). He must give up in the realization that he is only a man and that God alone is God. Man must stop thinking in his pride that he can contribute anything to world peace, let alone work it out. Any attempt by man to do so is a denial of the existence and government of God.

God is the Only One Who will be praised among the nations and on the earth. The knowledge that He is God must not be merely an intellectual knowing. It must lead to entrusting yourself to Him (verse 11), that you take refuge in Him, that He is your stronghold.

Whatever may befall believers, whatever opposition they may experience, they can confidently say that “the LORD of hosts” is with them (Rom 8:31-39). The Captain of all the earthly and heavenly hosts, both good and evil, is with them. Why then and for what will they still fear? Added to that, they may know that “the God of Jacob” is “a stronghold” for them. The name “Jacob” refers to the people in their weakness. But if God is their

stronghold, it means that they are untouchable, for who can do anything against Him?

Psalm 47

Introduction

This psalm connects to the previous one in which the remnant was calmed by the thought of Messiah's presence in the city of God. It has been suggested that in it the supremacy of God is sung because of His intervention in the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, in which He killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (Isa 37:36-37). The victories of King Jehoshaphat have also been suggested.

In any case, this event foreshadows the defeating of the enemies of God's people by the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, in the end time. The expelled and oppressed remnant sees in faith the things that await their fulfillment and completion as if the moment had already arrived. The result, as described in this psalm, is that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is exalted and magnified as "a great King over all the earth" (verse 2), Who will be worshiped by all nations (verse 9; cf. Isa 52:13; Rev 15:4).

Psalm 46 and Psalm 48 speak of Zion, the city of God, the city of the great King (Psa 46:4; 48:1b; Mt 5:35), in Psalm 47 we find the great King Himself (Mal 1:14). Great King means that there is no king who can be compared to Him, not even Sennacherib, though he lets himself to be called so (2Kgs 18:19). He is the King of kings. Psalm 46 and Psalm 48 are songs of praise about the city of the great King, Psalm 47 is a song of praise about the great King Himself. Psalm 46 is about the coming of the King to judge, Psalm 47 is about the acknowledgment by the whole world that He is the great King, the King of kings.

The psalm can be divided by *selah* after verse 4 into two stanzas that complement each other. The first stanza is about God's love for His people to whom He subdued nations (verse 4). The second stanza is about God's holiness: He sits as King on His holy throne and reigns over all nations (verse 8).

We can also divide the psalm into two stanzas, each beginning with a call to praise God (verse 1b and verse 6) followed by the reason. Both stanzas consist of ten lines (verses 1b-5 and verses 6-9).

Psa 47:1-4 | God Is King

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

O clap your hands, all peoples;

Shout to God with the voice of joy.

2 For the LORD Most High is to be feared,

A great King over all the earth.

3 He subdues peoples under us

And nations under our feet.

4 He chooses our inheritance for us,

The glory of Jacob whom He loves. Selah.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

The psalm begins with a call for “all peoples” to clap their hands (verse 1b). Clapping hands here is an expression of delight and homage (2Kgs 11:12; Isa 55:12). Before the eyes of the spectators a scene has taken place about which they are so delighted that they cannot help but clap their hands.

The voice is also used to express the delight. Shouts of joy “to God with voices of joy” are heard. The fact that the subdued peoples praise Him Who has subdued them with songs of joy means that this can only be fulfilled in the millennial realm of peace. Then it will be so.

These expressions of joy take place because “the LORD Most High is to be feared” (verse 2). God is here called “LORD”, Yahweh, the God of the covenant with His people. He has acted for His people as the “Most High”, which is His Name in connection with the realm of peace (Psa 9:2). In the realm of peace, He is to all and sundry “a great King over all the earth” (cf. Mal 1:14b). He governs all and has authority over all.

That omnipotent and omnipresent King is the King of His people. His people are then no longer a smitten and trampled people. They are no longer the tail, but the head of the nations (Deu 28:13,44). They do not owe this to

themselves, but to God. This is how they confess it: “He subdues peoples under us, and nations under our feet” (verse 3).

And what is the reason? Not something in them, but in Himself, namely His love for them (verse 4). He has chosen for them their inheritance, which is the land to which He has led them. He did that in the past, after He delivered them from Egypt. He will do so in the future – and He is already busy in doing so now! – when He will bring them back to their land from the scattering that He had to bring upon them because of their unfaithfulness to Him (Eze 36:22-28).

God has chosen that land for them to give it to them as their “inheritance” (Eze 20:6a). This means that it is their inalienable property. The hostile nations dispute their right to it, but God has established their right to it. Therefore, any disputing it is rebellion against Him, leading to His judgment. He also calls it “the glory of Jacob”, for it is also “the glory of all the lands” (Eze 20:6b), a land that brings glory and splendor to them. They owe all this to God.

Psa 47:5-9 | God Is Exalted

*5 God has ascended with a shout,
The LORD, with the sound of a trumpet.*

*6 Sing praises to God, sing praises;
Sing praises to our King, sing praises.*

*7 For God is the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with a skillful psalm.*

*8 God reigns over the nations,
God sits on His holy throne.*

*9 The princes of the people have assembled themselves [as] the people of the
God of Abraham,*

*For the shields of the earth belong to God;
He is highly exalted.*

Verse 5 still belongs to verses 1b-4. There is a *selah* at the end of verse 4 because verse 5 is no longer about what He has done to the nations (verses 3,4), but about who He Himself is. In terms of content, verse 5 still belongs to the previous verses because God “ascended with a shout” and

the LORD “with the sound of a trumpet”, meaning that after defeating the nations, He returns to Jerusalem. The going to Jerusalem is called: ascending. Jerusalem is higher than the surrounding places, both literally and figuratively. Therefore, going to Jerusalem is an ascension.

It is not clear to which occasion we should think here. It is comparable to the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion by David. That was also done “with shouting and the sound of the trumpet” (2Sam 6:15). Shouting is common at an enthronement. It has to do with the proclamation of the kingship of God (cf. Num 23:21). We can connect trumpeting with the day of atonement as the announcement of the year of jubilee (Lev 25:9,10) which prophetically refers to the realm of peace. Then the “period of restoration of all things” has come (Acts 3:20-21).

We can also think of the glorification of the Lord Jesus after He finished the work on the cross (Psa 68:18; Eph 4:8-10). As a reward for this, He is immediately glorified by God at His right hand in heaven (Jn 13:32) and by Him “made both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

In verses 6-7, “sing praises” is repeated five times. First, it is repeated twice to sing praises “to God” (verse 6). God is the Almighty and Supreme. He is the Only One, the Truthful One. He alone is worthy of worship (Mt 4:10; Rev 14:6-7).

In the first stanza (verses 1b-5), it has already been noted that God is the great King. In the second stanza, which begins in verse 5, His Kingship is given additional emphasis. Twice He is called King (verses 6,7) and His government and His throne are mentioned (verse 8). The call sounds to sing praises “to our King”, the great, sovereign God, the King, the Ruler of His people.

A king has a people. God is King and has a people. The people that God has as their King are an exceedingly blessed people. This people is Israel. God is their King and dwells in their midst. That gives special cause to sing joyfully and to praise Him, especially after He has put an end to the time of tribulation (Zep 3:14-15).

It is also true for us that we have a special reason to praise God after a time of trial. In the tribulation we have sometimes felt as if He had forgotten

us. Then when He brightens it for us, a deep joy and peace come into our heart, for which we honor Him with great gratitude.

God is King! At an ascension to the throne, a call is made in Israel: Such and such is king! (2Sam 15:10; 2Kgs 9:13). Here we are talking about the enthronement of God, which is the reason to sing praises. Since God is “King over all the earth”, the singing of praises for and about Him implies singing “a skillful psalm” literally “a maskil psalm” (verse 7). *Maskil* means instruction, understanding, wisdom. It is the word we encounter in the heading of several psalms. It is singing with understanding and insight, as is done in the Christian church (1Cor 14:15; cf. Col 3:15).

That this song is “a maskil” or “instruction” means that it is a song that brings insight and understanding. For example, in Psalm 32, the first maskil-psalm, we are instructed about and gain insight into the forgiveness of sin. In Psalm 45, we are instructed about and gain insight into the Person of Christ. Here, in Psalm 47, we are instructed about and given insight into the exaltedness of the great King.

That God is King over all the earth means that His reign knows no boundaries. He is not a national God like the idols of the nations. If this comes through to us, we will let ourselves be ‘instructed’ by it with regard to our whole life, in all areas of it.

The ‘instruction’ also extends into the future, when “God reigns over the nations” (verse 8). When He is King over all earth, it means that He governs everything publicly. We don’t see that now, but we see Him to Whom all authority has been given in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18; Heb 2:8-9). By this we know that He is in control of everything and directs it in such a way that it cooperates in the accomplishment of His plans. Although the dominion over the world was given away by man to satan at the Fall, that does not mean that God no longer rules. We see this in the book of Job.

God “sits on His holy throne”. This means that He is holy and reigns in holiness. This is already seen by faith today. Soon it will be seen by all. Then it will be said: “The kingdom of the world has become [the kingdom] of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

In the realm of peace, Israel is the means through which God has blessing for all the earth and all nations, through which the nations will also worship the one true God. Also in verse 1b is the call to the people to rejoice before the LORD. The call to sing praises may also be directed to the nations and not just the people of Israel. The nations will join God's people by their "princes" to be blessed by them (verse 9).

God's people are here called "the people of the God of Abraham". It is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that He would make him a father of a multitude of nations (Gen 17:5-6). And in him all nations would be blessed (Gen 12:3b; Gal 3:8).

By "the shields of the earth" is meant the "princes of the people" from the first line of this verse 9. "Shields" indicate that they are responsible for the protection of the people. These 'protectors' "belong to God" (cf. Pro 8:15). He is their Owner; they are accountable to Him. They are completely in His power and cannot do anything without Him. They cannot be compared to Him. He alone "is highly exalted" (cf. Zec 14:9).

Psalm 48

Introduction

This psalm is the second to last in the series of psalms “of the sons of Korah” that began with Psalm 42. In Psalms 42-43 we hear the complaint of the single person and in Psalm 44 the complaint of the whole remnant. They are in distress and cry out to God to deliver them from the power of the enemy. They are especially distressed because of their flight from the land, which makes them feel an immense lack of staying in the temple. Psalm 45 presents Christ as the answer to their cry to God for help. He is the One through Whom deliverance and their return to the land, Jerusalem and the temple will come.

Psalm 46 expresses trust in God through the experience of God’s grace in the present. Psalm 47 celebrates God’s intervention on behalf of His people, with Christ being King over all the earth and Israel exalted above the nations. The call is to praise God together. Psalm 48 presents the King in Zion, the center of government from which He rules over all the earth. This psalm also talks about the importance of the city and the temple of God to the heart of God.

Psalm 45 speaks of the beauty of the King (Psa 45:2), Who is the great King in Zion (Psa 47:2). Psalm 48 speaks of the beauty of Zion (Psa 48:2), the city of the great King. Then the name Jerusalem will be changed to Yahweh *Tsidkenu*, which is “the LORD is our righteousness” (Jer 33:16), and to Yahweh *Shammah*, which is “The LORD is there” (Eze 48:35b). Jerusalem has become the capital of the world (cf. Isa 2:2-3).

Psa 48:1-8 | The City of God

1 A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,

In the city of our God, His holy mountain.

2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,

Is Mount Zion [in] the far north,

The city of the great King.

3 God, in her palaces,

Has made Himself known as a stronghold.

4 For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,

They passed by together.

5 They saw [it], then they were amazed;

They were terrified, they fled in alarm.

6 Panic seized them there,

Anguish, as of a woman in childbirth.

7 With the east wind

You break the ships of Tarshish.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen

In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God;

God will establish her forever. Selah.

This “psalm” is called “a song” (verse 1a). By “a song” is usually meant a song of praise. It is a song of praise about the LORD’s victory over all His enemies. Now the realm of peace is dawning.

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

Finally, there is rest for the believing remnant. God is seated on His holy throne (Psa 47:8). This leads them to exclaim: “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised” (verse 1b). God is “great”. God’s greatness is reflected in this psalm in the beauty of Zion, the city of the great King. We see as a comparison the same thing with King Solomon, whose greatness is reflected in the house he built and in his servants (1Kgs 10:4-5).

God is exalted above all peoples and their gods. He has shown His power over them and overthrown all the hostile powers that were raised up against His city. Therefore, He is “greatly to be praised”. He is worthy of all praise and worship, both in His Person and in His actions.

He dwells “in the city of our God”. It is the city of God because He dwells there and has ascended His throne. He has chosen that city Himself. The Korahites speak of “the city of our God” because the God who dwells in His city is their God. His throne and His temple are both on “His holy mountain”, which is Mount Zion. It is His “holy” mountain, which further emphasizes that God is there.

They primarily sing of the city of Jerusalem in this song as a stronghold and a safe dwelling place. But they begin their song by singing of the beauty of the city, which is perfect (verse 2; Psa 50:2). This is the first thing that moves them when they see the city (cf. Eze 16:14; Lam 2:15; Mk 13:1). The city is “beautiful in elevation”. The word “beautiful” is used except here for the city only for the Messiah (Psa 45:2). This indicates that the city is “beautiful” because of the Messiah Who dwells there. ‘Elevation’ in Hebrew is literally ‘height’. The city stands out above all other cities. This is so both because of the presence of the great King in that city and geographically (Zec 14:10b).

Because Christ sits on His throne as King-Priest, there is joy for the whole earth. From the city of God, where the throne of Messiah stands and He reigns, blessing goes out over the whole earth (cf. Isa 2:1-5). There is peace and joy everywhere. By “Mount Zion” is meant the city of Jerusalem. That there is talk of “the far north” means that it is the place of God’s government (Isa 14:13). First God’s government was from heaven, but now it is also on earth. This is the fulfillment of two prayers from the prayer the Lord Jesus taught His disciples: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10).

God is in the palaces, or strongholds, of the city in which princes dwell (verse 3). The strength and security of Jerusalem lie in the presence of God in the city. Because it is known that God has chosen the city as His dwelling place, the inhabitants of the city have no fear of outside threats mentioned in the next verse.

Those outside threats have been frequent in earlier days (verse 4). Hostile kings have jointly marched against the city in the past. Perhaps here we can think of the enemies who went up against Jehoshaphat and were defeated by God’s action (2Chr 20:1-2,22-23).

Another clear evidence of God’s protection is His deliverance of Jerusalem in the days when Sennacherib besieged the city (Isa 37:36). In the future, He will deliver Jerusalem from the king of the North and still later from the armies coming from the remotest parts of the north (Dan 11:45; Eze 39:1-6).

From this action of God against those who have the audacity to attack His city, we see how valuable this city is to Him. It is His dwelling place that He has amidst His people. There He wants to be worshiped and served by them. God will retaliate for every attack on the apple of His eye. This is also true for us who are the church of the living God (1Cor 3:16-17).

God makes sure that the attackers of His city will see something whereby they will be “amazed” and “terrified” (verse 5). What they will see is not mentioned. The city, “it” is in brackets in this verse, indicating that these words are not in the original text. Nor is it likely that the sight of the city will amaze and terrify them. More likely it is an appearance of a heavenly army or of the LORD Himself (cf. 2Kgs 6:14-17; Isa 37:36).

In any case, what they will see will cause them to flee in alarm. They came (verse 4), they saw (verse 5a) and ... they fled (verse 5b). They have thought, in the words of Julius Caesar’s famous saying, *Veni, Vidi, Vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered), that they would take Jerusalem that easy. Instead, it will be for them, to put it with a pun of Julius Caesar’s saying: *Veni, Vidi, Vanish*. As quickly as they can, they will move away from the city. No one, however, will escape.

What seemed to them to be an easy victory becomes a dramatic downfall. They are seized with “panic” (verse 6). They tremble with fear and feel the pain and anguish “as of a woman in childbirth”. This description of the enemies’ downfall makes the remnant realize all the more the value of that city and that temple on that mountain to God.

Encouraged by God’s action on their behalf as just described, they turn to Him (verse 7). They express confidence that “with the east wind” He will “break the ships of Tarshish”. Just as the ships of Tarshish are powerless against an east wind, so the enemies of the great King are powerless against the sight of His majesty (verse 5).

They have seen this perspective fulfilled (verse 8), having previously heard about it from the mouths of the Old Testament prophets. They have also heard what God has done for His people in the past (Psa 44:1b). God has stood up for His people in the past and He has done so once again.

In the city dwells the Captain of the heavenly hosts. God no longer protects from heaven like He did in the past, but He now protects the city by

His very presence in the city. He deploys His heavenly hosts as soon as His city is attacked. That city is “the city of our God”, the city where He Himself is. Therefore it is the city of His people. Therefore, every attack is a suicide attempt. It is an impossible task to besiege this city, let alone to conquer it, because “God will establish her forever”.

We can also apply this to the church. We, the church, are the New Jerusalem, in which God dwells. We too may rejoice in this fact. We too may know that nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ (Rom 8:31-39).

There is no power on earth or in the heavenly places that can conquer or even do any harm to God’s New Testament city, the church (Rev 21:9-10). That city is built on the rock, that is the Son of the living God. Therefore, the gates of Hades, or the power of the realm of the dead, will not be able to overpower it (Mt 16:16-18). She abides in the perfection of the Son for all eternity.

Psa 48:9-14 | The Glory of Zion

9 We have thought on Your lovingkindness, O God,

In the midst of Your temple.

10 As is Your name, O God,

So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;

Your right hand is full of righteousness.

11 Let Mount Zion be glad,

Let the daughters of Judah rejoice

Because of Your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion and go around her;

Count her towers;

13 Consider her ramparts;

Go through her palaces,

That you may tell [it] to the next generation.

14 For such is God,

Our God forever and ever;

He will guide us until death.

Verses 9-11 are a thanksgiving to the covenant faithfulness of God, revealed in righteousness (verse 10) and in judgment (verse 11). While before, in verses 1b-8, God is spoken *of*, God is now spoken *to*. After describing God's protection, the Korahites talk about what they do and where they do it (verse 9). They address God in admiration, Whom they address with "O God", in which we note a heartfelt expression of fellowship with Him.

They say to Him that they think of His lovingkindness, that is, His covenant faithfulness, and do so "in the midst of Your temple". This is the most beautiful and intimate place for them, the closest to God. There they think of all that He has done for them with the result that they may now be here, so close to Him. He has "made His wonders to be remembered" (Psa 111:4).

This also applies to the church. We may come together as a church and then know that the Lord Jesus is in the midst (Mt 18:20). There is nothing more beautiful and intimate than to be in the place where He is in the midst. There we may think of Him, which we do especially when we proclaim His death "in remembrance" of Him. This is according to the desire of His heart. In doing so, we also think of His covenant faithfulness, as the Lord Jesus says of the cup: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Cor 11:23-25). Therefore, the desire of everyone who loves Him also goes out to be there and to do that (cf. Isa 26:8).

When we come to know the spiritual riches of the Name of God, we will be impressed with its glory (verse 10). As we have personally come to know Him in His care, protection and deliverance both for us and for His people, we will praise Him and do so "to the ends of the earth". As far as Israel is concerned, it goes beyond the borders of the land (that is also how the text can be translated). It means that the Name of the LORD is great, not only in Israel, but throughout the world. For us, it means that we will keep nothing of it for ourselves or make His glory known only in a small circle. His "right hand is full of righteousness", which means that He has done great and glorious deeds. In this case, we are talking about deeds that flow from the covenant, deeds that are in accordance with the terms and contents of the covenant. Every act of His is an act of righteousness. He can

only act in righteousness. Whoever sees that, can only boast in it. Never will there be any criticism of it. On the contrary, it gives constant and ever more reason to honor Him for it.

The effect of these acts of righteousness is joy (verse 11). "Mount Zion" is called upon to "be glad". God has taken care of her and has done so in a righteous way. The result is a joy that does not fade away, but is permanent.

It is also a joy shared by all who are connected with God's people. God has brought about that joy. In "the daughters of Judah" we can see the cities of Judah. Not only are the inhabitants of Jerusalem rejoicing, but the inhabitants of all Judah. They all share in the revelry of deliverance "because of Your judgments", which are the judgments of God on the enemies. In accordance with the covenant, the judgments involve Israel receiving deliverance and the enemies being judged. Because of their conformity to the covenant, these judgments give joy to the hearts of the people, which normally is not the case with judgment.

Deliverance provides the opportunity to go out of Zion and see the city from the outside. The remnant is invited to walk around Zion (verse 12; cf. Neh 12:31,38,40). Then they will find that the city is perfectly safe. There are no more breaches in the wall, the towers are strong and the gates fortified and secure.

They must count the towers and will find that they are all still there. The towers serve to strengthen the city while enhancing its beauty. But the ultimate strength, safety and beauty is God Himself. For New Testament believers, the key is to count the parts of the spiritual armor to see if all seven parts are still there or if something might be missing (Eph 6:14-18).

They must "consider her rampart" (verse 13). The rampart is a defense work in front of the wall. It is still fully intact and has not suffered a scratch (cf. Isa 26:1). Looking at Zion and especially noticing how God has protected the city is a matter of the heart. It involves noticing what God has done in favor of the city.

The same goes for "her palaces", which are the royal residences. Usually they are fortified and protected. Let them examine them closely. Then they

will notice that everything is there and that they can serve permanently as the residence of the prince. It is all thanks to God's protection.

The last line of verse 13 tells the reason for walking around Zion, counting its towers and considering its ramparts and palaces: they are to "tell the next generation" what they have examined. In doing so, it is not primarily about Zion, but about the God of Zion. God Himself is the beauty and power of the city. What has happened to Zion, the protection the city has experienced, is due to God. The word "for" (verse 14) indicates this.

We can apply the call of verses 12-13 to the church. It is a great privilege to know we belong to the church of the living God. But there is a danger that through habit we no longer see the special privilege. Then we have to leave the place of worshiping God, as it were, for a while in order to turn our hearts to the city. We do this by delving into the Word of God to find out what the church means to God's heart.

We must set our hearts on it and look closely at it (cf. Eze 43:10-12). When we examine in God's Word what the church is, we also have something to tell "to the next generation" (cf. 2Tim 2:2). We will do so with enthusiasm and will encourage the children to do that considering or examination as well. Thus, each generation can become a first generation itself.

It comes down to whether we can answer our children's questions when they ask us why we do things the way we do them (cf. Exo 12:26-27; Deu 6:21-22; Jos 4:6-7,20-24). They do notice whether we give only a rational, theologically correct answer, or whether our answer comes from a heart that has examined and embraced these things.

If we do not have an answer, it is quite possible that we ourselves are bystanders. The children will not get excited or examine the Scriptures themselves. They will look for a church where they feel comfortable if they look for a church at all. We should not be bystanders, but know what the church is by going "around the city" in Scripture ourselves and thus become impressed with the dwelling place of God.

The city here is that which is seen outwardly from God's government as King. We may certainly pass on what we have seen of the beauty and inviolability of the city. However, what it is mainly about is that we pass on

what we have seen of the God of the city in His government in the lives of His own, past and present.

It is about being able to say with admiration and enthusiasm: “Our God is forever and ever” (verse 14). This God, our God, has caused all the attacks on the city to fail. His church will respond to His purpose.

The psalm concludes by expressing the assurance that God will be the God of His people “forever and ever”. What the Lord Jesus says confirms this: “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

The remnant also knows that He will “guide” them “until death”. This means that the last enemy, death, has not yet been abolished. The remnant is presently still in great distress. But they are greatly encouraged in their spirit by what the Spirit of Christ has shown them about the city of God and God’s dwelling place. With that perspective before them, they can even face death without becoming afraid of it.

Psalm 49

Introduction

This is the last psalm in this series of psalms of the Korahites. They paint in this psalm the emptiness of the world in the light of God's judgment at the end of time. That emptiness will then be visible to all. What is written in this psalm already reveals that emptiness to the believers now and therefore will already have its effect on all that they possess, are, and strive for.

We do not hear a cry to God or a song of praise for Him. The point of the psalm is to give us the proper view of the value of wealth. The psalmist does this under the guidance of God's Spirit by viewing its value against the background of death. Death proves the folly of all human wisdom and greatness. This is not taken into account in the world, nor by carnally minded believers. However, it is a fact that is always true. Those who are open to the teaching of this psalm will fully and wholeheartedly agree with that.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher communicates the result of his research of the meaning of life from man's point of view. His conclusion: it is empty and volatile. In Psalm 49 we find the psalmist's conclusion to the meaning of life in response to the experience of suffering through the great tribulation described in Psalms 42-48.

The psalmist communicates his conclusion as a proverb (singular, verse 4). He does so in two stanzas, both of which end with a refrain (verse 12 and verse 20). This refrain speaks of the perishableness of wealth and the inevitability of death. We see an illustration of this in the parable the Lord Jesus tells about a rich fool (Lk 12:16-21).

The psalm can be divided as follows:

Verses 1b-4 Announcement of wisdom.

Verses 5-12 The inability of wealth to prevent death. This section ends with the refrain in verse 12.

Verses 13-20 (a) The inability of wealth to change your final destination (verses 13-15). (b) Therefore, do not be impressed by wealth (verses 16-20). This section ends with the refrain in verse 20.

Psa 49:1-4 | Hear This

*1 For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.
Hear this, all peoples;
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
2 Both low and high,
Rich and poor together.
3 My mouth will speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart [will be] understanding.
4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will express my riddle on the harp.*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

Verses 1b-4 form an unusually long introduction for Psalms. It really is a special psalm; we might say it is a ‘wisdom psalm’. In this psalm, as in Ecclesiastes, a wisdom teacher is speaking, someone who has been taught by God. His message is universal, it is meant for everyone, for “all peoples” and for “all the inhabitants of the world” (verse 1b). The inhabitants of the world are short-living, mortal people; they inhabit the world only briefly.

We recognize them in “those who dwell on the earth”, who are frequently mentioned in the book of Revelation (Rev 3:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,12,14). They are the earthlings, people who stick to this world, who are glued to it. They are the people whose portion is in this life (Psa 17:14a). They are so short-sighted that they live only for here and now. They are all called to “give ear”.

Whether they are “low” or “high”, whether they are “rich” or “poor”, each one has to deal with it individually (verse 2). What one’s position in society or social status is does not matter. What matters in this psalm is how we are to deal with the inequality that is present in it.

We learn this by letting the 'light' of death shine on it. Then we see that this inequality that is present in life has no impact whatsoever on death. For everyone inevitably has to deal with death. And in death all differences cease. Death is the great 'equalizer'.

In the context of these psalms of the Korahites, it is mainly about the oppression of the simple, poor remnant, by the distinguished and rich. The remnant comes to the conclusion that in death all differences are gone, after they have gone through the great tribulation.

The New Testament believer sees more. He knows that the Lord Jesus can come at any time to take up the believers. This is unknown to the Old Testament believer, for it is a mystery to him (1Cor 15:51-57). This does not make the message of the Korahites any less important to us, but on the contrary, even more important. If our spiritual eyes are open, it makes us see the relativity of wealth even more clearly.

The psalmist attracts the attention of his hearers or readers by saying how he is going to speak (verse 3). He does not yet say what he is going to speak about, although he has already given a hint in verse 2. To hold their attention, so that they will listen to what he is going to say, he holds out to them that he brings his message with "wisdom", "meditation of my heart", "a proverb", and in "riddle" (cf. Pro 1:6). He will "express" his riddle "on the harp".

The words of wisdom are important in order to get the right view of the subject on which the poet is going to speak. To benefit from these words, one must trust the poet. He has thought about what he is going to say. His words are the result of the contemplation of the subject in his heart.

He has not only thought about it, he has actually lived it in the midst of oppression and persecution (verse 5). Right through the needs, he put his trust in God (verse 15). This has given him insight into the subject on which he will speak. He speaks of wealth and the fear among those who are not rich of those who are rich.

He calls all peoples to listen (verse 1b), but he himself is a listener as well (verse 4). The wisdom of the psalmist, then, does not come from himself. It is wisdom that has been entrusted to him, although he does not mention

its source here. The wisdom comes to him as a proverb. He first listens himself to what he has to say.

Before we can say anything meaningful, we must first listen. And when we speak, we must keep listening to the voice of God's Spirit. The poet is inspired by the Spirit and is aware that he can only say something about wealth if he continues to listen to the Spirit's voice.

What he says is "a proverb". The word proverb means "parable" or "comparison". We see the expression reflected in "like the beasts" in verse 12 and verse 20. This confirms the idea that in these two verses, like a refrain, we have the core message of this psalm.

For the use of a proverb in order to clarify his subject with it, he inclines his ear. In Hebrew it is literally "he keeps his ears open". This means more than understanding, for it also implies that he is willing to listen. In Revelation 2-3 we find this characteristic of a listening ear among the remnant in the recurring "whoever has an ear, let him hear ..." (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22).

The psalmist keeps his open ear, as it were, very close to his subject to know which proverb to use. It is not an easy subject, for the majority have a wrong view of wealth. But by listening carefully he will receive wisdom which he now expresses as a single proverb and will use the correct comparison.

He can therefore say that he will reveal his mysteries and do so in an eloquent manner, accompanied by a harp. The LORD uses the tones of the harp to calm the turmoil in the psalmist's mind (cf. 2Kgs 3:13-15). The psalmist's state of mind is restless in the days of evil, as we can see from verse 5. Because of the soothing music, he is able to understand God's voice, to unveil and pass on the mysteries.

'Riddle' here has the meaning of mysteries, of something hidden in the darkness. Here it is about the mysteries or riddles of life and death, and their relationship to each other in relation to wealth. The poet manages to reveal this riddle in an outstandingly clear manner, capturing the curiosity and attention of the listener.

Many are blind to the dangers associated with wealth; to them it is a mystery. For them he is going to reveal the real meaning of wealth. He is going to remove the covering that lies over it. He does this with the accompaniment of harp playing, giving his teaching the character of prophesying (cf. 1Chr 25:3). Prophesying means that he applies the truth of God to the heart and conscience of the hearer (1Cor 14:3). His subject, as mentioned, is wealth. He prophesies about the danger that is present when people are doing well financially.

Psa 49:5-15 | Trusting In Riches Is Foolish

5 *Why should I fear in days of adversity,
When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,
6 Even those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the abundance of their riches?
7 No man can by any means redeem [his] brother
Or give to God a ransom for him —
8 For the redemption of his soul is costly,
And he should cease [trying] forever —
9 That he should live on eternally,
That he should not undergo decay.
10 For he sees [that even] wise men die;
The stupid and the senseless alike perish
And leave their wealth to others.
11 Their inner thought is [that] their houses are forever
[And] their dwelling places to all generations;
They have called their lands after their own names.
12 But man in [his] pomp will not endure;
He is like the beasts that perish.
13 This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of those after them who approve their words. Selah.
14 As sheep they are appointed for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd;
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning,
And their form shall be for Sheol to consume
So that they have no habitation.*

*15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
For He will receive me. Selah.*

The teacher of wisdom begins his teaching with a question (verse 5). It is the question of how the faithful God-fearing can be calm, without fear in days of calamity, in a time of great tribulation. It is a time when unrighteous people are on his heels and enclose him. These unrighteous are ungodly, wicked rich, who oppress the poor. Prophetically, it is about the apostate mass of the Jews oppressing the faithful remnant. According to Old Testament valuation, the rich bear the appearance of God's approval, while the poor bear the appearance of God's disapproval. This is how Job's friends and also Job himself reasoned.

While the preacher shows us the emptiness, the meaninglessness of wealth, the psalmist goes a step further. He considers the end of those who rely on their wealth (cf. Psa 73:17). In this psalm, the wisdom teacher helps us to get rid of the misconception that the rich have the favor of God and the poor have God against them. The solution to the issue is found in having the right view, God's view, of life and death. If someone has that view, it makes him fearless of people who exercise power over him by means of their wealth. The teacher shows that wealth and the rich are only temporary, passing (cf. Jam 1:11).

Let the God-fearing look closely at the unjust, foolish rich. What will they see? People who are so foolish that they trust in their wealth, which means they do not trust in God (verse 6). Serving God and at the same time serving Mammon, the god of money, is not possible. It is not only foolishness but also sin (Mt 6:24; cf. 1Tim 6:17).

Wealthy people in this psalm are rich, powerful people, oppressing poor people or the believing remnant. The word "wealth" contains both riches and power. These wealthy people are also haughty, for they "boast in the abundance of their riches".

But what does their wealth, no matter how great, mean at all? Can a rich fool use it to save someone from death? Just a moment of well thinking makes that clear. The poet now indicates why the God-fearing need have no fear of the foolish rich. For those people, with all their money, have no authority over death (verses 7-9).

A rich person cannot save himself or anyone else from death with his money (verse 7). Wealth and power have limited value and are a perishable possession, for they do not secure against death (cf. Pro 10:2). Therefore, we need not fear or envy the proud rich. These people think that nothing can happen to them. But life cannot be bought with money. Life is therefore perishable, finite possession. This is true of all people without exception.

Rich, proud people who rely on their wealth and boast of their great richness often have a bad conscience. They have often obtained their wealth through dishonest practices (cf. Jam 5:1-6). Money is not called “the unrighteous Mammon” by the Lord Jesus for nothing (Lk 16:9).

On earth, rich people can buy off a punishment with money, but they cannot buy off with their wealth the inevitable death as the wages of sin. In the sphere of the Old Testament, this is about a manslayer who committed premeditated murder. For him there is no redeemer, nor does the city of refuge offer him protection from death (Num 35:9-21). There is no way for him to escape death as punishment for his sin.

Nor can the debt accumulated by a life of sin be bought off with money (cf. Mk 8:36-37). There can be no reconciliation with God for all the sins committed by paying any price, not even with all the gold of the whole world (cf. 1Pet 1:18). Nor can they use it to ransom or redeem a brother in evil and thus free him from the righteous judgment of God. Only God can do that (Hos 13:14a).

Their lives are far too precious to be expressed in a sum of money (verse 8). Never, ever, will any amount of money be able to be deposited or credited to God’s bank account sufficient to safeguard from death. Any fortune will be eternally inadequate. It shows the total and eternal worthlessness of money and goods compared to the life of a human being.

The rich person believes that he can continue to live forever because he has a lot of money (verse 9). Great investments are made that should make it medically possible for a person to become immortal. But “living on eternally and not undergo decay” is and remains a nonsensical illusion. Yet the rich fool continues to strive for it. It proves his total blindness, the complete darkening of his mind (cf. Eph 4:17-18).

It is a general principle, that no man can buy spiritual life for another man or give it to him. Only the Lord Jesus can, because He became equal to the brethren. He took on blood and flesh to redeem brethren (Heb 2:14-17). No one can do it, only He. To receive the life He gives requires confession of sins before God and faith in Christ and His work on the cross.

The living man, in all his blindness, does see that no one escapes death (verse 10). He cannot deny that fact. He sees that this is true for the "wise" as much as for "the stupid and the senseless". They "alike perish". He also sees that they will "leave their wealth to others". It is of no use to the departed themselves once they have perished. And who are these others (cf. Lk 12:20)? That is not said. This puts even more emphasis on the fact that the rich man's life will end one day, that it will not remain as it is now.

The stupid and the senseless see it all, but it doesn't affect them, they shut themselves off from this inescapable reality. They do not allow themselves to be warned by what they see with their own eyes. Everyone dies once, no one escapes death. They see this, but in their proud self-conceit they imagine that this will not happen to them.

In their foolishness and pride they think "their houses are forever" (verse 11). This depraved thinking is ineradicably deep in them. If they themselves perish at all, they will continue to live on, so they think in their foolishness, in their homes, their families or the generations to come.

They think they are great and put their own name on everything. They name the countries after themselves (cf. Gen 4:17). They attach their name to them because they believe that this is how they will continue to live. As kings they have had their names proclaimed over them and thereby made a claim on them. It is the proclamation of ownership of it, by which they will continue to live on even after death, they think, fools that they are.

They ignore the truth that they are dust and will return to dust (Gen 3:19b). They think they control the future, that they can control it themselves. Their possessions will ensure that they do not die, they believe. That is how much their lives are intertwined with the material world. They have no thought of anything higher.

This is really living on the level of the beasts (verse 12). This is the refrain, or summary of the psalm, repeated in almost identical terms in verse 20.

“Man in [his] pomp will not endure.” Whatever he may have achieved in life, whatever prestige he may have acquired, he does not continue to live on, but “is like the beasts, that perish”. To live like a beast is to live without a sense of God. We see this in what happens to Nebuchadnezzar, which teaches us a lesson. Without God, he truly lives like a beast (Dan 4:28-33). Only when he raises his eye to God does his mind return (Dan 4:34).

Man who has lived like a beast, that is, without God, will die like a beast. He leaves the world in which he was honored, in the same way a beast does, and he perishes like a beast. Therefore, the poor, oppressed psalmist is not afraid of the rich oppressor, for the oppressor awaits the same fate as a beast: death.

This, of course, refers only to physical death. Only in this is a human being equal to a beast. That a human being above a beast has a spirit, which lives on after death, is not considered here. The unbeliever, the man who lives without God, does not realize that man has a spirit that returns to God and must give an account of his life to his Creator (Ecc 3:19-21). Those who believe in the doctrine of evolution are blind to this. Also, man’s body will rise once, either to life or to judgment (Jn 5:28-29; Dan 12:2). Man, unlike a beast, continues to live on without end.

With verse 13, the second stanza begins. “This is the way” is the way of a beast. Going that way is their foolishness. It is the way of relying on themselves and their wealth, without any thought of death. Their way is foolishness, but yet “those after them ... approve their words”. The descendants of the fool praise him because he has achieved so much. He is their guru from whom they can learn the way to success.

They want to learn from him, adopt his vision of life, because that’s how they want to live and let their name live on. It proves that they are just as foolish as he is. We can think in this context of the great names in the world of music and sports. The books written about these people are sold graciously.

The foolish rich may imagine so many things to be true, but they are no more than sheep shepherded by death (verse 14). The comparison to sheep illustrates their dependence on a shepherd. Like sheep, they are in the power of another: death, which pastures them. A sheep dies, leaving

nothing behind to its descendants; its name perishes. To perish means “to be silenced”.

The inevitable end of the foolish rich man is like that of a sheep, for he is like that. He leaves the world in the same way as a sheep and ends up in the grave. His accumulated reputation is of no use to him, and others are deceived by his example. The God-fearing must realize that the power of satan is only for this life. After that, there is no deception anymore.

That death is their shepherd, means that when they die, death will drive them like a flock into his special domain, Sheol, the realm of the dead. Behind the mask of friendliness is the grim face of death. Death is already grazing them now, during their lives. Everything they do, they do because they are prompted to do so by death as their shepherd. Their whole existence and all their possessions are connected to the realm of the dead. The contrast with the LORD as Shepherd, Who causes His sheep to lie down in green pastures and leads them beside quiet waters (Psa 23:2), can hardly be presented more impressively.

Because the foolish rich are in the power of death, their rule will not endure. That the upright will rule over them in the morning is a reference to the resurrection (cf. Isa 26:19). In this context it means that after death and in the resurrection the roles will be reversed (cf. Lk 16:25). This may encourage the God-fearing who are now still oppressed by the rich fools.

The power of the rich is short-lived. Then they will die and “their form shall be for Sheol to consume”, meaning that all outward glory will shrivel in the grave to something insubstantial (cf. Lam 3:4). To perish does not have to do anything with ceasing to exist. The rich fools dwell in death for all eternity, far from their beautiful home in which they have dwelt on earth.

The faithful, the remnant, trusts in God (verse 15). He knows that God redeems his life from the power of the grave. Redeeming also has the idea of “liberating” or “ransoming”. What man cannot do for himself or another (verses 7-9), God can. He has obtained the ransom for each of His own through the work of His Son, Who gave His life “as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

God will raise the faithful from the grave and take them to Himself. Death has no permanent dominion over him. Death will have to give back to Him to Whom they belong, all who are of His through the work of His Son. The word “receive” has emphasis. It means ‘to take up for certain’ and is used for Enoch and for Elijah (Gen 5:24; 2Kgs 2:5), over whom death has been unable to exercise power.

God can keep from death so that one who belongs to Him does not enter into it, and He can resurrect from death when one who belongs to Him has entered into it. In both cases, His power over death is demonstrated. For us, this is a New Testament truth. We expect the coming of Christ through which, like Enoch, we will be taken up without seeing death (1Thes 4:14-18).

Here in the Old Testament this truth is not yet known. The Old Testament believers expect to be saved from death somehow. In which way, they do not know. What they do know for sure is that death does not have the last word. All Old Testament believers lived in this faith (cf. Heb 11:39-40).

Psa 49:16-20 | The Fool Perishes

*16 Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;
17 For when he dies he will carry nothing away;
His glory will not descend after him.
18 Though while he lives he congratulates himself—
And though [men] praise you when you do well for yourself—
19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They will never see the light.
20 Man in [his] pomp, yet without understanding,
Is like the beasts that perish.*

In the light of the God-fearing’s trust in God (verse 15) and the foolishness of the rich man’s reliance on his wealth, there is no reason to fear the increasing wealth and power of the wicked. In the beginning, the psalmist asked the question why he should fear (verse 5). Now he tells his hearer, his disciple – for he is teaching – not to fear (verse 16). He is going to motivate this again.

Wealth often leads one to rely on that rather than on God. The rich fool shows this by the use of his wealth. He does not use his wealth to serve God, but to increase the honor of his own house. With that, he impresses others. He wants others to praise him for his good taste. In addition, and this is the main idea in this psalm, wealth gives power to oppress the poor.

Then the psalmist points out to the faithful the end of the foolish rich man (verse 17; cf. Psa 73:15-17). The rich man is a fool, for he says "in his heart, "There is no God"" (Psa 14:1; 53:1). The fool plods, dies, and can take nothing of his wealth with him (Ecc 5:14; 1Tim 6:7; Job 27:16-19). Nor does he benefit from all the honors people have given him during his life and speak of at his funeral (cf. Isa 14:10). He can take all his titles and diplomas with him in his coffin and into the grave, as well as a copy of his enormous bank balance; they are completely without value and meaning to him in the grave.

He congratulates himself with his life (verse 18). His circumstances are as he has wanted them to be. He can do what he likes to do without having to ask anyone for a favor or be accountable to anyone. Others see that he has had success in life and praise him for his successes. He taps himself on the shoulder and others do the same. That's the way it should be, he thinks. Selfish people can often count on approval. It flatters their ego, but they don't realize that it is hypocrisy and that the flatterers are just as big egotists as he is.

The harsh reality is that he dies and spends eternity in darkness (verse 19). He can praise himself into heaven, but when he dies he joins the family of his fathers, that is all those people who had success in life, but after their death will never see the light again. His fate is exactly the reverse of what he has thought. He has thought that he would live on forever (verse 9) and that his house would exist forever (verse 11). The reality is that he "never" will see the light. To see light is to see the light of life and to enjoy prosperity and joy. He has no part in that in all eternity.

The foolish rich man, like the beasts, is "without understanding" (verse 20), i.e. he has no view of the true state of affairs. Nor can he judge it. He completely lacks discernment because, like the beasts, he walks with his

head down and looks down. He who has insight or understanding looks upward (cf. Dan 4:33-34).

The 'psalmist-teacher' penned this psalm to thereby give 'understanding' to those who will hear (verse 3). The foolish rich man is not lost because of his possessions, but because of his lack of understanding of true wealth, which is wealth in God (Lk 12:20-21). He also shuts himself off from gaining this insight.

The material also holds enormous temptation for us, members of the New Testament church. We can easily become slaves to money. This can happen by working hard for your own business. You tell yourself that it is your responsibility after all, but you don't realize that you are in the power of the money. A good help to see how things really are is to consider the relationship between being busy with and for material things and the things of God. If we do this honestly, it will quickly become clear where our priorities lie.

We can also deal with spiritual riches in a wrong way: if we boast about our knowledge of biblical truths and spiritual achievements. We see this in the church in Laodicea. The Lord Jesus makes severe reproaches to that church about this (Rev 3:14-18). They must first be detached from all their supposed riches in order to be truly rich, that is, that the Lord Jesus can be in their midst again. He is, in fact, outside, at the door (Rev 3:19-20). If we are full of ourselves, there is no room for Him.

What the psalmist wants to teach the God-fearing is that he should not marvel at the prosperity of the foolish rich man (verse 11). He should not be impressed by it. They all perish and can take nothing of their wealth with them. The God-fearing also may know that God leads him till death and delivers him from the grip of the grave by raising him from the dead. All this is an encouragement to the believing remnant to persevere.

Psalm 50

Introduction

Psalms 50-51 connect to Psalms 42-49. In these two psalms we find the conclusion of the previous chapters. In Psalm 50 we find what God has to say through the trouble of the (great) tribulation. In Psalm 51 we find the result of the tribulations and what God has to say with them in the hearts of the believing remnant. That result is a repentant heart, a heart that is broken and contrite and full of acknowledgment of their sins (Psa 51:17).

In Psalm 50, God speaks to man; in Psalm 51, man speaks to God. Psalm 50 is about sin against God, Psalm 51 is about sin against the neighbor. These two sins are the cause of the two lawsuits God has with His people. In Psalm 50, God talks about not wanting animal sacrifices, but offerings of thanksgiving from the heart.

The sacrificial service in the then rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, where the believing remnant temporarily sacrifices to the LORD along with the unbelieving mass of the people, is rejected. The LORD wants to be served in sincerity and truth. In Psalm 51, the man who acknowledges his sins speaks. That man brings as sacrifices “a broken spirit” and “a broken and contrite heart” (Psa 51:17). Such sacrifices are according to God’s pleasure.

In many psalms the people of God are called to gather to honor and praise God and to rejoice in Him. This is not so in Psalm 50. This psalm describes a trial that God has with His people. He is both the Judge and the Accuser. As a result, the tone is serious.

A division of the psalm:

verses 1-6 Call to come to the LORD.

verses 7-15 The true sacrifice is not just bulls or goats, but thanksgiving and faithfulness.

verses 16-21 Rejection of a wicked life of the lip confessors.

verses 22-23 Summary.

Psa 50:1-6 | God Comes as Judge

1 A Psalm of Asaph.

*The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken,
And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.*

*2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God has shone forth.*

*3 May our God come and not keep silence;
Fire devours before Him,
And it is very tempestuous around Him.*

*4 He summons the heavens above,
And the earth, to judge His people:*

*5 "Gather My godly ones to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice".*

*6 And the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself is judge. Selah.*

This is the first "psalm" of the twelve psalms that we have "of Asaph" in Psalms (verse 1a). This psalm is about sacrificing to God in a way that is pleasing to Him. Asaph is the appropriate person for that. He is the head of the Levites who are servants to give thanks to and worship God (1Chr 16:4-5,7). He is also a prophet and a seer (1Chr 25:2; 2Chr 29:30).

The name Asaph means "he who gathers". Here we find God Himself gathering the remnant, His godly ones (verse 5), to exhort them, and then gathering the wicked (verse 16), the unbelieving multitude, to warn them.

God begins by introducing Himself as "the Mighty One, God, the LORD" (verse 1b). He is the Chief Judge in the universe. We address an earthly judge as "your honor", but the supreme heavenly Judge is "the Mighty One, God, the LORD". When an earthly judge enters the courtroom, everyone stands. When the LORD enters the courtroom, all of creation stands.

This Chief Judge is the LORD, the God of the covenant with His people. In the second book of psalms, the name LORD is replaced with the name God as much as possible. But here the name LORD, the covenant name of God, is still used, to emphasize that this is about the covenant. The LORD is the God of gods, or the most high God, and therefore all people are called to

listen to the most high God. Also, the heavens and the earth are called to testify at the LORD's trial against His people.

He, God, is speaking, not a man. Therefore, everyone must listen. To this end He calls the earth from east to west, from one end to the other (cf. Mal 1:11; Psa 113:3). All the inhabitants around the earth are called as witnesses in the trial He has with His people.

Next, God shines forth (verse 2). He does not come out of heaven to Sinai, but "out of Zion" to the earth. Zion is His dwelling place and is here called "the perfection of beauty" (cf. Psa 48:2). This is the beauty He has given her, for she must correspond to Him. He "has shone forth". This is evident in His appearance (cf. Deu 33:2). He is absolutely pure. Where He appears, He radiates shining light. Here it is connected with His judgment on those who draw near to Him.

Asaph is involved in appearance of God to His people. He speaks of the coming of "our God" (verse 3). It concerns His coming to judge. From the New Testament we know that the coming of God for judgment happens in the coming of the Son of God as the Son of Man (Mt 25:31; Acts 17:31).

Our God is coming, Asaph says, and how. He will no longer be silent. He has been silent for a long time, but now He is going to judge. When He is going to speak, it means that He is going to act (cf. Rev 19:15). His speaking is identical with His acting. When God created the heavens and the earth, He did so not so much with His hands as with His word.

His coming is accompanied by a consuming fire (2Thes 1:7; Heb 10:26-27). It reminds one of His appearance on Sinai to give the law (Exo 19:18). This also applies to the tremendous storm around Him causing everything to tremble and shake (Exo 19:16). His majestic, impressive appearance here suits the justice He is going to apply to the people according to the law of the covenant.

In the trial He has with His people, the heavens above and the earth below must take their seats in the witness box (verse 4). Heaven and earth were witnesses when the covenant was made (Deu 30:19; 31:28; 32:1). When the covenant was broken, they were called again as witnesses (Isa 1:2). And in the future, which is the subject of this psalm, they will again be called as witnesses.

He is going “to judge His people” and He wants them to be there as witnesses. This is not to judge whether He is acting righteously, but to observe that everything is done by Him in a perfectly righteous way. It is not, as it were, a trial behind closed doors, but a public trial, open to all and verifiable by all.

God calls His people to gather before Him (verse 5). The first to be summoned are God’s “godly ones”. The Hebrew word is *chasidim*, which are those who are loyal to the covenant, and therefore are in God’s favor. They are the true people of God. At the same time, this reminds the people that they have a great responsibility to live in accordance with it as well. And they too have lacked this, as will be seen from the accusation, which is read out in the following verses.

God’s godly ones have renewed the covenant on the basis of the blood of the new covenant. They are once again in a covenant relationship with Him. The period of “Lo-Ammi”, not My people (Hos 1:9), has ended. They are again God’s people. In doing so, they have committed themselves to offer sacrifices to Him. The LORD is now teaching that it is not a matter of duty, but a matter of the heart.

They are told that it is not a matter of *their* judgment, but of the judgment of heaven, or *God’s* judgment (verse 6). “For God Himself is judge.” The judgment is not with men, with creatures who do not know their own hearts, but with Him, Who knows man’s heart perfectly (Jer 17:9-10). In order to form a righteous judgment and execute a just sentence, that knowledge is necessary. God has perfect knowledge of all the actions of all men and of the motives behind them.

There is no higher proof of a right judgment and of a right execution than the fact that God has judged and executed. He is “the Judge of all the earth” and He deals “justly” (Gen 18:25b). If He has done it, we would do well not to comment on it, but to agree with it wholeheartedly.

Psa 50:7-15 | The God-Fearing Indicted

7 “Hear, O My people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you;
I am God, your God.

8 *"I do not reprove you for your sacrifices,
 And your burnt offerings are continually before Me.*
 9 *"I shall take no young bull out of your house
 Nor male goats out of your folds.*
 10 *"For every beast of the forest is Mine,
 The cattle on a thousand hills.*
 11 *"I know every bird of the mountains,
 And everything that moves in the field is Mine.*
 12 *"If I were hungry I would not tell you,
 For the world is Mine, and all it contains.*
 13 *"Shall I eat the flesh of bulls
 Or drink the blood of male goats?*
 14 *"Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving
 And pay your vows to the Most High;*
 15 *Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
 I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me".*

God is now introduced as speaking. He calls His people – "My people" – to hear, for He is going to speak (verse 7). The attitude of hearing is the basic attitude that becomes every person and especially God's people toward Him. Next, God addresses His people as "Israel", which is the people in the position He has given them. Israel means 'prince of God'.

God says He will testify among them, for He has a trial with them. It is a special trial: the Judge Himself is the Witness. Emphatically, He introduces Himself to them: "I am God." He, and no one else. He, God, the Creator of the universe, the Ruler of the universe, addresses them. That almighty God stands in a special relationship with them. He says: "I am ... Your God."

This brings Him very near. He takes note of everything they do, especially their sacrifices with which they come to Him. What weighs heavily on His mind in this regard is that they serve Him formally, but their hearts are not involved. This is what He is going to speak to them about, because they have wrong ideas about how God sees their sacrifices.

Formally, they are doing well. They are not withholding from God their sacrifices, but bringing them (verse 8), as He has also ordained for them. Therefore, He will not punish them for that. Their "burnt offerings are

continually before” Him (cf. Exo 29:42). He sees what sacrifices they come up with.

God speaks of a “young bull out of your house” and of “goats out of your folds” (verse 9). Therein lies the idea that they come to God with their sacrificial animal as a great gift that they pay for out of their own pockets anyway. In this way, they want to oblige God, as it were, for a return. One good turn deserves another. They give something away and surely God will appreciate and repay them in the form of a special blessing. They have forgotten that they have received everything from God and give it to Him out of His hand (cf. 1Chr 29:14b).

What they are blind to is that He needs nothing from the people. All the beasts, the wild beasts “of the forest” and “the cattle on a thousand hills”, belong to Him (verse 10). As a result, He has a right to them and can dispose of them whenever and wherever He wants. Therefore, He is in no way dependent on their sacrifices. Whatever man possesses, he possesses because God has given it to him. God has never given man absolute dominion over anything. Man is merely His steward and, as such, accountable to God for all that he has.

God also ‘knows’ “every bird of the mountains” (verse 11; cf. Pro 12:10a). He knows their number, knows where they abide, and cares for them. He has disposal of them. When His people offer Him a bird, they need not think He needs it. He also says that “everything that moves in the field” is His. They are never out of His presence. As soon as He would need one, He can take one. It also implies confidentiality and care.

No one can give Him anything that He does not possess. God instituted the sacrificial service not because He needs those animals, but because the people urgently need them. Sacrifices are not there because God would need food or something, as it is with the idols, but because man needs them in order to draw near to God. God is “the blessed God” (1Tim 1:11), Who has everything He needs in Himself. He has all satisfaction in Himself. No one can give Him anything that He does not possess and would need.

Suppose, says God, that I was hungry, I would not tell you, I would not let you know (verse 12). If I wanted to eat something, I could go for it in all the

world I have created, because the world and all that it contains belongs to Me. It can give Me anything I want. God says this to show how absurd it is to suppose that He would in any way depend on or be obliged to man.

With indignation, God poses the question that must penetrate deep into their consciences as to whether He would really eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of male goats (verse 13). By this He makes clear to His people what foolish thoughts they have about the sacrifices they bring to Him. What primitive thoughts God's people can have about serving Him. This happens because of the influence that the nations around them have, by opening themselves up to their way of serving their gods. The idol priests eat what has been sacrificed to the idols, suggesting that the idols are eating it. They have forgotten that God is a Spirit.

What He wants, is for them to offer Him their thanks (verse 14). It is not He Who should thank them for their sacrifices, but they should thank Him for Who He is and what He has done for them. They have promised to give Him those sacrifices (cf. Lev 7:11-21; Deu 23:21-23). Well then, let them do so and do so in the right attitude and mind.

He is "the Most High" and knows what they have promised. He reminds them of it. They cannot play games with Him. The bringing of a vow offering is not to provide for God's 'sustenance', but to thereby indicate that His people have noticed that He has provided for rescue. These are the sacrifices He values.

Nor does it require great effort, but a heart that is aware of God's wonderful goodness that He demonstrates time and time again. God is not concerned with great sacrifices made many times over. That is what man wants, because then he can do some work. God does not ask for our effort, the products of our work, but He asks for our heart (cf. Mic 6:6-8). At the same time, it is a lot that God asks, yes, He asks everything: He asks for our whole heart (Pro 4:23), which is our whole life.

In His great mercy He invites them to call upon Him "in the day of trouble" (verse 15). God does not want a people who only pray to Him when they need Him, but He wants a relationship with His people, with a people who honor Him (verse 14). From that relationship He invites them to call on Him when they are in need.

When they cry out to Him from that relationship when they need Him, He is available to them. This is prophetically about their calling in the time of the great tribulation. If the relationship is there, and they cry out to Him in their trouble, He will help them out of the trouble and thereby give them cause to honor Him for it. To honor is to offer praise, but it's broader than that: to obey everything He says. Honoring is what suits them and what God likes to see from them. God does not need them, but they need Him. He does not come into trouble, but they come into it.

Psa 50:16-21 | The Wicked Indicted

*16 But to the wicked God says,
"What right have you to tell of My statutes
And to take My covenant in your mouth?
17 "For you hate discipline,
And you cast My words behind you.
18 "When you see a thief, you are pleased with him,
And you associate with adulterers.
19 "You let your mouth loose in evil
And your tongue frames deceit.
20 "You sit and speak against your brother;
You slander your own mother's son.
21 "These things you have done and I kept silence;
You thought that I was just like you;
I will reprove you and state [the case] in order before your eyes.*

In this section, God addresses "the wicked" (verse 16). This is a member of a different company than the "godly ones" to whom He speaks in the previous verses. The wicked has forgotten the true meaning of the sacrifices. The wicked is indeed a member of God's people, but he is one who does not reckon with God, whereas he speaks of doing His will. Prophetically we see here the unbelieving mass of the Jews following the antichrist and offering sacrifices in the temple rebuilt in unbelief in Jerusalem.

God holds up to him his boldness to tell of His statutes, while he himself does not live by them. The wicked even has the audacity to take God's covenant into his mouth, to boast that he is a member of God's people, while

he has no consideration for God at all. He has a form of godliness, but no new life. He talks nicely, but sin lives in his heart.

He talks about God's "statutes", but his life is blatantly contrary to them. In our time, it is the people who are straight in doctrine, orthodox, who hold the principles, while their practice shows the opposite. The statutes of God are the rules He has given to His people concerning their lives in general, but they will here especially relate to His rules concerning sacrifices.

God makes clear to the wicked the sins he commits. In sharp words He denounces his attitude toward Him (verse 17). He knows his heart and knows that he hates the admonition, even though it is meant to correct him and then bless him. The word "you" is given emphasis. It means that the very one who knows so well and boasts of it, acts so wickedly (cf. Rom 2:17-23). By casting away His words behind him he shows his disgust for God. He is a hypocrite of the highest order.

The phrase "My words" brings to mind "the Ten Commandments" literally "the Ten Words" (Deu 4:13) God gave His people. In the following verses, God presents the wicked with some examples showing that he treats His commandments with contempt by grossly violating them (cf. Jer 7:8-10).

When he sees a thief, meets him or gets to know him, he walks with him (verse 18). He does not condemn the thief, but either condones his actions or even praises him. Thus he heartlessly violates the commandment "you shall not steal" (Exo 20:15). The sin lies in not condemning it, on the contrary justifying it and thus agreeing to it. His behavior shows where his heart is. He stands in the path of sinners (cf. Psa 1:1).

He who does not honor another's property also does not refrain from committing adultery with his neighbor's wife. This also applies to their supposed relation to God. They are adulterously running after the antichrist and robbing God of the honor due to Him. In this way the commandment "you shall not commit adultery" (Exo 20:14) is also blatantly violated by the wicked. God says to him that he associates with adulterers. He does the same thing that adulterers do, which is having sexual intercourse with a wife who does not belong to him.

He uses his mouth he uses to speak evil, to slander and to deceive (verse 19). His tongue is so deceitful that one lie after another is uttered by him. His tongue is a forge of mere deceit, it is a tool of the lie. His brother, his closest relation, his family, has to suffer and becomes a target of his slander (verse 20). As he “sits” – this may indicate a court sitting where justice is to be done fairly – he speaks evil. He accuses his brother, “your own mother’s son”, and casts a blot on him, that is, he puts him in a bad light.

These are the sinful works of the wicked (verse 21). Yet God does not intervene (yet) and remains silent. From this the wicked draws the wrong conclusion by thinking that God is just like him. To explain the patience God has with evil as His condoning of it is foolish (cf. Ecc 8:11; Mal 2:17; 2Pet 3:3-5). Those who do so are judging God by their own low standards. But God is God and not man. God’s silence does not mean that He approves of evil. He who thinks this way despises His kindness (Rom 2:4).

Because the wicked draws wrong conclusions from God’s silence, God will break His silence and reprove him. In doing so, He will display or “state [the case]” of his sins in order before his eyes against him. He will confront him with the fact that he has despicably thrown away His words as well as all his transgressions that prove it. They will not be able to close their eyes to it, so clearly will He demonstrate their sins. He will bring that up in the trial as evidence for their condemnation. The punishment He executes will be in accordance with it.

Psa 50:22-23 | Warning and Promise

22 *“Now consider this, you who forget God,
Or I will tear [you] in pieces, and there will be none to deliver.*
23 *“He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;
And to him who orders [his] way [aright]
I shall show the salvation of God”.*

Verse 22 is a summary of verses 16-21 and also a conclusion. The word is addressed to the wicked, that is someone who is religious, but has no relationship with God, for he has forgotten Him. If he understands that it is about a relationship, salvation is still possible for him. Then he will come to repentance and acknowledge that he has forgotten God. Forget-

ting God is not stupidity, but a guilty forgetting by eliminating Him from his thinking.

If he does not understand this call, God will tear him in pieces, as a lion tears its prey in pieces (cf. Hos 5:14). Then there will be no more deliverance. If he rejects the only possibility of deliverance, there is no one who will be able to deliver him.

Then finally, as a summary of verses 7-15, there is a word for the God-fearing (verse 23). Not he who offers many sacrifices without involving his heart, not he who can list God's precepts and in the meantime cast away God's words as if they were unclean, but he who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving, he honors God. God is pleased with this.

It is also connected to the fact that he is going his way aright, which is the way of God. God is with him on this way. He will lead him there and show him His salvation. The right way ends in the full salvation of the realm of peace. That is God's salvation. God stands at the end of that way. Being with Him is the great joy for everyone who is on the way with Him and lives with and for Him.

Psalm 51

Introduction

Psalm 51 is the response of the believing remnant to the exhortation of Psalm 50. They are called to call upon the LORD “in the day of trouble” (Psa 50:15). They have “a broken spirit” and “a broken and contrite heart” (Psa 51:17) and tremble at His word (Isa 66:2b).

That response is the sacrifice that is pleasing to God. In Psalm 50 it is the sacrifice of thanksgiving and the vow offering (Psa 50:14), in Psalm 51 it is the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart (Psa 51:17).

We can divide Psalm 51 into three parts:

1. Verses 1b-6 deal with reconciliation.
2. Verses 7-13 deal with the demand for forgiveness.
3. Verses 14-19 talk about restoration and praise.

If we compare some of the concepts that appear in these three sections,

1. “wash me thoroughly” (verse 2),
2. “purify me” (verse 7) and
3. “deliver me from bloodguiltiness” (verse 14),

we get a sense of the deep humiliation David went through in order to come to a complete restoration and praise through repentance and forgiveness.

Psa 51:1-2 | Prayer for Cleansing

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;

According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity

And cleanse me from my sin.

It is a psalm “for the choir director” (verse 1a). That means that it is meant for others who have a similar experience to the one David expresses in this psalm. See also at Psalm 4:1. That David intends this psalm “for the choir director” shows that he is truly broken. This psalm is the fourth “penitential psalm” of the seven found in Psalms (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). It is the middle and also the most profound of those seven psalms.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

The occasion of the writing of the psalm is David’s adultery with Bathsheba (2Sam 11:1-5; 12:1-12). Nathan *came* to David after David had *come* to Bathsheba. The Spirit uses a play on words here. Nathan came to David to make David’s sin known.

His sin is multiple. First he commits the sin of adultery “after he had gone in to Bathsheba” to sin with her by committing adultery with her. Then he sins by killing Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, with a trick, thereby incurring blood guilt (verse 14). The Hebrew word for “transgression” in verse 1b and verse 3 is plural.

Of David it is said that he did “what was right in the sight of the Lord, and did not deviate from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite” (1Kgs 15:5). What David did – adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife, and the murder of Uriah – is a type of Israel’s twofold sin in

1. the acceptance of antichrist, which is (spiritual) adultery, and
2. the rejection of Christ, which is murder (cf. Jn 5:43).

David first concealed his sins for about a year. It was only through Nathan’s ministry that he was broken and confessed his sins, after which he was immediately told that the LORD had taken away his sin (2Sam 12:13). Yet we see in this psalm that confession and forgiveness can be a process. Real understanding of sin and the awareness and acceptance of forgiveness take time. It is evidence of a deep work of God’s Spirit when it takes some time. Those who confess their sins and claim forgiveness just as quickly have no idea of their sinfulness before God and are insincere in their confession.

David's confession is prophetically applicable to the believing remnant. As mentioned above, the people have sinned in two respects:

1. They have committed adultery against God by associating with the antichrist (Jn 5:43b).
2. They have committed murder by bringing Christ to the cross (Jn 5:43a).

The first sin is the transgression of the commandments on the first stone tablet of the law that governs one's relationship to God. The second sin is the transgression of the commandments of the second stone tablet of the law which governs the relationship toward one's neighbor. The first is the sin of depravity, the other is the sin of violence (Gen 6:11; cf. Mt 5:31,21).

After Nathan convinced David of the terrible sins he had committed, David's first question to God is whether He will be gracious to him (verse 1b). The Old Testament gives provisions for manslaughter without intent, but David's sin is premeditated murder. There is no forgiveness for that in the Old Testament. David knows that he deserves the death penalty. He has no right to continue living unless God is gracious to him. In doing so, he asks that God is gracious to him "according to" His "lovingkindness". David appeals to Who God is (Exo 34:6-7).

He then asks God to blot out his transgressions from His criminal record, to remove them from it, so that he no longer has a criminal record (cf. Col 2:14; Isa 43:25; 44:22). He acknowledges that He has broken God's commandments "you shall not commit adultery" and "you shall not kill". He doesn't condone these transgressions, but confesses them without apology.

Indeed, there are no excuses for adultery and fornication. They are sins that cannot be undone. David has an indelible guilt on him. The only possibility of erasure lies in "the greatness" of God's "compassion". To this he appeals.

The Hebrew word for sin, *chata'a*, means to miss the goal that God has set for His creature, which is the glorification of God toward creation (people) (Rom 3:23). Sin is, as it were, a blot on his clothing, or his outward revelation, and therefore must be washed.

David is not only *guilty* because of his sin, but he has also become *dirty* because of it (verse 2). He asks not only for the expiation of his transgression through forgiveness on the basis of compassion, but also to be washed clean of his “iniquity”.

The word for “wash thoroughly” is used to wash dirty clothes clean. David’s sins are “as scarlet” (Isa 1:18) and can never be made white by men. Washed clothing speaks of a new beginning with God (Gen 35:2).

The Hebrew word for “iniquity” is *awon*. The meaning is “to act crookedly, not sincerely”. It is acting as “a crooked and perverse generation” does (Phil 2:15). The conscience no longer works. It is turned off.

As king, he is God’s representative and has an exemplary function. It is his calling and mission to lead the people in the way of God and to show them how God is to be served. Instead, through his sins he has dirtied his example. God’s Name has been disgraced by his behavior. That disgrace must be washed clean and only God can do that.

Finally, David asks God to cleanse him from his sin. In this is the idea of leprosy. Sin, like leprosy, is an impediment to drawing near to God (cf. verse 7). Through sin the relationship with God is broken and man falls short of the glory of God. Because of his sin, David no longer has access to God in His sanctuary, where everything is pure and holy, in accordance with Who God is. He longs for restoration of his fellowship with God and therefore he asks to be cleansed (cf. 1Jn 1:9).

What David asks for in these opening verses shows that he has an understanding of what sin brings about and what it takes to be delivered from its burden. He asks for ‘blotting out’, ‘washing’ and ‘cleansing’. To ‘blot out’ is to completely remove the record of one’s transgressions. ‘Washing’ is the removal of the dirt of the blot of sin. ‘Cleansing’ refers to cleansing his heart and conscience in connection with his iniquity. The first is toward God, the second toward men, the third is toward himself. When all that happens, his transgressions, his iniquities, and his sins are completely forgiven.

Psa 51:3-6 | Confession and Repentance

3 For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.

*4 Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when You speak
And blameless when You judge.*

*5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.*

*6 Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.*

David knows his transgressions (verse 3). Awareness of this is necessary if God is to do His work of restoration. There must be complete openness about it. His sin is constantly before his eyes since Nathan discovered it for him. This is not a pleasant state, but it is extremely beneficial. Only when God sends Nathan to him does he come to full and sincere confession. This psalm is proof of that.

Although David has sinned against his neighbor, he confesses that he has sinned against God, yes, against God only (verse 4; 2Sam 12:13a). The point of sin is first and foremost that it is evil in God's eyes. Dishonor has been done to *God*. Any sin against a neighbor is first and foremost a sin against God. If this awareness is not at the top, there will be no thorough confession. Then there is only regret and that mainly about the consequences, but no repentance for the deed.

God is absolutely righteous. If we acknowledge that we have sinned against Him and done what is evil in His sight, we acknowledge that He is righteous in His judgment of sin. The word 'confess' means 'to say the same thing'. To confess a sin is to see a sin as God sees it and to say of it the same as He says. This is what David did when Nathan confronted him with his sin on behalf of God. He admitted God was right in His judgment of the sin he committed. Paul quotes this verse in the letter to the Romans, the letter in which he explains what the righteousness of God is (Rom 3:4).

God defines what sin is. Sin is anything done without the acknowledgment of His right to our lives. Man was created for the goal of glorifying his Creator. He misses that goal by living as a sinner (Rom 3:23). In His law, He states what man must do and what He will do if man breaks the law. When God judges because His law has been broken, He proves that

He is pure. His “eyes are too pure to approve evil” (Hab 1:13a). Only when a person acknowledges that God is righteous and pure God can declare that person righteous and pure.

David descends even deeper into the problem of sin. He acknowledges that he was “brought forth in iniquity” and “in sin ... conceived” by his mother (verse 5). This is not a shrugging off of his guilt, but the recognition that he is a sinner to the core of his being. He speaks not only of his sins as deeds, but of the sin that is in him as the source of the deeds, of the sinful nature that every man has (cf. Rom 7:18a).

We call this “original sin”, which is every human being’s nature since Adam fell into sin. We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. The teaching on this is given in the letter to the Romans. It is recommended that we read that letter regularly. Seeing the difference between sin as an act and sin as a source is fundamental if there is to be a profound confession. This statement by David is a rare and yet clear statement about original sin in the Old Testament (cf. Job 14:4; 15:14; 25:4; Psa 58:3).

David has a deep understanding of what God seeks and values (verse 6). He knows that God desires “truth in the innermost being”. The innermost is the inner self, the soul or heart (cf. Job 38:36). He experienced in his feelings that God had no joy in his innermost being, nor did he experience God’s joy when he hid his sins in his innermost being. Joy is the result of God’s work. He creates the joy (Isa 65:17-18). The truth in which He finds joy is the recognition of sin before Him and the acceptance of His judgment of it without reservation.

If in the sinner that truth is present as a deep conviction, then God “makes known wisdom in the hidden part”. There is room in the innermost being through confession and now God can make His wisdom known therein. As a result, the restored believer can make the right decisions in the choice he is always faced with: the choice between good and evil.

Psa 51:7-12 | Prayer for Restoration

7 Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness,

Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

9 Hide Your face from my sins

And blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,

And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation

And sustain me with a willing spirit.

After his profound confession, David asks God to purify him with hyssop (verse 7). Hyssop is like a biological brush, used to smear liquid on a solid surface. Typologically, it speaks of applying the work of Christ to man. Hyssop is used, among other things, in the applying of the blood of the Paschal lamb to the lintel and the doorposts (Exo 12:22). The application of the blood, or accepting its value in faith, is that it covers sins before the eyes of God, works cleansing and forgiveness (1Jn 1:7b; Rev 1:5; Heb 9:22). The blood cleanses us in the eyes of God.

David also asks that God washes him. This refers to the Word of God being compared to water (Eph 5:26; Jn 15:3). We see here the application of the leper's cleansing sacrifice in Leviticus 14 (Lev 14:1-20). The people as a whole, that is, the believing remnant in the end time, will also be cleansed by this sacrifice, restoring them to their fellowship with God. The application for us is that by reading God's Word we come to recognize our sins. If there are sins, we confess them and they are forgiven (1Jn 1:9).

David looks forward to God's response to his confession (verse 8). He asks for the proof that God has accepted his confession. That proof is God's joy and gladness over his confession. When God makes him know that, that joy will flow into his bones and he will leap for joy. Now he still feels shattered and powerless because the law condemns him and his conscience accuses him.

He asks God to hide His face from his sins (verse 9). By this he asks that God forgives his sins and remember them no more. He is now no longer asking for forgiveness for a particular sin but for the blotting out of "all" his iniquities. In a thorough confession of a sin, we become aware that we

have not done just one particular wrong act, but that we have often fallen into error. In God's presence we see our entire lost condition.

This confession awakens the desire for something totally new, a new creation of God, the creation of a clean heart (verse 10). No human being can work this out for himself; God must do it. It must be a creative act of God, in the same sense that we are "a new creation" in Christ (2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10). The verb "create" here is the same as in Genesis 1 (Gen 1:1). It is creating something totally new that was not already there. God cannot fix us, He must start something new.

A clean heart is a heart that is not defiled by sins. That heart has an aversion to sin, and what comes out of it is clean. Someone with a clean heart has no impediments to draw near to God. He lives in fellowship with God. He sees God because he is pure in heart (Mt 5:8). The New Testament believer knows that by faith he has a clean heart (Acts 15:9). However, it is important to live in accordance with that.

In addition to a clean heart, David asks for the renewal within him of "a steadfast spirit". He used to have this steadfast spirit and remained in the way of God. Now that he has fallen into sin because he did not remain steadfastly focused on God, he asks for its renewal. He does not want to fall so deeply again. Because of his deep fall, he is all the more convinced that God must provide him with that spirit so that he remains in fellowship with God. As a result, he will not be easily tempted to commit sin again.

We also need "a steadfast spirit" so that we focus only on Christ and expect everything from Him. Then we will be kept from the temptation to sin that leads to new defilements and, what is worst, to the breaking of our fellowship with God. We still have the sinful nature within us. Therefore, this question also applies to us. The important thing for us is that we remain true to the Lord with resolute heart (Acts 11:23). Then we will flee sin when it wants to tempt us (cf. Gen 39:10-12).

Sin causes a deep break with God. The fellowship with Him is broken as a result. When the awareness of sin dawns, the sinner also realizes that God must rightfully cast him away (verse 11). After all, God can do nothing else with sin but reject it. At the same time, uttering that question implies that

David trusts that God does not cast him, the sinner, away, because God always answers an upright confession with grace.

Asking God not to take His Holy Spirit away from him is appropriate in David's mouth being an Old Testament believer (cf. 1Sam 16:14). In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit does not *dwell* in the believer. Yet He does *work* in him. We see the Spirit at work at creation (Gen 1:2). An Old Testament believer can only do something that is pleasing to God through the Holy Spirit. Everything that is good with him comes from God's Spirit. David is aware of this (2Sam 23:2).

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell on earth only after the glorification of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus leaves no doubt about this (Jn 7:39). Since the day of Pentecost, the Spirit dwells in the church (Acts 2:1-4; Eph 2:21-22) and in the believer (1Cor 6:19). Those who know this will never ask God to take His Spirit away from them (Jn 14:16-17; Gal 4:1-7; 1Cor 12:13).

Of course, it is important that we do not grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30), but let ourselves be led by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit (Gal 5:16,18,25). Therefore, what David is asking here does have great practical significance for us. It is about the need for spiritual renewal that we too need on a regular basis. Hopefully we agree with that.

David has often known and enjoyed the joy of God's salvation. Every time God gave Him salvation, there was that joy. All the time he kept silent about his sins, that joy was absent. He had no fellowship with God. Now that he has confessed his sins, he expresses a deep desire for the return of that joy of God's salvation (verse 12).

The Spirit Who is on him now – for his confession is the work of the Spirit – could never be on him when he was silent about his sins. What he still desires now is the joy of God's salvation. This joy he wants to experience continually in God's presence. For that, he asks God to sustain him "with a willing spirit". He asks for inner boldness to live in fellowship with God again by keeping His commandments and not breaking them again.

Psa 51:13-17 | The Sacrifices God Will Not Despise

| 13 [Then] I will teach transgressors Your ways,
| And sinners will be converted to You.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;

[Then] my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

15 O Lord, open my lips,

That my mouth may declare Your praise.

16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;

You are not pleased with burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

David has prayed for forgiveness and for restoration; now he prays if the LORD can still use him in His service. He wants to go and share his experiences as a transgressor with other transgressors (verse 13; cf. Lk 22:32; Psa 34:11). Those who have a deep awareness of their own sinfulness and likewise of God's forgiveness and restored joy will show concern for others. David wants to teach others, who have broken God's commandments, God's ways by speaking to them about confession to God and repentance to Him. He is eager to bring sinners back from a path of error and thereby cover a multitude of sins (Jam 5:19-20).

When he thinks about teaching others God's ways, the weight of his sins again overwhelms him (verse 14). Now he thinks of his blood guilt. After all, he killed Uriah to cover up his sin with Bathsheba. As a result, he has brought blood guilt upon himself (2Sam 11:14-17). David has already spoken of the joy of God's salvation (verse 12), now he speaks of "the God of my salvation". When that God saves him from his bloodguiltiness, delivers him from it, his tongue will sing joyfully. Then he will sing – not of God's love and mercy, which we might expect, but – of God's "righteousness". God has a righteous basis for this salvation: the work of His Son on the cross.

This confession has a prophetic application. The believing remnant will acknowledge in the future that they are guilty as a people of the Messiah's death, through which they have incurred bloodguiltiness. For them, too, salvation from their bloodguiltiness lies in the work of Christ on the cross. The remnant will also confess the people's sin of adultery because they have accepted the antichrist.

David asks the “Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign God and Ruler of the universe, to open his lips (verse 15). Then he will declare God’s praise with his mouth. No praise has come on his lips or out of his mouth during the time he has kept silent about his sins. Now that he has realized and confessed his sins, David does not burst out in sudden jubilation. There is no posturing with him. His closed mouth and lips are the result of the sins he committed. The opening of them must be done by *God*. He humbly asks if God will work it out with him. He desires it and therefore God will do it.

God does “not delight in sacrifices” as such (verse 16), for the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away any sin (Heb 10:4). David knows this, is deeply aware of this. He already expressed that by the Spirit as well (Psa 40:6). If God did find joy in that, he would have gladly brought it. Also in burnt offerings God takes no pleasure. David knows that too.

The only sacrifices in which God finds joy are “a broken spirit” and “a broken and a contrite heart” (verse 17; cf. Isa 57:15; 66:2b). There is nothing of pride and self-justification in those sacrifices, but there is a mind present that is precious to God. This also applies to us. One who offers such sacrifices is truly “a poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3). Such a person does not boast, but is humble before God.

David does not speak of the joy God finds in such a mind, but says that God will “not despise” it. In doing so, he addresses God emphatically: “O God.” People often do despise such a mind, but “O God, You” certainly will not. By saying “will not despise”, David emphasizes that there is no glory attached to these sacrifices.

Psa 51:18-19 | Prayer for Zion

*18 By Your favor do good to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,
In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.*

After his profound confession and his request for cleansing, David now thinks of Zion (verse 18). As the representative of the people, he has brought slander upon all the people through his sins. God has had to with-

draw Himself from Zion. Now that David has made confession, he asks that God do good to Zion according to His good pleasure.

Prophetically, this is about the rebuilding of the city and the temple that the LORD will have rebuilt. Because of the great tribulation, sacrifice ceased, and because of the attack of the king of the North, Jerusalem is destroyed. The restoration of the temple and of the sacrificial service is described by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-44).

Because of his sins, the city has become fragile, its spiritual strength has disappeared. The literal walls may still be there, but when the spiritual strength is gone because of sin, the wall no longer provides protection. Therefore, David now asks that God rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, that is, that the city be protected again.

The result will be that God will again find delight in “righteous sacrifices” (verse 19) that will be brought by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. We can apply this to a local church, which is also seen as a place where God dwells. In a local church, when sin has been judged and fellowship with God has been restored, the spiritual sacrifices are again pleasing to God.

We might expect the “righteous sacrifices” to be sin offerings. That would be well in line with the confession of sins. But David speaks of “burnt offering and whole burnt offering” that is completely consumed. When God begins to speak about sacrifices, He begins with the burnt offering (Lev 1:1-3). A burnt offering is the highest sacrifice that can be offered as a voluntary sacrifice. Of the various burnt offerings that can be offered, the “young bulls” are the highest form (cf. Lev 1:3,10,14).

The burnt offering is an offering that is consumed in its entirety. Everything from this sacrifice comes on the altar and goes up in smoke as a soothing aroma to God (Lev 1:9; cf. Deu 33:10). When David speaks in addition to a burnt offering of an offering that is completely consumed, he demonstrates an understanding of this offering. He explains the essence of the burnt offering. The burnt offering represents the work of the Lord Jesus as a work done wholly and exclusively for God.

Psalm 52

Introduction

Psalms 52-55 are four maskil- or instruction-psalms, instructions of David where the two great sins of Israel are expounded. One of them is adultery against God because the people ally themselves with the antichrist.

In these four psalms the antichrist is prophetically painted. He is the man of sin, the man who will be the false king of Israel, the man who will come in his own name, who will declare himself to be God and be accepted by the people of Israel (2Thes 2:3b-4; Jn 5:43). This false king, along with the unbelieving part of the people, will persecute the weak believing remnant, causing them to seek refuge in the mountains east of Israel, abroad.

The time that then comes is what the Lord Jesus calls “a great tribulation” (Mt 24:21; cf. Dan 12:1). This time will begin with the placing of “the abomination of desolation” in the temple (Mt 24:15; Dan 9:27b). The abomination, or idolatry, is a man declaring himself to be God (2Thes 2:4). This is the full measure of the sin of Israel and of mankind.

When that time comes, the time has also come for the LORD to intervene and destroy Israel. But first the faithful remnant is brought to safety from judgment in a place where they will be purified.

The first psalm of this mini-series of maskil-psalms, Psalm 52, is a great contrast to the previous one. In Psalm 51, we hear someone turning to God with repentance for his sin and being completely broken. In Psalm 52 it is about the power and depravity of someone who boasts in evil. That wicked, prideful person is a picture of the antichrist.

Faithful believers in all times have had to deal with the wickedness in which this wicked person expresses himself. The believer is always surrounded by people who behave in this way. In this psalm we see the expressions of the violent person and how faith responds to them.

Psa 52:1-5 | The Downfall of the Mighty Man

1 For the choir director. A Maskil of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech".

Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?

The lovingkindness of God [endures] all day long.

2 Your tongue devises destruction,

Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.

3 You love evil more than good,

Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah.

4 You love all words that devour,

O deceitful tongue.

5 But God will break you down forever;

He will snatch you up and tear you away from [your] tent,

And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah.

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The psalm is "a Maskil of David". It is one of the thirteen maskil-psalms. *Maskil* means 'teaching' or 'instruction'. The instruction here is about the fulfillment of the principles of Psalm 1, in which the contrast is presented between Christ and the antichrist, between the faithful and the wicked, between a David and a Doeg (Psa 1:1-6). For "a maskil" or "an instruction", see further at Psalm 32:1-2.

What is said here of Doeg is described in the first book of Samuel (1Sam 21:1-8; 22:6-23). There we read that Doeg is the supervisor, the chief shepherd of Saul's shepherds. Doeg is therefore a type of the antichrist, the false shepherd of Israel. He is "the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock" (Zec 11:17a). He stands in sharp contrast to David, who is a type of the Son of David, Who is "the good Shepherd", "the great Shepherd", and "the Chief Shepherd", Who gives His life for His sheep (Jn 10:11,14,15b; Heb 13:20; 1Pet 5:4).

The psalm dates from the time when David was fleeing from Saul. The *maskil* or instruction is made by David in response to the treachery of Doeg, who informs Saul of David's visit to Ahimelech (1Sam 22:9). Thereupon Saul orders Doeg to kill the priests because they are on the hand of David. Doeg carries out that order with devilish delight (1Sam 22:18-19).

When David hears about it, he takes the blame for the massacre and offers protection to Ahimelech (1Sam 22:20-23).

Because David is a prophet (cf. Acts 2:30), he, inspired by the Holy Spirit, not only wrote about an event in the past, but did so with the future in mind. In the history with Doeg, the facts are stated in a way, that the final fulfillment takes place only in the person of the antichrist. For example, it says in verse 3 that this person, who is clearly a picture of the antichrist, is a liar, while of Doeg no lie is mentioned (cf. Dan 11:32).

Doeg is called "the Edomite". This means that he is a descendant of Esau, who is called a "godless person" (Heb 12:16). The Edomites are indeed the bitterest enemies of God's people and of God Himself. Doeg is a clear example of this. He is, like another Edomite, Herod (Acts 12:21-23), pre-eminently a type of the antichrist.

After what has happened has penetrated deeply to David, he expresses his thoughts and feelings about it as an instruction for the whole people in this psalm. Doeg is a violent man who is favored by King Saul. David looks at this murderer in the light of God. In this way we must also learn to see the violence of people who love evil and still seem to succeed in life. That is why this instruction is also "for the choir director".

David begins his psalm not by addressing God, which is usual, but by addressing the "mighty man", in which there is an undertone of sarcasm (verse 1b). Mighty man is literally 'strong hero'. This is fully true of the antichrist (Rev 13:11-18). The translation "mighty man" is based on the fact that Doeg carried out a slaughter among the priests (1Sam 22:18). That was not enough for him. He went beyond the king's order and wiped out the entire city of Nob, women, children and livestock (1Sam 22:19).

David opens his words to this violent man with a question. In that question, indignation at the depravity of that man and also astonishment at his foolishness resound. It is bad enough that he does evil, but it is even worse that he boasts of it. He boasts that he exerts so much influence through his evil deeds. To himself, these are not evil deeds. He takes pleasure in his deeds.

The mighty man boasts of the evil that he does to the godly ones of God. To boast means: he takes pleasure in it. It also means that in his heart he

says: "I will not be moved; throughout the generations I will not be in adversity" (Psa 10:6).

Faith responds to this by referring to "God's lovingkindness". Evil may assert itself for some time, but then it is over. God's lovingkindness echoes throughout the day. There is not a moment when God is not kind. Here it is about Adonai, the faithfulness of God by virtue of the covenant.

For us it is the faithfulness of God on the basis of the blood of the new covenant. This will also be true for the faithful remnant in the future. On the basis of this covenant, God can grant His blessings, His lovingkindness. This is what the believer holds on to, and through this he stands firm against the evil and wicked one. The awareness of the lovingkindness of God is the best protection against evil.

The evil of the mighty man is primarily in his tongue (verse 2). His tongue is seen here as a 'destructive tongue', an instrument by which he does not primarily *speak* harmful things, but *devises* harmful things. This indicates that he deliberately chooses his words to cause as much harm as possible. His tongue is "like a sharp razor" that works "deceit" (cf. Psa 55:21; Isa 7:20; Dan 11:32; Jam 3:6). He cuts people down with what he says. His words work like thrusts of a sword (Pro 12:18a).

There is not a shred of truth in what he says, even when he says things that are true. When Doeg tells Saul that he saw David with Ahimelech, it is true (1Sam 21:6-9; 22:9-10). But the motives behind his words, make all his words 'devouring words'. His tongue speaks words that are true, for he says what he has seen, but he does so with a 'tongue like a sharp razor' that works deceitfully.

What it really is about here is not falsehood in general, but the big lie with regard to God. What the antichrist says is in the greatest possible contrast to Christ. Christ speaks only truth about God, without any lies. The antichrist speaks only lies about God, without any truth: "That king will act according to his own will. He will exalt himself and will exalt himself above every god. He will speak wondrous things against the God of gods" (Dan 11:36). The antichrist is "the man of lawlessness ..., the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of

worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2Thes 2:3b-4).

He has an obsessive love of evil over good (verse 3; cf. Mic 3:2a). He prefers lies "to speaking what is right". It is not even a little white lie, but the persistent and consistent speaking of lies. The man is a chip off the old block, for his father is the devil in whom is no truth. "Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44b).

This is true for many unbelievers, including the scribes to whom the Lord Jesus says this in John 8. However, this is especially and above all true for the antichrist, the beast from the earth, of whom John writes that it speaks as a dragon, as the devil himself (Rev 13:11). And then a *selah* follows in the psalm, for this is what the wise, the *maskilim*, must consider carefully.

The mighty man loves "all words that devour" (verse 4; Psa 10:7). He loves to say things that devour other people and plunge them into misfortune. Words can 'devour' someone's reputation. Devouring words work devastation and decay. Directly related to this is a "deceitful tongue". Everything that comes over his tongue is all deceit because the source is totally corrupt.

It is not primarily about the quantity of his deceit, the amount of lies, but about its quality, the content or origin of the lie. It is not primarily about lying about anything and everything, but that he is a liar about the great truth about God: He denies the Creator-God, the *Elohim*. This will be worked out later in Psalm 53. The spirit of the antichrist can already be seen in the evolutionists, who deny God the Creator.

When David is finished with his description of the mighty man, he presents him with the judgment that God will bring on him (verse 5). David describes this judgment in various pictures, all of which mean that he will be completely wiped out. God will "break" him "down forever", which refers to his dwelling place. It will be an eternal mess, without any possibility of rebuilding.

God will "snatch" him "up and tear" him "away" from his tent in which he has been living. To snatch here is to grasp a fiery coal that is hurled away as quickly as possible so as not to burn oneself on it. With this speed, God

snatches him up from the tent, that is, from all that is dear to him (cf. Mal 2:12).

Just as Doeg uprooted Ahimelech and the priests of Nob, God will “uproot” him “from the land of the living”. Uprooted means that Doeg has not only wiped out the priests, but has wiped out the entire city, women and children included, meaning that there will never be any descendants.

Uprooting is also a sudden, violent act. Like a tree he will be uprooted, so that he will not ever sprout and blossom again. All connection with life will be cut off. He will be eternally in the realm of death, where nothing of his deceitful words, thoughts, and actions will remain. As for the end of Doeg, we know little. He is now in the realm of the dead. Of the antichrist we do know how and where he ends. He will be thrown, without having been in the realm of the dead, directly into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20). In type we find this with Herod in Acts 12, where God Himself intervenes at the moment the measure of sin is full (Acts 12:21-23).

Psa 52:6-7 | The Mockery of the Righteous

*6 The righteous will see and fear,
And will laugh at him, [saying],
7 “Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge,
But trusted in the abundance of his riches
[And] was strong in his [evil] desire”.*

Those who fear God, “the righteous”, will live to see the day of judgment on the wicked (verse 6). They will see God’s judgment on this man. This will fill them with awe; it will greatly impress them. They will also be filled with holy mockery (cf. Psa 2:4). They will laugh at him, not out of gloating, but out of joy that God has exercised His righteous judgment and thus fulfilled His promise of judgment on evil. At the same time, this is also their deliverance. It is not an amused laughter, but a joyful laughter because the power of the mighty man is over and done with.

They point the finger at “the man who would not make God his refuge, but trusted in the abundance of his riches” (verse 7). Not making God his refuge means that God is not his fortress, that he has not sought his safety and protection from Him. Whoever gives up God is given up by God. Ev-

everything on which he has relied will be to no avail when God judges him (cf. Psa 49:6-8).

His arrogance and self-confidence have led him to harmful actions. By what he has 'earned' in doing so, he has become strong. Everything served to enhance his own independence and importance. He did not need God. With a deeply ingrained malice he harmed others and inflicted damage to the benefit of himself. With this 'testimony' the description of this arch villain ends.

Psa 52:8-9 | What the Righteous Shall Be and Do

*8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.
9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done [it],
And I will wait on Your name, for [it is] good, in the presence of Your godly ones.*

The first words of verse 8, "but as for me", indicate that what now follows is the tremendous contrast between David and the mighty man. David compares himself to "a green olive tree in the house of God". He can say this without any of fame of his own and despite all the bragging of the mighty man. What he says here is in great contrast to the mighty man who is torn away from his tent (verse 5).

Green means that the foliage of the tree does not wither. This is because this tree is planted by streams of water. This applies to the faithful remnant in the future. Throughout the great tribulation they have always put their trust in God, the source of refreshment and life.

Prophetically, the "olive tree" of Israel speaks in connection with the blessings of the covenant with God (lovingkindness = covenant faithfulness). We find this worked out in Romans 11. For a time, they – Israel, the natural branches – are broken off from the cultivated olive tree. But soon, when the wild olive branches – the professing Christianity – are removed, they will be grafted back onto their own olive tree (Rom 11:23-29).

David is constantly in the house of God, that is, in God's presence, while the mighty man will be outside God's presence eternally. In contrast to the mighty man who has relied on his great wealth, David trusts in "the

lovingkindness of God”, God’s Adonai, God’s faithfulness to His covenant and His action on that basis. He does this not once when it seems to be necessary and useful, but “forever and ever”.

We can apply the comparison of the green olive tree in the house of God to the New Testament believer who is led by the Holy Spirit in the church. Green means that there is an outward witness of the Spirit’s power. We see this in believers who show the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal 5:22-23a).

There is one more thing that David will do forever and that is to give thanks to God (verse 9). Here David is addressing God directly. His reason for giving thanks to God is found in what God has done. He has punished the mighty man and all his followers and has cleansed His own from all blame and blessed them.

David will wait on God’s “name”, by which he says that he looks forward to the revelation of God’s features and actions. Therein is his hope, for he knows that that name is good for God’s godly ones, for all who are in God’s favor. All who are in God’s favor, both Old Testament and New Testament believers, can testify to that. They will know the Name that is above all names and will worship Him as their Lord and their God.

When we testify to the lovingkindness of God’s Name, we know that many other believers can also testify to that. He has many names. Each name reveals an attribute. We have come to know many names or features of Him in our lives. For each name or attribute we can give thanks to Him and praise Him with all who have also come to know Him that way.

Thus, prophetically speaking, in this psalm we find instruction from the *maskilim* about the man of sin and instruction about the salvation of God for the remnant who will worship God when this man of sin is broken and uprooted.

Psalm 53

Introduction

The content of this psalm is largely the same as the content of Psalm 14. One notable difference is that where Psalm 14 has the name "LORD", that name has been changed to "God" in Psalm 53. "LORD" is the translation of Yahweh, the name of God as the God of the covenant with His people. In both psalms God is called by different names: in Psalm 14 4 times Yahweh and 3 times *Elohim*; in Psalm 53 0 times Yahweh and 7 times *Elohim*.

In Psalm 53, the existence of God, the translation of *Elohim*, that is God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and the God of all people, is denied. What is said of the single person Doeg in Psalm 52 applies, according to Psalm 53, to all people.

Psa 53:1-3 | There Is No One Who Does Good

1 For the choir director; according to Mahalath. A Maskil of David.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God",

They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;

There is no one who does good.

2 God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men

To see if there is anyone who understands,

Who seeks after God.

3 Every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt;

There is no one who does good, not even one.

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

It is a psalm "according to Mahalath". It is probably the type of melody of this psalm. The tone is in minor and miserable. This expression occurs one more time, in the heading of Psalm 88 (Psa 88:1). It is believed that the word *mahalath* is derived from a word for "sickness". This is also quite consistent with the content of the psalm, which describes the sickly and miserable condition of the end time, the great tribulation. It is the fulness of the sin of humanity and the reason for God to intervene (cf. Acts 12:21-23).

This psalm is again “a Maskil of David”. Psalm 14 gives us the principles of sin (Psa 14:1). Here in Psalm 53 it is a maskil-psalm, that is, instruction from and for the wise, the *maskilim*. This instruction is about the major characteristic of the antichrist, the man of sin, namely, denying the Creator-God, *Elohim*. Here the principles of Psalm 14 are applied to the antichrist and taught to the *maskilim*. The antichrist is here called the fool (verse 1b). However, the spirit of antichrist is already blowing in the evolutionists and modern theologians who deny the Creator.

For “a Maskil” see at Psalm 52:1 and Psalm 32:1.

David not only knows *what* the fool is saying, he also knows *where* he is saying it from (verse 1b). Through the teaching of God, he knows that the fool has “said in his heart” that there is no God. The fool is an ungodly one. He is not an atheist, but one who consciously disregards God in his life. He deliberately ignores God as not of interest. The antichrist is the fool in this psalm, for he has cast God aside and declared himself to be God (2Thes 2:3b-4).

The heart is the source of all thoughts, which are worked out in life. “The fool” is not necessarily a stupid person. On the contrary, he can be very intelligent. Yet God calls such a person a fool because he denies in his heart the existence of God. It is a willful disregard of His existence.

He willfully refuses to acknowledge the truth of God’s existence because he hates the thought that there is a God Who knows him and to Whom he is accountable (cf. Jn 3:20). It is the opposite of the beginning of wisdom, which is the fear of God (Pro 1:7), by which the wise person takes God into account in everything. The fool lacks the slightest trace of wisdom.

Next, David describes the result of ignoring the existence of God. People who ignore the existence of God “are corrupt”. They also commit “abominable injustice”. They cannot do otherwise, for they despise the source of good, the source that as the only one is good and gives good. They have no other frame of reference than their own depraved heart. The Lord Jesus tells what all comes from such a heart (Mt 15:19).

This is true of every human being. There is really “no one who does good”. The issue is not the *tendency* to do *evil*, but the *impossibility* to do *good*. Atheism, the denial of the existence of God, is not an innocent mistake, but an

open and horrible sin. No excuse can be conceived that God can accept as an excuse.

God informed David that He has “looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there is anyone who understands, who seeks after God” (verse 2). Man may shut God out, but God does not forget man. He is always looking down on man to see if there is anyone wise enough to seek Him.

It is a great folly of man to think that by his denial of God there is no God either. From His exalted dwelling place, God perceives everything that man thinks and does. We must learn to see everything from above, from the viewpoint of heaven, the place where God dwells. His assessment is perfectly pure, without clouding by earthly relationships or circumstances.

God has had to observe that “every one of them has turned aside” (verse 3). This has been done by every one personally. Every one has gone his own way, a way apart from God, with his back to God (Isa 53:6a). The common result is that they “together have become corrupt”.

The word for “corrupt” is the word used for “turned sour”, as can happen with milk. Milk is there to be drunk. If that does not happen and is left, it becomes sour. It is then no longer drinkable and must be thrown away. So it is with people who do not use their life for the purpose for which God has given it, which is to serve and glorify Him. That life is corrupt.

The conclusion is a confirmation of what has already been said in verse 1 that there is no one who does good. By adding that there is “not even one”, it leaves no room for an exception. The judgment is general. It does not concern only the person of verse 1, but it applies to every man, whoever he may be. It is the death sentence of the human race, of humanity fallen into sin as a whole. Is there no escape? Yes, thankfully there is. Those who take refuge in God are saved from this situation.

Psa 53:4-5 | Rejected by God

*4 Have the workers of wickedness no knowledge,
Who eat up My people [as though] they ate bread
And have not called upon God?*

5 There they were in great fear [where] no fear had been;

*For God scattered the bones of him who encamped against you;
You put [them] to shame, because God had rejected them.*

Having observed fallen humanity, David now moves on to speak of God's people in the midst of that fallen humanity. In amazement, he wonders about the knowledge of those "who eat up My people" (verse 4). It seems as if these people, who have no knowledge of God and therefore no knowledge of those who are associated with Him, can do as they please, targeting in particular David's "people", which are God's godly ones.

The fools gorge on his people, who they eat as if they were eating bread. It should not surprise us that these wicked people act this way. They are people who do not have the slightest connection to God. They do not call upon Him, for He does not exist for them. Therefore they behave even worse than beasts, for these still cry out to God when they are hungry and God hears them. But these wicked people do not need Him because they trust in their wealth (cf. Pro 18:11).

Then David points to the fear that controls them as a result of God's judgment (verse 5). This is a second difference from Psalm 14. We find in this verse God's judgment on the enemies of God's people at the end of the great tribulation. This is also instruction for the understanding, the *maskilim*.

Those who say they have no fear of God are therefore not without fear. They are "through fear of death ... subject to slavery all their lives" (cf. Heb 2:15). For all their snobbery and boasting of their wealth and so-called wisdom, they are "in great fear [where] no fear had been" (cf. Lev 26:36; Job 15:21; Pro 28:1a). He describes it as if they were already wandering in fear. By faith, he actually sees where things are heading with these pruners and boasters.

David sees a battlefield before him with the limbs of the assailants lying there scattered by God (cf. Isa 66:24; Eze 39:11-15). They are not buried, whereby they are "put to shame" by God (cf. Isa 14:19-20).

Psa 53:6 | Longing for Salvation

*6 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When God restores His captive people,*

| *Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.*

The righteous hopes in God for the complete salvation of Israel. For this he looks to Zion, the dwelling place of God. From there salvation must come. The complete salvation means both the deliverance of the oppressed people and the return of the captives of God's people from the dispersion.

Then the entire people will be blessed, which will be to the joy of Jacob and to the joy of Israel. The name Jacob reminds us of the promises of God that He made to Jacob and that He will fulfill, despite the unfaithfulness that Jacob often showed. The name Israel reminds us of what God has made of Jacob, of the position and privileges He has given him.

Psalm 54

Psa 54:1-3 | Salvation by God's Name

1 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, "Is not David hiding himself among us?"

*Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your power.*

*2 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.*

*3 For strangers have risen against me
And violent men have sought my life;
They have not set God before them. Selah.*

For "for the choir director; on stringed instruments" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "a Maskil" see at Psalm 32:1.

This psalm is "a Maskil of David". It is an instruction, a *maskil*, for the wise, the *maskilim*. When the remnant has fled abroad, the strangers (verse 3a), represented in the Ziphites, who are a picture of the surrounding nations, will betray them to the violent men (verse 3b), represented in Saul, who is a picture of the antichrist, and his followers. Psalm 54 instructs the remnant to pray to God and put their trust in Him Who will deliver them.

We read here the occasion for the writing of this psalm. This is one of fourteen psalms that mention in the heading the occasion of their writing (Psa 3:1; 7:1; 18:1; 30:1; 34:1; 51:1; 52:1; 54:1; 56:1; 57:1; 59:1; 60:1; 63:1; 142:1). During the time that David was fleeing from Saul, the Ziphites twice reported to Saul where David was hiding (1Sam 23:19; 26:1). This betrayal is the occasion for this psalm.

Much of this psalm is applicable to us, who also suffer from what people do to us because we belong to Christ. We can think especially of all believers who are persecuted because of their faith, such as in North Korea, China, and islamic countries.

David asks God to save him from his enemies by His Name (verse 1b). The "Name" stands for all that God is, for His Being and all His attributes. One of those attributes is His power to exercise justice. David asks if God will vindicate him by His power. Prophetically, it is the language of the believing remnant in the end time when they are oppressed by the self-willed, false king, the antichrist.

David addresses *God*, not the *LORD*. He does not do so until the end of the psalm, when the covenant faithfulness of the *LORD* has been demonstrated (verse 6). Now the point is that God demonstrates His power toward hostile people. His enemies do not seek direct confrontation with David, but act with cunning treachery.

When David hears about it (1Sam 23:25; 26:3-4), he does not confront the enemies in his own strength, but appeals to the power of God. His enemies don't notice this, but David does all the more. He knows he is in his right and he asks God to demonstrate that to his enemies by means of His power.

After David has come directly to God with his need in verse 1b, he then asks God to hear his prayer (verse 2). His prayer consists of "the words of my mouth". He makes known to God in clear words what his need is and what he would like God to do. Likewise, we too may make our need known to God by means of our words (cf. Phil 4:6).

Then David describes what troubles him, what his need is (verse 3). There are "strangers" who have risen against him and want to kill him. "Strangers" means those who do not belong to Israel, the nations. The Ziphites are a type, an example. They are inhabitants of the wilderness Ziph, possibly Israelites, possibly also Canaanites, who are unknown to David (strangers). In any case they prophetically represent the nations.

These strangers want to kill David. They are focused on him as on a criminal and not on God, they do not keep God in mind and do not consider His authority at all. If they did, they would see David the way God sees him. But He is not before their eyes, they don't have Him in mind, nor His power and His righteousness. The believer, David, the remnant, does (Psa 16:8).

Psa 54:4-5 | God Is Helper

*4 Behold, God is my helper;
The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.
5 He will recompense the evil to my foes;
Destroy them in Your faithfulness.*

Then David turns his gaze away from the people who are after him and, with an emphatic “behold”, turns his eyes with confidence to God (verse 4). God is his Helper. He has often experienced that and he is counting on it again now. He knows that “the Lord”, that is Adonai, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, “is the sustainer of [literally: as those who sustain]” his soul. His soul, his life, is under siege and threatens to waver. But he will not fall because the Lord sustains him. He is aware that his faithful followers also sustain him, which they only can do because God helps and sustains them.

David does not take the law into his own hands, but leaves it to God to recompense his attackers the evil (verse 5; Rom 12:19). God will deal with them according to what they deserve. He trusts that God will act that way for He is faithful to Himself. That means He will deal righteously with any evil done to His own. He cannot deny Himself and therefore in His faithfulness He will destroy the unrepentant evildoers (cf. 2Tim 2:13).

The unbelieving part of Israel will be wiped out in the future by the disciplinary rod of God, the Assyrian (Isa 10:5), in this case the king of the North. For David, the judgment on Saul does not come immediately to his deliverance. It will be years before Saul is killed.

Psa 54:6-7 | Giving Thanks to the Name of the LORD

*6 Willingly I will sacrifice to You;
I will give thanks to Your name, O LORD, for it is good.
7 For He has delivered me from all trouble,
And my eye has looked [with satisfaction] upon my enemies.*

After his salvation, he will “willingly ... sacrifice” to God (verse 6). He does not act out of obligation or compulsion, he does not do it because it is formally the way it should be done, he does it spontaneously out of love because he is grateful. In these sacrifices he will give thanks to the Name of

God, who is "LORD" (Psa 52:9). He will do so because that Name is good. LORD is the Name that indicates the covenant relationship of God with His people. By virtue of that Name, God acts on behalf of those who are in this covenant relationship with Him.

He has shown the goodness of that Name by delivering David, and in him the remnant, from all trouble (verse 7). They have seen the proof: they have seen their enemies fall by God's action in their favor. All the evil attempts to bring him down have been foiled by the LORD. Now they lie down defeated. David sees it and knows that he is delivered and safe. Just as the Egyptians perished in the Red Sea (Exo 14:23-28), so too will the enemies perish in the future (cf. Zec 14:12).

Psalm 55

Introduction

It has been assumed that the occasion for this psalm is the betrayal of Ahithophel (2Sam 15:31). It is an assumption that has good grounds, especially when it comes to the prophetic application. David has to deal with the betrayal of Ahithophel, the Lord Jesus with the betrayal of Judas, and the remnant with the betrayal of the antichrist. Judas and the antichrist are both called “the son of destruction” (Jn 17:12b; 2Thes 2:3b).

The background to David’s feelings is the betrayal of a friend. Ahithophel is at first a trusted advisor to David. But after Absalom has seized the throne of David, Ahithophel has defected to Absalom. In this psalm we hear something of David’s intense grief over this betrayal. In this respect there is a parallel with Psalm 41, where David also complains about the betrayal by a friend (Psa 41:6-9).

We also hear in the psalm Christ’s Spirit in David, that is, David reflects what the Savior felt at the betrayal by Judas. We also hear what the remnant is going through in the end time because of the conspiracy of the antichrist and his followers against them.

Psa 55:1-8 | Prayer in Distress

1 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Maskil of David.

Give ear to my prayer, O God;

And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.

2 Give heed to me and answer me;

I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,

3 Because of the voice of the enemy,

Because of the pressure of the wicked;

For they bring down trouble upon me

And in anger they bear a grudge against me.

4 My heart is in anguish within me,

And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

5 Fear and trembling come upon me,
And horror has overwhelmed me.
6 I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
7 "Behold, I would wander far away,
I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah.
8 "I would hasten to my place of refuge
From the stormy wind [and] tempest".

For "for the choir director; on stringed instruments" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

This psalm is "a Maskil of David". It is the last "maskil" or 'teaching' or 'instruction' in the small row of maskil- or instruction-psalms (Psalms 52-55). In these psalms there are instructions for the whole people of God, that is, the part that is faithful to God, in the time of the great tribulation.

These psalms all have to do with instruction about the antichrist. Through this instruction, the wise, the *maskilim*, will be able to calculate the number of this beast (Rev 13:18). For "a maskil" see further at Psalm 32:1.

David starts the psalm by asking God to give ear to his prayer, to listen to it (verse 1b; Psa 34:15b). He also asks if God does not hide from his supplication. God's not listening to him is the same as God hiding Himself from him. When God hears his prayer, it means that He gives all His attention to David.

Therefore, David then asks if God still pays attention to him and prove it by answering him (verse 2). He points out to God that he wanders restlessly in his "complaint" and that he is "surely distracted". Surely God does hear his complaining and distraction, doesn't He? This wandering around and these expressions of distress are caused by "the voice of the enemy" and "the pressure of the wicked that bring down trouble" upon him (verse 3). This marks the severity of the situation.

Injustice is on him by people who "in anger ... bear a grudge against" him. By this he means the slander that his enemy throws around loudly about him. The enemy does so with a hatred that is fueled by anger. That enemy is "the wicked", the man who has no regard for God, but is an instrument of the devil. The grimness with which he rages causes David great fear.

His heart trembles in anguish within him because of the grimness (verse 4). He has no control over it. His heart knows no rest, but goes wild within him, for he is overcome by “terrors of death”. Terrifying visages that represent death appear to him. “Fear and trembling” come upon him, or in him, and “horror has overwhelmed” him (verse 5).

For this reason, he says that he would like to flee the city, in which hatred and violence are coming upon him from all sides (verse 6). The word “oh” is the sigh that comes from a mind that is in deep distress. He wishes someone would give him “wings like a dove”. A dove is a defenseless animal that seeks its safety in lonely places, where no people live (cf. Song 2:14a; Jer 48:28). David was eager to fly away like a dove – a dove can fly non-stop for up to fifteen hours – to such a region to stay there, to live there and be at rest there.

That would not be a region close by. He would “wander far away” (verse 7), far away from trouble. There he would “lodge in the wilderness” (cf. Jer 9:2). The nights in particular are full of dangers. If he were in the wilderness, he would be safe in the night as well. He would hasten to escape, for the threat of being seized is great (verse 8). David compares the advancing enemy to “the stormy wind” and “tempest”. He is unpredictable like a stormy wind and destructive like a tempest.

This prayer will also be prayed by the believing remnant in the end time. In view of that time, the time of the great tribulation, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples to flee to the mountains (Mt 24:16-20). And God will provide the remnant with wings to flee from the dragon, the devil, into the wilderness (Rev 12:13-14).

Psa 55:9-15 | Betrayed by an Acquaintance

9 Confuse, O Lord, divide their tongues,
 For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
 10 Day and night they go around her upon her walls,
 And iniquity and mischief are in her midst.
 11 Destruction is in her midst;
 Oppression and deceit do not depart from her streets.
 12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me,

Then I could bear [it];

Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,

Then I could hide myself from him.

13 But it is you, a man my equal,

My companion and my familiar friend;

14 We who had sweet fellowship together

Walked in the house of God in the throng.

15 Let death come deceitfully upon them;

Let them go down alive to Sheol,

For evil is in their dwelling, in their midst.

David asks for the intervention of the “Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler and Commander of the universe (verse 9). He is asking the Lord to “confuse”, literally “swallow up” his enemies, which is to eat them greedily. He also asks if God will “divide their tongues”, causing division among them. Herein is clearly a reference to the confusion of language at the building of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

The enemy’s greatest weapon is their tongue. When the Lord causes a confusion of language among His enemies, their coherence is lost, just as it happens in the confusion of language God gave at the building of the tower of Babel. They cannot then continue to forge pernicious plans because they no longer understand each other.

The reason for his question is that he sees “violence and strife in the city” (cf. Hab 1:3). By the city is meant Jerusalem. David himself is not in the city, but prophetically it is about the remnant and they will be in the city. He has heard how things are in the city. He has been told that in a way that he can visualize it. It hurts David that that city is terrorized by the enemy and the wicked. They call the shots in the city.

It even is so bad that violence and strife surround the city because it is upon its walls that surround it (verse 10). The walls, which normally guarantee safety and protection for the city from evil because they have faithful guards on them, no longer offer that safety and protection at all. On the contrary, on the walls parade people who protect iniquity and mischief in the midst of the city. And they do so day and night, that is, incessantly.

“In her midst”, down to the inner city, destruction is at work (verse 11). “Her streets”, where everyday life takes place, is mired in “oppression and deceit”. All social life is ineradicably permeated by it. All classes of the population employ trickery and deceit.

After complaining about what is going on in the city, his city, David goes on to complain about a specific person (verse 12). The reproach of enemies is bad, but this is to be expected, it is in a way ‘normal’ and understandable. He could bear it too, though it hurts and causes fear. And for his hater who exalted himself against him, he could hide himself so that he was no longer exposed to his hatred.

But the person he is about to describe is neither an enemy nor a hater, but a “man” [Hebrew *enosh*, mortal man], of whom he says he is “my equal” (verse 13). David’s putting it this way indicates that he is speaking as a king and placing the other person as on his level. Ahithophel – if David is thinking of him, which is likely – is not a king, but the antichrist will be a king. It shows how much he has valued this person who in himself is no more than a mortal man.

The designation “my companion and my familiar friend” emphasizes the special relationship that existed between David and this person. This does apply to Ahithophel who was David’s “companion” and who was a “familiar friend” to David, an intimate (cf. Psa 41:9).

David describes the relationship with his companion and familiar friend as “sweet fellowship” (verse 14). He describes his dealings with him as intimate. It reflects the intimacy of the close friendship he had with him. As a culmination of their close dealings with each other, David mentions that they walked “in the house of God in the throng”.

Prophetically we see this in the first half of the last year week of Daniel. Then the believing remnant and the unbelieving mass of the Jews, under the leadership of the antichrist, will go together to the newly rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Dan 9:27a). The antichrist will take the lead and act very piously. Halfway through that year week, he will throw off his mask and show his true face. The mask comes off with the prohibition of further sacrifice and the erection of the abomination of destruction in the temple (Dan 9:27b; Mt 24:15).

The anguish of the reproach and betrayal of such a person leads David to the sudden exclamation that “death come deceitfully upon them” (verse 15). David speaks in the plural, “them”. His former friend is not his only betrayer. However, that friend’s betrayal has affected him most deeply and brought him to this exclamation. The punishment that comes over it is to “go down alive to Sheol”, which brings to mind the judgment on Korah’s entourage and on the antichrist (Num 16:30-33; Rev 19:20).

This must happen to them, “for evil is in their dwelling, in their midst”. Their midst is their innermost being, the center of their being, is a dwelling place of only evil, pernicious things. Nor is it a temporary dwelling, but a permanent habitation. Evil rules there, wielding the scepter and governing their complete will, speech and action.

Psa 55:16-21 | God Will Hear

*16 As for me, I shall call upon God,
And the LORD will save me.*

*17 Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and murmur,
And He will hear my voice.*

*18 He will redeem my soul in peace from the battle [which is] against me,
For they are many [who strive] with me.*

*19 God will hear and answer them—
Even the one who sits enthroned from of old— Selah.
With whom there is no change,*

And who do not fear God.

*20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him;
He has violated his covenant.*

*21 His speech was smoother than butter,
But his heart was war;*

*His words were softer than oil,
Yet they were drawn swords.*

In contrast to what David wishes in verse 15 for his betrayers, people who turn against God and His godly ones, he will cry out to God (verse 16). His adversaries go down to Sheol. For himself he expresses the assurance that “the LORD”, Yahweh, will save him.

He goes to God “evening and morning and at noon” to complain and murmur (verse 17; cf. Dan 6:11). It indicates that he is constantly calling upon God (1Thes 5:17). He prays, so to speak, ‘around the clock’. That he mentions the evening first is because in Israel the day usually begins on the evening of the previous day (Lev 23:32). He is confident that God will hear his voice.

In confidence of faith, David expresses that God will redeem his “soul in peace from the battle” which is against him (verse 18). To his mind, redemption has already taken place. The battle is over. The many who were against him are no longer fighting against him. The peace that he has lost because of his friend’s betrayal and the opposition of many has returned to his soul now that he has entrusted everything to God.

He knows that “God will hear and answer them” (verse 19). After all, God is the One “who sits enthroned from of old”. David’s enemies can drive him from his throne, but it is impossible to drive God from the throne. God sits on the throne and governs everything. His government is for the benefit of His own and means judgment for the wicked.

The wicked are judged because with them “there is no change” and they “do not fear God”. God speaks to man several times to turn him from his path of error (Job 33:14-17). But if they remain unchanging in their way of life and go their own way, He will humble them. Their reliance on their own strength and ability proves that they do not fear God, that they do not have any respect for Him.

That they do not change and do not fear God, they show by putting their hands forth “against those who were at peace with him” (verse 20). Once again David refers to the faithless actions of his companion and familiar friend. That one had taken advantage of him by seeking his misfortune, while David was at peace with him. By that treacherous action he violated the covenant of friendship.

The betrayal is the betrayal of the mouth (verse 21). His speech was “smoother than butter” (cf. Pro 16:28; Jer 9:4-5). He is a slippery hypocrite, someone you cannot depend on at all, whose words have no value. The buttery smoothness of his mouth camouflages his heart that is out for battle (Jer 9:8). His heart is brimming with plans to fight his friend.

The words that come out of his mouth “are softer than oil” (cf. Pro 5:3). Oil is meant to relieve pain (Isa 1:6). His words, however, do not relieve pain, but cause pain, for “they were drawn swords”. His sweet talk is life-threatening, for he is out to cause death and destruction.

Psa 55:22-23 | Trust in God

22 Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you;

He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

23 But You, O God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction;

Men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days.

But I will trust in You.

After the peace of verse 18, the weight of worry or burden can be cast upon the LORD (verse 22). In Psalm 37, David said, to himself and to others, to commit their *way* to the LORD (Psa 37:5). Now he says they should cast their *burden* upon Him. The answer to trials is not to run away from them, but to cast them upon the Lord (1Pet 5:7). This presupposes an activity on the part of the believer; he must do so.

When he does, the paralyzing effect of the trials ceases and the foundation for constant trust is laid. Whatever the trial or difficulty may be, we may cast it upon the Lord. Then the trial still exists, but He, the Lord, will “sustain” us in the midst of it.

In His unfailing faithfulness He is with us in the trial. This is not a temporary thing. We will find that He will “never allow the righteous to be shaken”. This is better than the absence of evil. It is impossible for Him to allow evil to gain victory. We must learn to trust in Him in the midst of evil. He still allows evil to exist to sustain us in the midst of it.

The men of blood and deceit, such as Ahithophel and Judas, prematurely descended into the pit of destruction (verse 23; 2Sam 17:14,23; Mt 27:5). David, on the other hand, trusts in God. God will hear him and save him, support him under his burden, give him everything he needs to fulfill his task on earth. David will serve “the purpose of God in his own generation” (Acts 13:36) and then be received by God in glory.

Psalm 56

Psa 56:1-2 | Complaint

1 For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A Mikhtam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me;

Fighting all day long he oppresses me.

2 My foes have trampled upon me all day long,

For they are many who fight proudly against me.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The phrase “according to Jonath elem rehokim”, or “the silent dove of those who are far off”, or “the dove of the distant terebinths”, seems to be a musical term. The tone indicated by this term is that of plaintive homesickness. The Septuagint translates this with: “According to people who have been driven away from the sanctuary.” This indicates that it speaks prophetically of the remnant driven out of Jerusalem (Mt 24:15-16).

David says in the previous psalm that he would like to have wings of a dove, to fly far away, far away from danger to a place of safety (Psa 55:6-8). Here that longing is given a musical tone. In Hebrew it can also be translated with: ‘dove of silence from afar.’

The dove is also a picture of the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:16). The Holy Spirit now dwells on earth in the believer and in the church, connecting the believer with heaven, where the Lord Jesus is. In the world the believer is not at home, and he does not feel at home in it. The Spirit will stimulate in every believer the longing for the Lord Jesus in heaven, to be with Him. He does this through God’s Word, which is all about the Lord Jesus. Those who do not read the Word of God do not know that longing and will connect with the world.

David writes the psalm in response to the hostile approach of many who fight him and do so all day long. Therefore, like a dove, he yearns for a place of safety and security. He longs to go home again like a dove in a foreign country. It is the feeling of being in exile. His longing is to be home,

a place far away from where he is now. It is also a place of stability and durability, of which the “distant terebinths” speak.

This psalm “of David” is called “a Mikhtam”. This designation is also mentioned in the heading of the four following psalms (Psa 57:1; 58:1; 59:1; 60:1). Some say its meaning is derived from a word for “gold”, which has led to the translation “a golden gem”, as in the Dutch translation we use. Apart from these five psalms (Psalms 56-60), it only appears in the heading of Psalm 16 (Psa 16:1).

Mikhtam means ‘engraved’, in other words: permanent, precious. Prophetically, it refers to the experiences of the believing remnant in the time of the great tribulation. The remnant, of whom this psalm speaks prophetically, is still abroad, oppressed by the antichrist and the unbelieving mass of the Jews on the one hand, and the surrounding nations on the other. They seek their comfort, guidance and encouragement in the Word of God (verses 4,10). That leads to renewed confidence (verse 11) and a giving thanks to God (verses 12,13). That is the precious thing about these experiences, which never lose their value.

The occasion of the psalm, of this “mikhtam”, is that “the Philistines seized him in Gath” (cf. Psa 34:1). David fell into their power. He found himself in that circumstance of affliction through his own fault. The fear of Saul persecuting him restlessly became so strong that he lost his trust in God and took refuge with the Philistines in Gath (1Sam 21:10-15).

David had to deal with two enemies: his own people led by King Saul, and the foreign enemy, the Philistines. Similarly, the remnant will have to deal with two enemies. The first is the unbelieving mass of the Jews led by the antichrist (Rev 13:11-18), supported by the dictator of the restored Roman Empire, the beast out of the sea (Rev 13:1-10). The second is the foreign enemy, the Assyrian, the king of the North, probably a coalition of islamic nations in the end time. The emphasis in this psalm is on the foreign enemy, the Philistines.

Because of them, he comes into great distress of soul. He is a prisoner in Gath and cannot get out of the gate. Therefore he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely at the gate as a madman (1Sam 21:12-13). Then he is set free. In this depth of affliction, in which he behaves so un-

worthily, this “mikhtam” or “golden gem” is born. Prophetically we see here the purification of the believing remnant, just as Joseph’s brothers were purified in the distress of their brief captivity in Egypt.

God can use our most degrading experiences to make more of Christ visible in us. This is the result of the trial of faith and the exercise of faith of trusting in God. Then we can repeat Christ in faith: “This I know, that God is for me” (verse 9), allowing us to testify of it, twice: “In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid; what can man do to me?” (verses 4,11).

The complaint begins with a prayer to God to be gracious to him (verse 1b; cf. *Psa 51:1*). Grace is the only thing David can appeal to, for he has forfeited every right to help and blessing. David immediately pours out his heart before God. He pictures before Him in bright colors the constant, varied, and hostile opposition.

He tells God that “man has trampled upon” him. Thus he makes it a case between the almighty God and man [*Hebrew enosh*, mortal man]. Even in his distress, David continues to insist that the enemies, though powerful and many, are only puny human beings, mortals. He also continues to insist that although he is vulnerable and with few, he can expect help from God, the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth.

He himself has no strength against that mortal man, that is how weak he is. That mortal man has trampled upon him, or snapped at him with a wide-open mouth to swallow him with skin and hair. The mortal he has to deal with is “fighting” him and “oppresses” him “all day long”. He does not have a moment of rest and he is all by himself.

His combatants are “foes”, people who have trampled upon him (verse 2). And again he says that they are doing this “all day long”. He is constantly being oppressed, without a pause for breath. The next day brings no change. It’s the same thing every day and the whole day. He constantly feels the hot breath of the opened mouth of his assailants on his neck to swallow him up. The threefold use of the phrase “all day long” (verses 1b,2,5) indicates how relentlessly he is besieged, with no place of safety.

On top of that, he has “many who fight proudly against” him. He sees himself surrounded by people who want to kill him. In the land over which he

is anointed king reigns a king who hunts him down. In the land to which he has fled to stay out of Saul's hands, he is also surrounded by assailants. The literal translation of the second line of verse 2 is "for they are many who fight me from on high". 'From on high' means 'proudly'. That is, his combatants have no respect for him at all, but look down on him in pride.

Psa 56:3-4 | Trust in God

*3 When I am afraid,
I will put my trust in You.
4 In God, whose word I praise,
In God I have put my trust;
I shall not be afraid.
What can [mere] man do to me?*

David acknowledges that there are days when he is afraid (verse 3). We know those days too. Fear is one of those things that God uses to make us realize that we need Him. David does not allow fear to control him. He chooses with conviction to trust in God. It is a strictly personal matter. He says "I will", with emphasis.

If the trust in God is restored, it is because we trust His word, which here are His promises that He will help us and save us (verse 4). It is not possible to trust God in any other way than by trusting His words. And when we trust His words, we are trusting Himself. Everything He has promised is reason to praise Him. Then in God we praise His word.

To trust in God we must be familiar with His promises. We only know these when we have read them in His Word. Distress inflicted on us by men, and even distress brought upon ourselves by our own fault, must lead us to what God has said.

Praising God because of His words gives confidence in God so that I no longer fear people. I can even say with boldness: "What can [mere] man do to me?" Men, literally 'flesh', people who are weak in themselves, are His creatures and therefore in His hand. A creature can do nothing apart from Him. For this reason the believer can speak in this way.

It is not presumptuous to say this, but an expression of trust in God. God has spoken. He has promised that He will protect His own, preserve them, and bring them safely to Him and give them everything He has promised. What can a creature do against that? We can rest completely in His words, that is, in Him Who has spoken.

Psa 56:5-7 | Complaint

*5 All day long they distort my words;
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
6 They attack, they lurk,
They watch my steps,
As they have waited [to take] my life.
7 Because of wickedness, cast them forth,
In anger put down the peoples, O God!*

Trust in God does not make us blind to the people who fight and attack us or the methods they use. Their enmity manifests itself primarily in words. David's enemies "all day long" – this connects to verse 2 – "distort" his words (verse 5). They mutilate his words, literally, they "hurt" his words.

One of the meanest weapons of the enemy is to distort someone's words. In doing so, the whole person is rendered implausible. It is the violation of a person's integrity. We too must be careful not to use this weapon. We can easily fall into the same error, especially when it comes to profound disagreements.

The Lord Jesus experienced this during His life on earth (Jn 2:19-21; Mt 27:39-40). God experiences this daily, for example, through the lie of the so-called theistic theory of evolution. God has said that He created the earth in six days (Gen 1:31; 2:1-2; Exo 20:11). Man distorts His words in such a way that He used many millions of years. What a disgrace this is to Him!

The thoughts of the enemy, "all their thoughts", are always for the worse for the believers. Never does he seek good for them. He may formulate his thoughts pleasantly and well, but he is out to damage and eliminate the believer in his testimony for God and His Christ.

The enemies of David, of the believing remnant, and of us as well, are having gatherings to deliberate how best to proceed to eliminate the believer (verse 6). It is a renewed attack that has made a renewed confidence necessary.

They do not come at him one by one, but join forces. The next action is for them to hide in an ambush. There they watch his footsteps. He is constantly watched. If he does anything wrong, he is finished, for they lurk for his life.

David, after suffering so much injustice, cries out to God; surely they will not go free, will they (verse 7)? In line with God's assessment of all this injustice, he asks God to "put down the peoples" in anger. The many combatants constitute such a large number that David speaks of "peoples". Again, we see that he is not asking for permission and help to deal with his enemies himself, but whether God will deal with them.

Psa 56:8-11 | Trust in God

*8 You have taken account of my wanderings;
Put my tears in Your bottle.
Are [they] not in Your book?
9 Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call;
This I know, that God is for me.
10 In God, [whose] word I praise,
In the LORD, [whose] word I praise,
11 In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid.
What can man do to me?*

David is fully convinced that God does not forget one of his many wanderings because of his fleeing from Saul (verse 8). God has counted them. He keeps track of how many there are and the duration of each wandering (1Sam 21:10; 22:1,3,5; 23:5,14,25; 24:1-2). For the sake of the remnant, God has set in advance a maximum to the days of their tribulation. He counts down their days until exactly that maximum is reached (Mt 24:22). Exactly at that point the tribulation ceases and the suffering is over.

God has also seen the tears of David. David asks God to put his tears in His bottle to keep them. These are the tears of believers shed in their suffering

and sorrow for the Lord (Job 16:20). These believers are written down by God in His book, including all their experiences (cf. Mal 3:16; Psa 139:16). As for the enemies, it will be a proof against them with which they will be confronted on the day of reckoning.

As for believers, the tears will be kept, that once they are with Him, He may wipe them from their eyes (Rev 21:4). The suffering and sorrow will be over, but the memory of what caused the tears will never be forgotten. Above all, the tears of Him, Who offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to God (Heb 5:7), will have our eternal attention.

David turns the day he is afraid (verse 3) into a day he calls (verse 9). He sees that his "enemies will turn back in the day when" he calls. When we call, the enemy will give way, not before. Because he calls, he can say with confidence: "This I know, that God is with me." He experiences that God is truly the Immanuel, "God with us". "This I know" is a victory call. Thus we can exclaim: "If God is for us, who will be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

Having expressed this certainty, he returns to what he said once before, in verse 4 (verse 10). In God he praises His "word". This is more general than in verse 4. It certainly includes the promises He made to David, but also includes all the other promises and purposes of God. It is about all that God has said.

The revelation of that we have in the written Word of God. God reveals what He has planned by expressing it in words. Thus we know His plans. We need no more than that and nothing else. God and His Word are one.

Then David says that he praises "in the LORD ... [his] word". "God" is the Name of God as Creator, "LORD" is His Name as the God of the covenant with His people. This brings it even closer. David is not just speaking of the sovereign God Who is trustworthy in all that He says. He is speaking here of the God with Whom he has a close relationship, the God Who has made promises to His people and will fulfill them.

Those who praise God and the LORD in the word He has spoken know that that God and LORD is trustworthy (verse 11). "The word" spoken by God "is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance" (1Tim 1:15; 4:9). Then there is no fear of man either, for what could man do to us

(cf. Mt 10:28a; Heb 13:6b)? God has spoken and He will do what He has promised. No man can change that. What man could undertake anything against God? Therefore, no man can do anything against the believer.

Psa 56:12-13 | Thanksgiving

12 Your vows are [binding] upon me, O God;

I will render thank offerings to You.

13 For You have delivered my soul from death,

Indeed my feet from stumbling,

So that I may walk before God

In the light of the living.

David is full of admiration for God. He has just expressed twice his trust in Him with the implication that he no longer fears any man (verse 11; verse 4). He turns to God and says to Him: “O God” (verse 12). In this we hear his amazement at what God has done. He immediately links the vows he has made to this. He will have made these during the time he was in trouble.

Now that he has found rest in God and His word and the knowledge that God is with him, he has not forgotten those vows. On the contrary, it is an incentive for him to keep those vows and to do so with rendering thank offerings to God. He trusts that God will help him and that he will bring the vow offering as a thank offering as a result.

God has delivered his soul from death (verse 13). Therefore, he can and will keep his vows. His enemies have always been out to kill him, but they have not succeeded because of God’s protection. They have watched his footsteps because they lurked for his life (verse 6). But God has kept his “feet from stumbling”. He gives God full credit for his deliverance.

The result is that he will “walk before God in the light of the living”. It means that he knows himself to be in God’s presence and is safe there. There he also walks in the light and not in the darkness. He walks there together with all the living, which are those who are also in God’s light.

The New Testament makes it clear that the light of life is the Lord Jesus (Jn 1:4). Walking in the light of the living comes down to what the Lord Jesus

says: "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (Jn 8:12).

Psalm 57

Psa 57:1-3 | Prayer for Grace

1 For the choir director; [set to] Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,

For my soul takes refuge in You;

And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge

Until destruction passes by.

2 I will cry to God Most High,

To God who accomplishes [all things] for me.

3 He will send from heaven and save me;

He reproaches him who tramples upon me. Selah.

God will send forth His lovingkindness and His truth.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see Psalm 4:1.

The phrase “[set to] Al-tashheth”, literally “Do not destroy”, has the form of a prayer (cf. Deu 9:26) and seems to be a musical term. This term appears in three more psalms (Psa 58:1; 59:1; 75:1). It links Psalms 57, 58 and 59 together. These three psalms prophetically deal with the time of the great tribulation being wrought by the antichrist. The tribulation is so severe that no man would be saved if those days had not been cut short for the sake of the elect (Mt 24:22). Psalm 75 has this same expression in the heading. There we see God’s response to the problems in these three psalms.

For “a Mikhtam of David” see at Psalm 56:1.

Also in this psalm, the heading gives the reason for its writing. David writes this psalm “when he fled from Saul in the cave” (cf. Psa 142:1). Because it does not speak of ‘a cave’ but of “the cave”, it is plausible that “the cave of Adullam” is meant. That is where David fled from Saul and where others joined him (1Sam 22:1-2).

In this psalm we look at a dark night in David’s life. In verse 4 we see David lying down to sleep, and in verse 8 we see David waking up in the early morning.

David makes no claim to deliverance, but makes a penetrating appeal to the grace of God (verse 1b). Twice he asks God “be gracious to me”, exclaiming “O God” in between. This illustrates how great the need is. Also, the appeal to grace shows that David realizes that he has no right to claim help. If God helps, it is by grace alone.

In Psalm 56, David begins by asking once “be gracious to me, O God”. Here, in Psalm 57, he places additional emphasis on this request by uttering this question twice. In Psalm 56, the danger comes primarily from the foreign enemy, the Philistines. In Psalm 57, the danger comes from his own people led by King Saul.

As he sits in the darkness of the cave, he expresses that his soul has taken refuge in God. Just as he asks God twice to be gracious to him, so he speaks twice about taking refuge in God. The first time it is an act in the present, he takes refuge in God at this time. The second time it is future tense, “I will take refuge”, indicating that he takes refuge continuously, until the danger has passed.

After all, he cannot take refuge in anyone else. Not the cave is his refuge, but God (cf. Isa 25:4). He has taken refuge “under the shadow” of God’s “wings”. Wings symbolize security and warmth (cf. Rth 2:12; Psa 36:7; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; Mt 23:37). In that security David wants to remain “until destruction passes by”. In doing so, he expresses his trust in God that He will bring an end to his threatening situation.

From that safe place David cries “to God Most High” (verse 2). Whatever happens, happens under His watch, it is under His authority and control. This crying to God, as well as his taking refuge in God, is an expression of his trust in God. God is infinitely superior to all enemies and their plans to harm him.

That God, so David says, will “accomplish [all things] for me”. By this he is saying that nothing or no one can prevent God from accomplishing His purpose with the lives of His own (cf. Phil 1:6; Rth 3:18). The same applies to the whole world event. Everything that God has planned, He will finish (Rev 21:5-6a).

Therefore, David knows, God will “send from heaven and save” him (verse 3). This is the confidence that the remnant will also express when they are

in the great tribulation. God will deliver them by sending them the Messiah from heaven. At His coming, He will put the enemies to shame by destroying them. For the believer, His coming means that God is sending in Him “His lovingkindness and His truth”.

God uses the very presence of His people’s enemies to show His lovingkindness and His truth. “His lovingkindness” is the basis of His action. He acts in accordance with the promises and blessings of the covenant. He shows this in the redemption of His own. His faithfulness He shows in the fulfillment of His promises.

Psa 57:4-6 | The Complaint

*4 My soul is among lions;
I must lie among those who breathe forth fire,
[Even] the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows
And their tongue a sharp sword.
5 Be exalted above the heavens, O God;
[Let] Your glory [be] above all the earth.
6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;
They dug a pit before me;
They [themselves] have fallen into the midst of it. Selah.*

David compares his opponents to tearing lions (verse 4; cf. Psa 10:9). He is in the midst of them; he is surrounded by them. They are people “who breathe forth fire”. Their hatred glows like a fire within them and they want to scorch him. Their words come from the fire of hell (Jam 3:6). He lies between them, unable to change anything about his position. At the same time, “I must lie” indicates a certain rest. He can lie down and sleep (cf. Psa 3:5-6).

The “sons of men” who are around him have teeth like “spears and arrows”. They want to devour him with their words (Psa 52:4). Their tongue he compares to “a sharp sword” (cf. Psa 52:2). They express the murderousness and hatred that fills them in words that have a deadly effect. They completely tear David down by spreading the worst slander about him (1Sam 24:10; 26:19).

In the face of such threatening circumstances, David asks God to exalt Himself above the heavens, the firmament, and make His glory visible above all the earth (verse 5). In doing so, he asks that God execute judgment on iniquity. It can no longer go on like this. David is concerned with God's glory. That has to become visible whereas now there is nothing to see of it.

It is necessary for God to exalt Himself and show Himself, because his enemies are in control. They have "prepared a net" for his steps to catch him (verse 6). That net, which is camouflaged with twigs and leaves, lies over "a pit" which they have dug for him to catch him in it as a wild animal is caught (cf. Psa 35:7).

They want to trap him. His soul is bowed down by them, so much so that he is cornered by his many adversaries. But in faith David sees that their ambushes will fail and that his enemies will suffer the fate they had in mind for him (cf. Psa 7:15; Est 9:25; Dan 6:25).

Psa 57:7-11 | The Glory of God

7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;

I will sing, yes, I will sing praises!

8 Awake, my glory!

Awake, harp and lyre!

I will awaken the dawn.

9 I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the peoples;

I will sing praises to You among the nations.

10 For Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens

And Your truth to the clouds.

11 Be exalted above the heavens, O God;

[Let] Your glory [be] above all the earth.

In the evening (verses 1b-4) David prayed for deliverance. In the morning (verses 7-11) he praises God for the assurance of salvation (cf. Psa 108:1-5). In his trust in God's salvation, he intends in his heart to sing praises to God (verse 7). His heart is "steadfast", prepared or at rest, he says twice. It is, as it were, the echo of the prayer he twice utters to God to be gracious to him (verse 1b). There is no longer any fear in his heart, but a firm conviction of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness.

The fact that he says twice that his heart is steadfast is not a meaningless repetition. It is a testimony to a rising enthusiasm. This is also echoed in “I will sing, yes, I will sing praises”. Here again we hear a repetition, this time of singing, with the second time given to singing a further clarification.

David says to his “glory” that it must awaken (verse 8). He also tells his “harp and lyre” to awake. Musical instruments are part of a celebration. His “glory” is paralleled by “harp and lyre” in connection with the giving thanks to the Lord. It is his “glory” that God’s greatness is manifested in his life through God’s salvation and by his praise.

When his glory and his musical instruments are awakened, he can “awaken the dawn”. The metaphor is that a night of suffering, is followed by a joyful shout of salvation in the morning (cf. Psa 30:5). He sees himself set at the beginning of a new day or a new period. It is still dark. Everything is still asleep. But it will not be long before the dawn breaks. With his singing accompanied by musical instruments he wants to speed up the dawn, he wants to awaken the dawn.

The dawning of the new day not only promises blessing for his own life. The dawning of the day – and this prophetically means the realm of peace – will be noticed among the peoples, that is his own people, and among the peoples, that is the nations (verse 9). This happens through the giving thanks to the Lord, Adonai, a thanksgiving he will make heard “among the peoples”. The same is true of the praises he will sing to God’s glory. He will do so “among the nations”.

The occasion, which is represented by the word “for”, is the lovingkindness and truth of God (verse 10). In verse 3, David has asked that God send His salvation trusting that God will send His lovingkindness and His faithfulness. Here he testifies among the nations that all of creation is full of God’s lovingkindness and faithfulness. It is an abundant reason to glorify God.

He calls God’s lovingkindness “great”. He connects that great lovingkindness with heaven and says it reaches up to there. Heaven is the place from which all blessing comes (verse 3). God’s faithfulness or truth he connects with the clouds and says that His faithfulness or truth reaches up to there. By the clouds we can think of His government moving above and over the

earth, untouchable by men. Both of these features of God are above the earth, but are known and enjoyed on earth (Psa 36:5).

David concludes his psalm by again asking God to exalt Himself above the heavens (verse 11). Yet there is a different sound connected to it than in verse 5. There the question is asked against the background of the enemies surrounding him. If God exalts Himself and brings them down, His glory will be seen over all the earth. At this point, salvation is a fact for faith. Therefore, God can show His glory “above all the earth” and it can be enjoyed everywhere.

May our desire be that our tribulations or trials will lead to the glorification of God in our whole live.

Psalm 58

Psa 58:1-5 | Unrighteous Judges

1 For the choir director; [set to] Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David.

Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods?

Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men?

2 No, in heart you work unrighteousness;

On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb;

These who speak lies go astray from birth.

4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent;

Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,

5 So that it does not hear the voice of charmers,

[Or] a skillful caster of spells.

The words of this heading we also find in the heading of three other psalms (verse 1a; Psa 57:1; 59:1; 75:1).

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “[set to] Al-tashheth” or “Do not destroy” see at Psalm 57:1a.

For “a Mikhtam of David” see at Psalm 56:1.

David calls the unjust judges to account (verse 1b). He asks the “gods”, with whom judges are meant, so to speak the supreme court, the penetrating question of whether they “indeed speak righteousness”. He also asks a second question: whether they judge uprightly, in accordance with truth and justice.

Here it is about the leaders, the judges of the people. Prophetically, it is the leaders at the time of the great tribulation who submit to the leadership of the antichrist. The Lord Jesus says that in this period lawlessness will increase and the love of the multitude – whereby we must think especially of the apostate mass of Israel led by the antichrist – will grow cold (Mt 24:12).

Thereby he addresses the college as “sons of men”, literally ‘sons of Adam’. These noble men are in themselves nothing more than ordinary “sons of

men". This is evident from the fact that they judge according to the depraved deliberations and prejudices that characterize the sons of men who live without God.

David himself answers his questions and does so in no unmistakable way (verse 2). The judges do not render justice or judge fairly. "No", they abuse their position. They wrong other sons of men in the name of justice in order to benefit themselves. This injustice is in their hearts. This is where it is conceived, and what God sees as committed there.

Their hands, that is, their actions, follow the injustice that is in their hearts. They weigh out the violence with their hands. It is presented in such a way, that the matter on which they have to decide is placed by them on one side of a scale, while on the other side of the scale lies justice. This is how things should be in a fair administration of justice in any case: there should be a balance between the crime and the verdict (cf. Job 31:6; Dan 5:27).

But these judges – and indeed also judges today – do not apply the law, but violence. Instead of weighing out a just punishment, they weigh out violence. They apply what they consider to be necessary violence in order to profit as much as possible from a trial. This is done by them "on earth". That is their sphere of activity, just like that of all the sons of men. As judges, they feel exalted above the earth and look down on people with contempt.

The judges are part of a society where the wicked call the shots (verse 3). The judges partake in this fiercely and even lead the way by their unjust judgments. They "are estranged" from God (cf. Eph 4:17-19). The judges are detached from God, the supreme Judge, and act according to their own will and play god.

This behavior did not come about suddenly, but it characterizes them "from the womb", that is, from the very beginning. This makes clear the character of (original) sin. It is the sinful nature. The power of original sin has been put to an end by God in Christ for everyone who acknowledges that he was brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin (Psa 51:5).

They "speak lies". They can do nothing but tell lies, just like the devil, who is "a liar and the father of lies" (Jn 8:44). They have no connection to the truth and therefore they wander. This is so "from birth". They cannot be

trusted in anything. Whatever they say or claim or promise, it is all false. The cause is not that they are deceived or have had a wrong upbringing, but the conscious and guilty acting according to what they devise in their depraved hearts from the time they were able to think consciously.

Their speaking is “venom” which is “like the venom of a serpent” (verse 4). Just as of the serpent the mouth is the most dangerous weapon – a serpent’s bite from a poisonous serpent is deadly because of the poison (cf. Num 21:6) – so too of the judges their mouth is the most dangerous. They speak like the serpent, that is the devil, the father of lies. Thus they perform their pernicious and deadly work.

They themselves are “like a deaf cobra, that stops up its ear”. They shut themselves off from everything that points out to them their wrong actions and lying words. They are therefore dangerous and uncorrectable, just like a poisonous serpent that is no longer correctable to the charmer because it stops up its ears. They do not want to hear the truth under any circumstances. That they are true children of their father, the devil, is evident from what comes out of their mouths and for what they stop up their ears.

They do not want to “listen to the voice of charmers” (verse 5). They shut themselves off from every sound of warning. The person performing the charming may be very skilled, but if there is pertinent unwillingness, he cannot do anything with his charming. We can apply this to the conscience that every person has. When a person wants to do something that is not right, his conscience speaks like a “charmer”. The wicked judge silences his conscience and sears it (1Tim 1:19; 4:2).

Psa 58:6-9 | Punishment for the Unjust Judges

6 O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth;
Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD.
7 Let them flow away like water that runs off;
[When] he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts.
8 [Let them be] as a snail which melts away as it goes along,
[Like] the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun.
9 Before your pots can feel [the fire of] thorns
He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

In a powerful way, introduced with the calling to God, “O God”, David makes known his desire with God that He puts an end to these terrible practices. Only God can do that. It is a cry for justice (cf. Rev 6:10). He proposes to God some appropriate punishments that will render these judges harmless.

Anyone who finds these proposals inappropriate and harsh shows an unhealthy compassion for depraved, incorrigible rebels against God. They willingly and knowingly stand with their fists raised against God. Such a person shows great indifference to the great injustice that these wicked judges do to God and men.

Because the mouth is their most dangerous weapon, David first asks that God shatters “their teeth in their mouth” (verse 6). With broken teeth, it is not possible to seize and eat prey. His weapon and thus his power is then disabled. Let Him “break out the fangs” – the Hebrew word means, first of all, ‘jaws’ – of these predatory and voracious “young lions”. Then they can no longer devour prey, that is, they can no longer exercise their wicked justice and make more victims (cf. Job 29:17).

David goes on to ask if God will make the wicked judges flow away like water that runs off (verse 7). Then they are gone forever. God must also let the arrows that the wicked judge lays on, that is, the deadly words he utters, be “as headless shafts”. Such arrows never hit target and thus do not cause damage.

God must also let them be “as a snail which melts away as it goes along” (verse 8). From a melting snail there is no threat whatsoever. The snail is also called a “slime worm” in Hebrew. When a snail is trampled, it turns into a slimy goo. God should never let them see the sun “[like] the miscarriages of a woman”. They must be like premature and stillborn children, which means that they have never seen the light of the sun (cf. Job 3:16; Ecc 6:3-5).

A final comparison to illustrate the judgment on them is that of cooking pots placed above a fire of thorns (verse 9). Before the flame enters the thorns to bring the pots to a boil, the wind has swept the thorns away.

With that speed, God will sweep away the wicked judges alive as in burning anger (cf. Job 27:21). It indicates that the wicked are as worthless as thorns and that judgment on them will be sudden and complete.

Psa 58:10-11 | There Is a God Who Judges on Earth

*10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance;
He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*

*11 And men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous;
Surely there is a God who judges on earth!"*

It becomes the righteous, Old Testament believer to rejoice "when he sees the vengeance" that God exercises on the wicked (verse 10). The righteous person is not bloodthirsty, but longs for justice (Mt 5:6). God will satisfy that desire by bringing vengeance on the wicked and especially on the ungodly judges and their bloodshed (cf. Isa 63:1-6; Rev 14:19-20; 19:13-14).

As a result, the righteous will "wash his feet in the blood of the wicked" (cf. Psa 68:23a). "The blood of the wicked" indicates that he dies a violent death. This is his just punishment. He has committed violence (verse 2) and perishes by violence. In his blood the righteous one washes his feet. Washing the feet is a refreshment for a weary pilgrim. In this context, it means that the death of the wicked refreshes him. He receives new strength because he has seen that God has judged.

The earth is the dwelling place of the righteous. Now injustice reigns there and he suffers greatly from it. Through the vengeance of God, the injustice and his suffering come to an end and at the same time a change is brought. The righteous is no longer oppressed, but will live in peace on earth and enjoy the blessing that God has promised him.

This change is for men, for everyone, the visible evidence that there is "reward for the righteous" (verse 11). It has long seemed that the unjust judges could go about their business unhindered, that there was no justice for the righteous and that he received punishment instead of reward. But the death of the wicked will make it clear to "men" that there is indeed reward for the righteous. God gives him what he is entitled to, but what he has always been denied by the prevailing injustice.

This also reveals – and this is also acknowledged by everyone with an assenting “surely” – that “there is a God who judges on earth”. People often say as an excuse for not considering God: ‘If there is a God, why doesn’t He intervene?’ It shows the arrogance of men who think they can judge everything.

God is not guided in His actions by the opinions of men. He determines the time to intervene and do justice on earth. That time is certainly coming. When that time comes, God Himself will judge on earth. Then justice will be done in a way that everyone will acknowledge: “The judgment is God’s” (Deu 1:17).

For the New Testament believer, things are different. Certainly he also looks forward to the time when God judges on earth. There is even a special reward for him in looking forward to the appearance of Christ as the righteous Judge (2Tim 4:8). His destination, however, is not earth, but heaven. That is where he belongs. His deliverance from the affliction of this world does not happen through the judgment God brings on his enemies, but by taking him out of the world. That happens at the coming of Christ to take His church to Himself.

There is a lesson in what David says for the believer today. No one can explain the events on earth by attributing them to chance or fate or to mere physical processes, as if everything takes care of itself. The clear proof that God controls everything will be provided when He judges openly, perceptibly for all.

We cannot explain events without God. If we involve Him in the events, we will see, sometimes already now, but in any case later, their true purpose, His purpose. That gives us peace of mind to accept certain events, even if we do not always understand why things had to go the way they did.

This faith is also the faith of the believing remnant in the great tribulation and also their experience at the coming of Christ to earth. They know that God is still doing justice on earth and will experience that when Christ comes with reward for them (Rev 22:12). In the light of the prophecies, verse 11 of this psalm only becomes reality when the Lord Jesus establish-

es the millennial realm of peace. Then He will reward the righteous for their faithfulness.

Psalm 59

Introduction

David is in great distress. His life is threatened with death. Therefore, in the first verses of this psalm, he takes refuge in God. As he makes his distress known to God, his trust that God will deliver him grows. He starts in the depths, from where he cries out to God to deliver him. Then his prayer turns to the quiet confidence that God is in control. Although nothing has changed about his situation, while praying he comes at the end of the psalm to sing praises for the deliverance that God is going to give.

In this psalm we also hear the voice of the faithful remnant in the end time. At the end of the psalm, the morning breaks and there is praise for God, Who has delivered the remnant from its enemies by His power and strength. This foreshadows the dawning of the joy of the millennial realm of peace.

We can also notice a division in two parts in this psalm: first verses 1b-10 and then verses 11-17. Both parts end in similar wording (verse 9; verse 17) and contain corresponding phrases (verse 6; verse 14). Both parts begin with a prayer for help and end with a testimony of faithful trust.

Psa 59:1-7 | Prayer for Deliverance

1 For the choir director; [set to] Al-tashheth. A Mikhtam of David, when Saul sent [men] and they watched the house in order to kill him.

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;

Set me [securely] on high away from those who rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from those who do iniquity

And save me from men of bloodshed.

3 For behold, they have set an ambush for my life;

Fierce men launch an attack against me,

Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD,

4 For no guilt of [mine], they run and set themselves against me.

Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!

5 You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be gracious to any [who are] treacherous in iniquity. Selah.
6 They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.
7 Behold, they belch forth with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips,
For, [they say], "Who hears?"

The first part of the heading is also in the heading of three other psalms (Psa 57:1; 58:1; 75:1).

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "[set to] Al-tashheth", literally "Do not destroy", see at Psalm 57:1.

For "a Mikhtam of David" see at Psalm 56:1.

Then we read in the heading the background of the psalm: Saul sent servants to David's house to guard him at night and kill him in the morning. This event is mentioned in the first book of Samuel (1Sam 19:10-11a).

Prophetically, we recognize in Saul the beast coming up out of the earth of Revelation 13 (Rev 13:11-18). That beast will be out to kill all who do not worship the image of the first beast, which is the beast coming up out of the sea (Rev 13:15).

David is in great distress. He bursts forth to God in short, powerful exclamations: "Deliver me ..., set me ..., deliver me ..., save me ..." (verses 1b-2). Servants of Saul come to him, whom he calls "my enemies ...who rise up against me", "who do iniquity", and are "men of bloodshed". We can see a climax in these designations.

He addresses these cries of distress because of these people coming toward him, whom he calls "my enemies", to God, Whom he calls "my God". His enemies will kill him without mercy. Therefore, he asks *his* God to set him securely "on high away".

With the words "for behold" he draws God's attention to the fact that his enemies have set an ambush for his life (verse 3). For the purpose of setting that ambush, they conspire against him. They deliberate how best to seize him. David now addresses God as "LORD" as if to remind Him through

that Name that He has a covenant relationship with His people, the people over whom He has appointed him as king.

He also mentions to Him that on his part he has given no occasion for their murderous plans, for there is no transgression nor sin in his attitude toward Saul. He is without transgression because he has always obediently done what Saul has asked of him. There has been no sin in his service to Saul (cf. 1Sam 20:1). The demonstration of his innocence is an additional argument for the call to God to intervene.

Added to this is the fact that the men Saul has sent at him are “fierce [or: strong] men”. These enemies are strong, mighty. Facing them, David feels powerless. At great speed they rush upon him and prepare to put him to death, “without guilt” of him (verse 4). There is no justification for their pursuit on his life because he has done nothing that would make this necessary. Therefore, he can make an urgent appeal to God to “arouse” Himself, to meet him, to come to him to help him, and to see that the distress is great and help is urgently needed.

David appeals to the “LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel” (verse 5). In Hebrew it is *Yahweh Elohim Tsebaot*, followed by “God of Israel”. He is asking “the LORD” – the Name not often used in the second book of Psalms – namely the God of the covenant, to use His great power as the “God of Israel”. That this is called out in prayer means, in the prophetic application, that the period of Lo-Ammi, the period when Israel was temporarily set aside by God (Hos 1:9), has come to an end.

By invoking that Name, he asks if God with all His hosts will come to his aid against these “fierce men” who want to kill him. He also calls God the “God of Israel”. By this he is saying that it is not only about his own salvation, but that of His people as well. His people are in danger of falling into the power of evil, bloodthirsty men.

Once again he urges God to awake and cites as the reason “to punish all the nations”. God must intervene and punish Saul’s servants. Saul and his followers are the enemies of David. Prophetically it refers to the enemies of the remnant outside the people, the nations. This is evident in the use of the word “dogs” (verses 6,14), which in the Bible is a symbol for the nations (cf. Mt 15:21-28). Here we find the fulfillment of what is written in

Psalm 2, where we read that the kings of the earth gather together against the LORD and against His Anointed (Psa 2:1-3; cf. Zec 14:2).

These are people who are “treacherous in iniquity”. Literally it says “all traitors of iniquity”. These heathen, which includes their comrades such as the antichrist and his followers, are traitors, faithless, and their deeds are unrighteous. They are unfaithful to God. Therefore, God must not be gracious to any of them.

He compares his enemies to howling dogs that wander the city in the evening looking for him (verse 6). They return in the evening, which means that the danger has not passed; they are looking for ways to catch him. Their howling – literally ranting, whining, crying – is a threat that announces a possible attack.

As they wander, a tirade of curses comes out of their mouths pouring out on David. The words spurt out; it is a flood of words that make it clear that they are after his blood (verse 7). Their words are like “swords”, sowing death and destruction (cf. Psa 57:4).

“They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth” (Psa 73:9) because they believe that no one hears what they say, “for, [they say,] “Who hears?” They are afraid of no one; there is no one who can do anything to them. In their audacity and pride they do not think of God at all (cf. Psa 10:11). They do not take Him into account. Should He be there, so they reason, He is clearly absent.

Psa 59:8-15 | Trust

8 But You, O LORD, laugh at them;

You scoff at all the nations.

9 [Because of] his strength I will watch for You,

For God is my stronghold.

10 My God in His lovingkindness will meet me;

God will let me look [triumphantly] upon my foes.

11 Do not slay them, or my people will forget;

Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down,

O Lord, our shield.

12 [On account of] the sin of their mouth [and] the words of their lips,

*Let them even be caught in their pride,
 And on account of curses and lies which they utter.
 13 Destroy [them] in wrath, destroy [them] that they may be no more;
 That [men] may know that God rules in Jacob
 To the ends of the earth. Selah.
 14 They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
 And go around the city.
 15 They wander about for food
 And growl if they are not satisfied.*

After David brought his complaint to God, his mind is at rest (cf. Phil 4:6-7). He now turns in confidence to the LORD, the God with Whom he has a personal relationship (verse 8). While the arrogant opponents may think there is no one to hear them (verse 7), David knows better. He knows that God laughs at them (Psa 2:4). God does not take them seriously in their attempts to bring down His anointed king. Who can oppose Him without being himself exterminated by Him? God mocks all the nations. Here by nations is meant God's people because they act like the nations (cf. verse 5).

The strength David experiences from the enemy does not lead him to think of a counter-offensive or to consider human means he might employ to fight the enemy. No, he will watch for God, for He is his "stronghold" (verse 9). With Him he is invulnerable to the strength of the enemy. That he watches for God, means that he focuses on God, puts his eyes on and trust in Him. With Him he knows himself to be safe.

He trusts in God as his "God" Who "in His lovingkindness will meet" him to come to his aid (verse 10). As soon as he has turned his eye to God, he sees not only God's lovingkindness, but especially God Himself, the God Who is faithful to His covenant. He counts on the gracious God because he has done nothing that would cause God to deliver him into the hand of his foes. Therefore he knows that God will let him look triumphantly upon his foes. God will deal with them so that he will have nothing more to fear from them (cf. Exo 14:30b).

God must not slay His attackers, for then his people, the people over whom he is anointed king, will soon forget again how God deals with His

enemies (verse 11; cf. Psa 78:11). No, God must scatter them by His power. Thus the wandering Cain is a warning example of God's judgment on him because of the murder of his brother Abel (Gen 4:12-14). Similarly, the scattered earthly people of God are a testimony of God's judgment upon them because of their murder of their Messiah. These warning examples should keep people from committing sins against God and the neighbor. If they do not listen, they will suffer the same judgment.

What is an encouraging testimony to God's people is retribution from God to their enemies that they deserve righteously for their crimes (verse 12). After all, they have sinned terribly with their mouths. The word that has come over their lips testifies to great pride. They have uttered curses and told lies, saying that no one hears anyway (verse 7). They must be made aware of the fact that there is Someone Who has heard their words and Who will judge them for that (Mt 12:37). David asks God to destroy them in His wrath (verse 13).

Earlier he asked not to slay them, but to scatter them (verse 11). This is to make them a testimony of God's power to his followers. Now he asks for the final, ultimate judgment. This is after they have served as a testimony to God's power. When their time is up, they are to be destroyed, so "that they may be no more". That judgment is for a testimony against them. It does not mean that they cease to exist, but that they no longer live on earth and they can no longer do their evil work.

As a result, they will know "that God rules in Jacob". It is not them with their big mouth full of presumptuous words who are rulers, but God is Ruler in Jacob. Here "Jacob" is mentioned, emphasizing the weakness of the people. That weak people have in God a Ruler unlimited in power. And God is not only Ruler in Jacob, but He rules "to the ends of the earth". There is no territory on earth, no matter how far it is from the center of the earth, Israel, where He does not reign. And He reigns everywhere in the same way as in Israel.

Realizing God's omnipresent dominion, David can now boldly say that by evening the enemies may return as howling dogs (verse 14). To howl means, as in verse 6, to rant, to whine. The context in which it appears makes it clear that it is not here the ranting of a dangerous dog as in verse

6, but the howling of a beaten dog that disappears with its tail between its legs, which is evident from verse 15.

David has heard God's laughter over the enemies (verse 8). That encourages him and gives him peace. Let them come back and roam the city, he knows that God is laughing at them.

Because he knows that God rules, he is also confident that their attempts to seize him will be in vain. "They will wander about for food", that is, they are looking for him (verse 15), like dogs that are "about for food". They will spend the night, but "will not be satisfied", for they will not be able to get hold of him. They will spend the night, but be disappointed in the expectation that they will be satiated by the capture of their prey.

Psa 59:16-17 | Song of Praise

*16 But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength;
Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For You have been my stronghold
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
17 O my strength, I will sing praises to You;
For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness.*

The words "but as for me", are contrasted with the false hope of the "dogs" of the previous verse. David's watching for God is not in vain. He will sing of God's strength because God has shown His strength and has delivered him (verse 16). Strength is the same as in verse 9. However, the strength is here found with God and not with the enemies in verse 9, who are called the "fierce men" in verse 3. The night, which is full of growling dogs who are out for his blood and think they will seize him in the morning, has lost its terror for David.

He is not afraid in the morning. On the contrary, he will sing of God's strength. "Yes", he says, "I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning", at the dawn of salvation. His enemies had wanted to kill him in the night, but drop off with their tail between their legs, while David sings joyfully of God's lovingkindness the next morning. He sees that God has been a safe "stronghold" for him and praises God's lovingkindness for that. He is impressed with the fullness of God's lovingkindness to him.

David speaks here for the third time of a “stronghold”. He first asked God to put him in a stronghold in view of his need (verse 1b). After bringing his distress to God, he says that God is his stronghold (verse 9). Now that he looks back in faith, he testifies in his song that God has been a stronghold (verse 16).

David has experienced that God has been that stronghold for him because he has taken refuge in Him. God has been “a refuge” in the days when fear distressed him. We may *know* that God is a stronghold, but we will only *experience* that when we take refuge in Him in our distresses and troubles.

David knows that he did not come out of the distress by his own effort or cleverness. He was certainly helped by his wife Michal (1Sam 19:11b-12), but she too was only able to act that way because God wanted to save David. It is all thanks to God Whom he calls “my strength” (verse 17).

His enemies are way too powerful for him, but not for God. God is his strength and to Him he will sing praises. Because God is his strength, God is his stronghold. He owes everything solely to God’s protection. And God has protected him because He loves him. David is thankfully aware of this as well. Therefore he sings again of God’s “lovingkindness” (verses 10,17).

It is an example for us when we are in great need and distress. We may then take refuge in God and seek protection and safety from Him. He receives us eagerly, for He loves us. He protects us with His strength, but does so with in His heart those feelings of lovingkindness toward us. He is full of goodness for us. We experience this especially when we resort to Him in our need. Whatever means He uses to rescue us from our distress, the rescue ultimately comes from Him. That is why we want to honor Him.

Thus David ends the psalm by praising God’s “strength” in verse 16 and God’s “strength” in verse 17. In verse 16 David speaks of “Your lovingkindness”, which is the strength of God; in verse 17 David says “O, my strength”. God, with His strength, is his God.

David is not only singing *of* God (verse 16), but also *to* God (verse 17). We may proclaim God’s power over all things to all creation, to the visible and the invisible world. We may also praise God’s Being for the power He has shown for the benefit of His own.

Psalm 60

Introduction

In this psalm we hear through the mouth of David the acknowledgment of the remnant that God has rejected them. They express their only hope is that He will turn back to them. This at the same time proves that they have returned to Him with their hearts. They show no rebellious spirit and do not seek help from anyone else. They accept the distress into which they have fallen as the just discipline for their unfaithfulness as God's people. God's response is to give His banner to those who fear Him, which is the faithful remnant (verse 4). This is proof that "all Israel" (Rom 11:26) will triumph through Him.

Psa 60:1-5 | Prayer for God's Return

1 For the choir director; according to Shushan Eduth. A Mikhtam of David, to teach; when he struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt.

*O God, You have rejected us. You have broken us;
You have been angry; O, restore us.*

*2 You have made the land quake, You have split it open;
Heal its breaches, for it totters.*

*3 You have made Your people experience hardship;
You have given us wine to drink that makes us stagger.*

*4 You have given a banner to those who fear You,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.*

*5 That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save with Your right hand, and answer us!*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The phrase according to "Shushan Eduth", translated, "the lily of testimony" is again a musical term indicating the tone in which the psalm is to be sung. "The lily" indicates loveliness, tenderness, and pleasant fragrance. "The testimony" is the law by which the people are bound to God. This

psalm sings of the fact that there is nothing more lovely and pleasant than being in a covenant relationship with God.

For “a Mikhtam” see at Psalm 16:1.

This psalm is “to teach” and prophetically relates to the time when the Lord Jesus has returned from heaven to judge the enemies of His people. The teaching is intended for the descendency to learn from the way in which ancestry cried out to God in need and particularly from the way in which God answered (cf. Deu 31:19,21; 2Sam 1:18).

The historical background is the struggle David had with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, i.e. with the Syrians of Mesopotamia and the Syrians of Zobah. These enemies caused great distress to David. He has felt rejected by God (verse 1b). This led him to earnest prayer to God. Joab was then used by God to end this situation by defeating the Edomites on the return trip (2Sam 8:3-14; 1Kgs 11:15-16; 1Chr 18:12).

David tells God that the devastation wrought by the enemy is from Him. He sees that God has broken them. Immediately after, he acknowledges the cause: God has been angry. That is, something has happened to His people that has caused that anger. At the same time, David asks God to restore them, to return to them and lead His armies in the battle again.

David compares the condition of that moment to an earthquake caused by God (verse 2). And, of course, it is dramatic that Israel, God’s chosen people, is in danger of going under. As a result, it shakes on its foundations. Because of the earthquake, the land is “split open” (cf. Zec 14:4). The cohesion has disappeared, there is no longer any unity. Therefore, David prays that God will nevertheless heal its breaches, for the whole society is tottering. With this he asks that God will remove the consequences of the defeat, for chaos threatens.

God has made His people, His own people, “experience hardship” (verse 3), which are circumstances that are hard to bear and painful. They have been given wine to drink, not to make them merry, but to make them wobble and cloud their vision (cf. Isa 51:17). God brought that upon them (cf. Amos 3:6).

Then comes the turning point. David sees that God has given “a banner to those who fear Him” (verse 4). A “banner” speaks of victory, given by God. Moses built an altar to the LORD after a victory over the Amalekites and called it: “The LORD is my Banner” (Exo 17:15; cf. Isa 11:10).

God gives the victory to the God-fearing part of Israel, which to Him is the true Israel. They must raise that banner “that it may be displayed because of the truth” that God is for them and that they are victorious in His strength. It is not a banner to walk with in a parade, but to walk behind it in the battle. The truth is that every victory is given by God and all glory and honor is due to Him for it.

For us, it means that we shall “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3). ‘The faith’ is the truth of faith. We contend for the truth when we hold up the truth as a banner, while the truth is attacked from all sides in all areas of life. In this battle we must keep in mind that it is God’s truth and that He gives the victory.

Those who constitute the God-fearing part of Israel are called by David “Your beloved” (verse 5; cf. Psa 108:6). They are the object of God’s love. David here pleads with God on the basis of His love for those who are a remnant in the midst of the apostate people. He asks God to save them by His right hand, that is, by His power, and in that way answer them.

Psa 60:6-8 | God Has Spoken

6 God has spoken in His holiness:

“I will exult, I will portion out Shechem and measure out the valley of Succoth.

7 “Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine;

Ephraim also is the helmet of My head;

Judah is My scepter.

8 “Moab is My washbowl;

Over Edom I shall throw My shoe;

Shout loud, O Philistia, because of Me!”

The answer from God that David is asking for (verse 5), God gives “in His holiness” or “in His sanctuary” (verse 6). This answer is the heart of the psalm. It is the turning point of crying out to God for help, to which God

responds. It is a solemn utterance, made in His sanctuary (cf. Amos 4:2; Psa 89:35).

The point is that we must be in the sanctuary (Psa 73:17), where God dwells, to know God's view of a situation. There He makes His thoughts known in response to our questions. Knowing how God thinks about a matter gives rise to exult, to leaping for joy. Then despair and doubt disappear and certainty about the outcome of the battle comes.

First God pronounces His rights over Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah (verses 6b-7). Shechem is on the west side of the Jordan, in the land, and Succoth is on the east side, the wilderness side of the Jordan. They point to the beginning of Jacob's return to the promised land (Gen 33:17-18). That God will "portion out", or divide Shechem proves His right to it (verse 6b). He will give it to whom it belongs. The "measuring out of the valley of Succoth" has the same meaning. God will measure out the whole area and thus give the precisely measured area to whom it belongs, no more and no less.

"Gilead" lies in the wilderness side of the Jordan and "Manasseh" lies partly in the land and partly on the east side, the wilderness side of the Jordan (verse 7). Of Gilead and of all Manasseh God says that it is "Mine". "Ephraim" represents the ten tribes and "Judah" the two tribes. Together they make up the whole land of Israel. Ephraim is seen as a helmet, or shield, literally "strength", in terms of protection. Of Judah God says that he is His scepter, or lawgiver (cf. Gen 49:10; Num 21:18). From Judah His law will be taught and enforced everywhere. This will be the situation when the Messiah reigns.

Next, God lets it be known that He also has ownership of all the territories outside of Israel. Of these, He mentions Moab, Edom and Philistia by name (verse 8). These areas lie east, south and west of Israel respectively and are within the boundaries of the land as promised to Abraham. God adds something to these names as well.

During the great tribulation, the remnant will flee to Moab, just as David's parents fled to Moab from King Saul (1Sam 22:3-4). Of Moab, God says: "Moab is My washbowl." A washbowl or laver serves to clean feet. God used Moab to cleanse His people there (Isa 16:4).

Of Edom He says that He will throw His shoe thereon. This means that He will subject this people to Himself (cf. Rth 4:7). Philistia is called to shout loud because of God. This is a forced loud shouting. They must do so because of God's awesome deeds on behalf of His people and at the expense of His people's enemies, among whom they are.

Psa 60:9-12 | Prayer for Help From Distress

*9 Who will bring me into the besieged city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
10 Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us?
And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?
11 O give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in vain.
12 Through God we shall do valiantly,
And it is He who will tread down our adversaries.*

After God has announced His right of ownership of various places and areas inside and outside Israel, David asks: "Who will bring me into the besieged city?" (verse 9). The fortress of Petra, built in rock, the capital of Edom, is that besieged city. Because of its natural location, it is humanly impossible to conquer that city. Is there anyone, David wonders, who can lead him "to Edom", to its center?

He himself gives the answer to his question. It can be none other than God (verse 10). But God has rejected. Here faith speaks. The God Who has rejected them is the Only One Who can help him and his army. Certainly, God did not march out with the armies of His people, so they were defeated. But that makes it immediately clear that the only way to overcome is for God to go out with them again.

David said in verse 1b that God had rejected Israel and therefore did not go with Israel. But now God wants Israel to go to battle. David says that it is only possible if He Himself goes with them. He does like Moses who says to the LORD: "If Your presence does not go [with us], do not lead us up from here" (Exo 33:15).

After all his considerations, David comes to the conclusion that he can only do powerful deeds if God gives them His help. Thus he comes to the

intercession of verses 11-12. Those who fear God can appeal to no one else in their distress but Him alone (verse 12). God has brought them into that distress and therefore He is the Only One Who can also lead them out of it. That is why they cry out for His help. They know: "Deliverance by man is in vain" (cf. Isa 2:22).

We can also apply this spiritually. When a man is in spiritual distress over his sins, there is no man who can help him. The Only One Who can help is God. He alone can deliver him from the burden of his sins, no one else. For this cause He gave His Son. The same applies to the guidance in the believer's life. Only God knows which way to go. Therefore, he must come to Him and not be led by men. He has given His Word and His Spirit to guide him.

Only with God, with His help, can God's people do valiantly (verse 12). He provides His people with strength and courage to fight the enemies. This statement demonstrates trust in God in the awareness of one's own powerlessness. If He is with them, they will tread down their adversaries, which is to say that God treads them down (cf. Rom 16:20a).

Psalm 61

Introduction

Now that the series of “Mikhtam” psalms of David (Psalms 56-60) has ended, with Psalm 61 a series of psalms begins that look back to the period of the great tribulation (Psalms 61-68).

Psa 61:1-2 | Cry Out to God

1 For the choir director; on a stringed instrument. [A Psalm] of David.

Hear my cry, O God; Give heed to my prayer.

2 From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

It is a psalm that should be accompanied with “a stringed instrument”. See at Psalm 4:1.

For “[a Psalm] of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David is in distress (verse 1b). He is on the run from the enemy. The enemy is approaching. He cries out to God to hear his cry and to give heed to his prayer. It is not stated who the enemy is. Nor is it said what the enmity is about. It is not about the nature of the distress, but about its effect in the heart of the God-fearing.

David, who in this psalm also expresses the feelings of the believing remnant in the end time, is far from the sanctuary, far from the delight of blessing, at “the end of the earth” (verse 2; cf. Psa 42:2,6). Nowhere does he see a solution to his distress. The pressure of the enemy, of the need, becomes too great for him. His “heart is faint”. He is exhausted and he begins to despair of life. But although he is far from the place where God dwells, he still trusts in Him. Therefore, he cries out to God from this place.

In his trust in God, he asks that God lead him “to the rock that is higher than” himself and that he could never climb in his own strength. He would like God to bring him to the top of the rock so that he will be out of reach of

his pursuers. If he is thus brought to safety by God, there is no enemy who can do anything to him anymore (cf. Isa 33:16). After all, for God, enemies and threatening circumstances mean nothing.

It is about the contrast between God and the circumstances, not about the contrast between the believer and the circumstances. It is like the ten spies who saw themselves as locusts in the eyes of the adversaries who were like giants to them (Num 13:28,33). They forgot that they were not to compare themselves to the giants, but to compare the giants to God. And what did those giants mean at all in the eyes of God Almighty? The walls seemed as high as heaven. But what do those walls mean for faith? By faith they fall.

Therefore, David no longer looks to the enemies, but to God and wants to be with Him. In the end time, the faithful remnant will also look this way. For the Rock is none other than God Himself (Psa 18:2; 2Sam 22:32). With Him, that Rock, that is Christ (1Cor 10:4b), his fainting heart will find rest and restoration of strength. Perhaps he has thought of the words God once spoke to Moses: "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand [there] on the rock" (Exo 33:21).

Psa 61:3-5 | God Is a Refuge

3 For You have been a refuge for me,

A tower of strength against the enemy.

4 Let me dwell in Your tent forever;

Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah.

5 For You have heard my vows, O God;

You have given [me] the inheritance of those who fear Your name.

God has been a refuge to him before, "a tower of strength against the enemy" (verse 3; Pro 18:10). This is what the believing remnant will say in the great tribulation. They know how God used to stand up for His people again and again (cf. Isa 25:4). This past acting of God in favor of His people gives them the confidence that God will also act in favor of them in their distress. They know that God will save them.

Then David confidently says that he will dwell "forever" in God's tent (verse 4). Here he speaks from the presence of the Rock upon which he

stands in faith. He trusts that he will be in the tent of God, which here is the tabernacle, the place where the LORD wants to meet with His people.

God's tent speaks of hidden dealings or fellowship with Him (cf. Psa 27:5b). Although David is physically distant from God's dwelling place, he knows that he is on the rock and that the tent is his constant abode. There he also enjoys protection, of which the wings speak (cf. Psa 57:1b; 36:7; 91:4), from the God of Israel.

David knows that God has heard his vows (verse 5; cf. Psa 50:14-15). He has made them in his distress and lets God know that he has not forgotten them. David, in making a vow, is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who made the vow to God to do His will (Heb 10:7; Psa 40:7-8). He did not make His vow subject to any condition, but made it out of love and devotion to His God.

The Messiah perfectly feared God's Name and perfectly fulfilled His vow. As a reward for that, He received the inheritance that God gives to all those who fear His Name. Moreover, He also acquired the right to the inheritance through His work on the cross (Rev 5:1-10). All who fear God will receive the inheritance because He accomplished the work on the cross for them. As a result, they have also become heirs (Eph 1:10-11; 3:6).

Psa 61:6-7 | The King Sits Enthroned Forever

*6 You will prolong the king's life;
His years will be as many generations.*

*7 He will abide before God forever;
Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may preserve him.*

David is not primarily asking for himself to prolong the king's life (verse 6). He is thinking primarily of God's King, the Messiah, the Son of David, to Whom this prophetically points.

Here we have the key to trust in God: it is trust in the Messiah. His years never end, but continue as from generation to generation. These are the years added to Him by virtue of His work on the cross and given to Him in the resurrection (Isa 53:10). These years have no end; they continue unceasingly (Heb 1:10-12). This is the fulfillment of "forever" of verse 4 as a result of the "lovingkindness and truth" of God in verse 7. "Prolong the

king's life" also means that David's posterity will be preserved, which is the Lord Jesus and all who belong to Him (cf. Psa 132:11-12).

His reign also lasts forever, "He will abide [or: sit enthroned] before God forever" (verse 7; cf. Lk 1:32-33; Dan 2:44). Never has a king sat on a throne forever, not even David. This can only be said of the Lord Jesus. He reigns forever "before God". Upon Him God always looks down in favor.

The guarantee of this lies in the "lovingkindness and truth" of God, which He appoints for His King, that is, on the basis of the covenant faithfulness of God, which is based on the blood of the new covenant. "Loyalty and truth preserve the king" (Pro 20:28a). He exhibits these features in His government and is thereby protected. The people will have no cause to rebel against Him, but will gladly submit to His authority.

His performance in lovingkindness "upholds his throne" (Pro 20:28b). This is quite different from the thrones of the world which are often founded on tyranny and oppression. These attributes are the foundation of the Messiah's throne. By acting in lovingkindness and truth, His throne will remain established. When He appears as King, they will be perfectly manifested in His government, making His throne steadfast.

Psa 61:8 | Singing Praise Forever

*8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
That I may pay my vows day by day.*

Suddenly the psalm here changes to the I-form. Now it turns out that the psalmist and the king for whom he prayed are one and the same Person. The psalm ends with the promise of the King of God, the Messiah, that He will sing psalms for God's Name forever. Every day of His reign, "day by day", He will do God's will in His government. He will return the kingdom to God after a perfect reign of a thousand years (1Cor 15:24). What a joy that reign must be to the heart of God!

Every single day of that thousand years is reigned, just as God wants it to be. His will is done, "on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). And it is done by Him Who has said, "Behold, I have come ... to do Your will, O God" (Heb 10:7). He has demonstrated this throughout His life. The climax is His work on the cross. There He laid the foundation for the whole will of

God. He executes it, also in the establishment of the realm of peace and His government during that time.

We too will not passively spend eternity. We will spend eternity giving Him praise, thanks and worship, singing the new song: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive ..." (Rev 5:12).

Psalm 62

Introduction

The subject of this psalm is waiting for God. It is not wait and see, but expect. It is putting one's trust in God, and to do so in the strongest terms. The psalm is written in the first person singular, which means that it is a personal psalm. That is why it is one of the favorite psalms of many believers of all times.

Expectation implies dependence based on the understanding that we can do nothing without Him. It also implies trust in faith that God's time is the best time and therefore we wait for Him and expect it from Him. It is trusting in Him that He will certainly come and in the right time, way and place. Through this, perseverance also gets a perfect work in us (Jam 1:4).

The core of the psalm is found in verse 8, where the people are exhorted to follow the example of the psalmist. This exhortation also applies to us, as well as to the faithful remnant.

Psa 62:1-2 | Rest in God

1 For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

My soul [waits] in silence for God only;

From Him is my salvation.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation,

My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

It is a psalm "according to Jeduthun". Jeduthun is the man appointed by David to prophesy with lyres, harps and cymbals to praise the LORD (1Chr 16:41-42; 25:1,3,6). Jeduthun means "choir of praise". See further at Psalm 39:1.

For "a Psalm of David" see at Psalm 3:1.

The word "only" in verse 1b, used by David, or the God-fearing, can also be translated with "sure". He uses similar words six times in this psalm,

in Hebrew each time at the beginning of a verse (verses 1b,2,4,5,6,9). Four times it characterizes the saints and twice the wicked.

The first “only” or “sure” he is spoken by him in relation to his trust in God. Here he testifies to the certainty of his soul’s silence or rest for God, in His presence. This rest is in God only and in no one else. This rest marks Christ during His life on earth. He has rest in His God and the way that God has determined for Him. Much in this psalm we recognize in the life of the Lord Jesus.

The certainty that the psalm breathes comes from a heart that has a free intercourse with God. The soul is “in silence”, or comes to rest, “for God”, that is in His presence. This silence and rest, this trustful waiting for God, comes forth from knowing that from God is his salvation (cf. Isa 26:3; 30:15).

This is not passive, but active. It is not ‘navel-gazing’, but a conscious being in God’s presence in trustful waiting for what He is going to do and that whatever He does is always good. It is a silent surrender in which no personal initiative is present. It is the silence of inner rest after the struggle in Psalm 42 and Psalm 43 (Psa 42:5,11; 43:5). What remains is God only. On the mountain of transfiguration, the disciples see “no one except Jesus Himself alone” (Mt 17:8). And Paul testifies: “To me, to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21a).

To be in silence for God means to be focused on God in the peaceful awareness that salvation is “His”. It is the inner peace through the consciousness of God’s nearness. It is the rest of a weaned child with its mother (Psa 131:2). Salvation means deliverance from affliction and bringing into the blessing. This refers both to present situations and to the final blessing in the realm of peace. That situation is brought about by Christ. Faith therefore looks upward for deliverance from a situation of distress in the present. Faith also looks forward, to the future, for the final deliverance from all distress and the bringing into the blessing of the realm of peace.

In the previous psalm, David asked God to lead him to the rock (Psa 61:2). Here he is on the rock (verse 2). There he sees, as it were, the glory of God (Exo 33:21-22). God is his rock. As a result, he is sure of his salvation

in view of the future. He will reach it. In view of the present, God is his “stronghold” because of the adversaries that are still around.

Because of all this, he can say: “I shall not be greatly shaken.”. In Hebrew it says he shall not be shaken ‘much’, that is, he will not be shaken to death. Because of the presence of enemies, he is not yet free from all danger. Nor is he yet completely free from their influence. Further down in the psalm (verse 6) he expresses the assurance that he shall not be shaken at all. Here he is still mindful that circumstances may still cause him to be shaken. However, he immediately adds that this being shaken shall “not be greatly”, indicating that he will not fall badly.

Psa 62:3-4 | Devisers of Evil

*3 How long will you assail a man,
That you may murder [him], all of you,
Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?
4 They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position;
They delight in falsehood;
They bless with their mouth,
But inwardly they curse. Selah.*

What is described in these two verses of the devisers of evil, the Lord Jesus experienced in the fullest way. He is the “man” (verse 3) Whom they assailed constantly. We should not be surprised if the world also hates us (1Jn 3:13). The world hated the Lord Jesus (Jn 7:7a) and therefore will also hate us (Jn 17:14). The believing remnant in the future will also experience this.

Against the Lord Jesus there have been constant deliberations to thrust Him down from His high position. With David, his kingship is the high position from which they want to thrust him down. With the Lord Jesus it is His perfectly pure, sinless conduct and His perfect words, by which they have been brought into the light. That light they hated (Jn 7:7) and so they sought to thrust him down from his high position (Lk 4:29).

The question “how long” here is not the sigh of someone burdened by enmity. It is the expression of one who is in silence for God. From God’s presence he asks the assailants how long they think they can go on doing

it. It is not a fearful, but an almost challenging question: “How long do you think you can continue with your senseless assaults?”

The enemies think they are strong and will achieve their goal. But David knows the reality and holds it out to them that they will all be killed. They may seem strong as a wall and a fence, but David sees that they are “like a leaning wall” and “like a tottering fence”. The impression of their strength is pretense. Soon they will topple and collapse (cf. Isa 30:12-14).

The assailants of the God-fearing are counseling “only” or “sure” – there is no doubt about this – how they will thrust him down from his high position (verse 4). This concerns David in his high position as king. It are nothing but foolish deliberations that are bound to fail.

They look only at his position. They are blind to the fact that his “high position”, and that of every God-fearing, is the high position of the rock. That rock is God. The very idea of trying to thrust him down from that is ludicrous. The application for us is that the devil wants to try to deprive us of our heavenly position in Christ. That is also a foolish attempt. He cannot take that away from us because it is anchored in Christ. What he does succeed in doing sometimes is to deprive us of the peace and enjoyment of our heavenly position.

They like to lie, “they delight in falsehood”. It is not about lying, it is about lying about God. Lying is their nature. They are true children of their father, the devil, who is “a liar and the father of lies” (Jn 8:44). Therefore, when they “bless with their mouths”, they are in reality lying, for “inwardly they curse”. Besides being liars, they are also hypocrites who in their hearts hate the believers. They do not wish the believers good, but evil.

Psa 62:5-8 | Trust in God

*5 My soul, wait in silence for God only,
For my hope is from Him.*

*6 He only is my rock and my salvation,
My stronghold; I shall not be shaken.*

*7 On God my salvation and my glory [rest];
The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.*

8 Trust in Him at all times, O people;

*Pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah.*

The confrontation with the assailants (verses 3-4) forces David to say to his soul, to himself, to “wait in silence for God only” (verse 5). David uses this powerful word “only” or “sure” for the fourth time. This is stronger than what he says in verse 1b. It shows a growing confidence in God, as we also see in verse 6b. This in turn leads to encouraging others to put their trust in God as well (verse 8).

David does not bring the assailant before God, but himself. He tells himself that his expectation is from God only. Everything in him is directed toward God in the confidence that he and his future are in God’s hand. In doing so, he silences the opponents, as well as any potentially emerging doubt in his soul.

With another powerful “only” or “sure” (verse 6), he adds what God is to him. God is his unshakable “rock”, his present and future “salvation” and his impregnable “stronghold”. When he thus says Who God is to him, he comes to the statement: “I shall not be shaken.” As already mentioned, we see here a growing trust in God. A few verses back he spoke of “not be greatly shaken” (verse 2). Now he says with certainty “I shall not be shaken”. This growing in certainty will also be found in the believing remnant in the end time.

This growing certainty is also reflected in what David has “in God” (verse 7). Here it is no longer so much about Who God is to him, but Who God Himself is. When he says that his “salvation” and his “glory” rest on God, the emphasis is not on his own salvation and his own glory, but on God. His salvation, honor, glory, or position have their origin and meaning in God. They are in Him and have value only because of that.

The same is true of his “rock” and his “refuge”. The emphasis is not on their usefulness to him – and that usefulness is great! – but on God, in Whom these things are present. Neither his protection nor his safety are in the foreground anymore, but God in Whom these things are found.

God is always what David says of Him here. God uses the various circumstances in which His own may be to reveal more and more of Himself. He wants to focus our eye beyond redemption or through redemption on

Himself. All His actions in our favor must bring us to admire His Person and not the actions themselves.

When the eye is thus fixed on God, the believer bears witness of this to encourage others to trust God in this same way (verse 8). In what David says here, we hear the Messiah speaking, inviting the people, the remnant, to also trust in God and to do so “at all times”. It is about constant trust and that in all circumstances, of prosperity and of adversity. If we believe that He is perfect in His ways, we will not wish to do anything without Him.

This does not mean that there are no more exercises and trials. Waiting for God also does not mean that we do not need to cry out to Him. It is precisely because there is trust in God that the exhortation to pour out their hearts before Him follows. Everything that is in the heart may be said to Him. God’s answer to this is that He gives His peace in the heart (Phil 4:6-7). Whether He gives what we ask for, and at what time He gives it, we will leave to Him if we remember that He is full of goodness and love for those who wait for Him.

Christ poured out His heart for God throughout His life. We see this every time we read in the Gospels that He is in prayer. He *is* prayer (Psa 109:4b). We see this particularly in the Gospel according to Luke where He is presented as the perfect Man. We find Him there eight times in prayer (Lk 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,29; 11:1; 22:41; 23:34a). The seventh prayer, the one in Gethsemane, is very impressive. There He pours out His heart before God because it is full with the work that He will accomplish on the cross of Calvary where He will be made sin.

Then He says not only “my refuge is in God” (verse 7), but “God is a refuge for us”. By the word “us” He connects Himself with the remnant. He does the same when He lets Himself be baptized and says: “In this way it is fitting for us [He and John the baptist] to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt 3:15).

Psa 62:9-10 | Unfounded Trust

*9 Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie;
In the balances they go up;
They are together lighter than breath.
10 Do not trust in oppression*

And do not vainly hope in robbery;
If riches increase, do not set [your] heart [upon them].

After David points out that we are to trust in God at all times, he warns against trust in people and human resources. By the “men of low degree” (verse 9) – Hebrew *bene adam*, which is sons of men, children of men – are meant ordinary people. They are only “vanity” or a “sigh”, in Hebrew *hebel*. From that the name Abel is derived. When Adam and Eve name their son Abel, it is an act of faith. We find the same thing in Psalm 90, where it says that we finish our years “like a sigh” (Psa 90:9).

A sigh is something intangible and extremely volatile. That is how a person is: today he is there, tomorrow he is no longer there. It is the greatest folly to expect any support from something so uncertain. God, on the other hand, always remains the same, He has all power and with Him everything is certain.

The “men of rank” are “a lie”. Here we are talking about dignified people – Hebrew *bene-isch* –, people, whom other people look up to expectantly. David, that is, God’s Spirit, wipes out that expectation with one word: they are a “lie”. It is not about their personal character, as if they were always false and traitorous, but about the idea that any expectation of their help instead of that of God is “a lie”.

When all people are weighed together in a scale, they are even lighter than breath. The picture is that of the old-fashioned balance scale, the scale with two arms with a scale on each arm. If on one scale all the people are placed and on the other scale breath, the balance tips over to the side of the scale with breath. All the people together have no weight at all. How foolish, then, to expect from them, whether simple or considerable, any help. It is meaningless, without any weight. You must have the right scale, God’s scale, to come to that conclusion (cf. Dan 5:27).

After the vanity of trust in *people*, David points out the vanity of trust in wrong *means* (verse 10). “Trust in oppression” means that we pressure people to help us, for example, by manipulating them. We then improperly and cunningly bend the resources to our will. Following on from this is the robbery of another person’s property. Then we appropriate resources

in an illicit and brutal manner. Any trust in what has been robbed is “vain hope”. It is hope that perishes like a sigh. In addition, God will judge this. Trust in wealth is also wrong. If it increases – even without oppression and without robbery – the heart should not be set upon it. Between wealth and uncertainty, an ‘equal to’ sign should be placed: wealth = uncertainty (1Tim 6:17a). It can simply vanish, it can simply dissolve into nothing (Pro 11:28; 23:5; 27:24).

People and resources can never save a man’s life for eternity, nor can they ever give true satisfaction to his existence. Only God can satisfy the deepest needs of a human being.

Psa 62:11-12 | God Rewards Each According to His Work

*11 Once God has spoken;
Twice I have heard this:
That power belongs to God;
12 And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord,
For You recompense a man according to his work.*

God calls His own to trust in Him, for power belongs to Him, and not to man, whoever that man may be (verse 11). The power that a man needs – to protect and save him – is found only in God. Everyone and everything fails, but not God. This should lead us to place our trust in God only.

This is once spoken by God. David heard it twice, which is to say that he was absolutely sure of it. Christ always had an open ear for all that God spoke (Isa 50:4). What God spoke once, He heard twice. That determined His whole life. God also speaks to man once or twice, but his response is completely different, for he takes no notice of it (Job 33:14).

Not only power belongs to God, but also lovingkindness is His (verse 12). God’s lovingkindness means His covenant faithfulness. God is called “Lord” here, that is Adonai, the sovereign Ruler. It means that God, the Creator and sovereign Ruler, uses His power to act in accordance with His covenant. He will bless and keep all who trust in Him, but judge all who reject Him.

This rare combination of power and lovingkindness is only present with God. The God-fearing therefore knows that God is using His power for him in love. When God demonstrates His power in the judgment on evil, it means the deliverance of the righteous. He has gone God's way on earth amidst evil and has waited in trust for God's intervention. God's recompense of evil is its reward. For us, this means the encouragement that we can count on Him and wait for Him.

Psalm 63

Introduction

In this psalm we hear the longing of the God-fearing for the sanctuary because it is God's dwelling place on earth, while yet he is far from it. In the previous psalm, God is his trust, while here God is the great refreshment for his thirsty soul. As in Psalms 61-62, we see in this psalm the longing for close fellowship with God.

Psalms 61-63 were written in the same period. They refer to the same period in the end time and portray the remnant's exercises of faith when they are driven out of the land. They come to realize that although they are far from Jerusalem, they may yet experience the LORD's lovingkindness. Thus, they still come to praise.

Psa 63:1-5 | Yearning for God

1 A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly;

My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,

In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary,

To see Your power and Your glory.

3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,

My lips will praise You.

4 So I will bless You as long as I live;

I will lift up my hands in Your name.

5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,

And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.

For "a Psalm of David" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm informs us about the circumstances David is in when he writes the psalm. That is "when he was in the wilderness of Judah". Since David is speaking of his kingship (verse 11), it is plausible that it is the time, when he is fleeing from Absalom. Then he is in the wilderness (2Sam 15:23),

where he is separated from the ark and the dwelling place of God (2Sam 15:25). The trial of David reveals what was in his heart. So too will it be with the remnant in the future. David proves to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness (Mt 5:6), for God himself.

David begins the psalm by telling God Who He is to him (verse 1b). God is *his* God. This speaks of an intense love for God. His deep love for Him we also hear when he then says that he seeks God “earnestly”. He does so because his soul thirsts for Him and his flesh yearns for Him (cf. Psa 42:1b-2). His soul and his flesh represent his whole person. His severe thirst and intense yearning are a spiritual reflection of the wilderness in which he is. He feels like being in a wilderness, like being in “dry and weary land where there is no water”.

When the Lord Jesus says on the cross “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28), it is a thirst for God because of the three hours in which He is forsaken by God. When the rich man thirsts in Hades (Lk 16:23-24), it is a thirst because as a creature he is eternally separated from his Creator (cf. Psa 42:1b-2).

He remembers God’s “power” and “glory” which he has “seen ... in the sanctuary” (verse 2). He has always entered God’s sanctuary to worship and meet God (2Sam 7:18a), with the result that God has revealed Himself to him in His power and glory.

Those who are in God’s presence become impressed with the power of His love and the glory of His Person. David beheld something of that glory, that is, he had an intense look at it. These are the impressions of God’s presence he has made with his heart. He has not forgotten them. Now that he is in the wilderness, he wants to experience them again and even more intensely.

Whoever has been an eyewitness of God’s power and lovingkindness with the eyes of his heart, has as it were “tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1Pet 2:3). As a result, he also knows that God’s lovingkindness – that is, the blessings God wants to give on the basis of the covenant – is better than life (verse 3). Life is the most precious possession one has. But the lovingkindness of God surpasses life. We may lose life, but the lovingkindness of God remains, while the awareness of it increases, especially as life seems

to flow away. When that awareness becomes great to one's heart, one's lips open to praise God.

Blessing or praising God (verse 4) here precedes salvation (cf. 2Chr 20:21-22). Praising God for His lovingkindness is also not limited to a single moment, but can be done continually as long as we live. We do not wait with it until we are with Him. Whoever loves God and experiences His lovingkindness will never stop praising Him. In God's Name he will lift up his hands as the outward gesture of lifting up his heart to praise God.

Being thus occupied with God's lovingkindness satisfies the soul "as with marrow and fatness" (verse 5). Here the God-fearing transcends the wilderness conditions, so to speak, and his mouth praises God "with joyful lips". He sings about Who God is to him. His body does suffer through his sojourn in the wilderness, but his soul is abundantly satisfied with the best of fellowship with God. God is the best part for the soul (Psa 16:5). This is experienced most when the circumstances are tough.

Psa 63:6-8 | Support From God

*6 When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches,
7 For You have been my help,
And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.
8 My soul clings to You;
Your right hand upholds me.*

From early in the morning [earnestly is literally early] (verse 1b) until late at night, when he is in bed (verse 6), David is dealing with God. When he cannot sleep, in the night watches – in the Old Testament the Jews divided the night watches into three night watches – he meditates on God (cf. Psa 119:148). Then he does not 'count sheep' to fall asleep, but meditates on the Shepherd. There is so much about Him to remember. We can also think about Who He is to us and what He has done for us and praise Him for it.

David looks back at God's faithfulness in the past. He tells God that He "has been" his "help" (verse 7). He trusts that also in the future the LORD will not disappoint him and will deliver him. Therefore, he can always sing for joy. He feels safe and secure under the shadow of God's wings.

There he finds protection from the heat of the sun during the day and there he finds warmth during the cold of the night. There he is close to God, despite the fact that he cannot be in the sanctuary. God Himself is his sanctuary here (cf. Isa 8:13-14a). That brings up a song of praise in him; there, in that place so close to God, he can sing for joy.

It fills him with deep desire never to let go of God again (verse 8). His soul clings to God and goes after Him. He expresses his covenant loyalty to God and, as it were, becomes attached to Him (cf. Deu 10:20). To cling to or adhere to someone is to attach oneself to someone in an intimate way. It is like the man's joining or attaching to his wife (Gen 2:24).

In doing so, he is upheld by God's right hand, which symbolizes God's power. He does not have to cling to God in his own strength and follow Him. It means that God holds David's hand with His right hand and leads him (cf. Isa 41:10,13).

Psa 63:9-11 | Rejoice in God

*9 But those who seek my life to destroy it,
Will go into the depths of the earth.
10 They will be delivered over to the power of the sword;
They will be a prey for foxes.
11 But the king will rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him will glory,
For the mouths of those who speak lies will be stopped.*

After the praise, David suddenly becomes aware, as it were, as a thought in retrospect, oh yes, the enemies are still there, but they are unimportant. If you have seen God, then you become aware of the greatness of God and the pettiness of your enemies.

David knows he has enemies (verse 9). The contrast indicated by the word "but" shows that his enemies have no part in Who God is to him and what he has in God. They are after him to destroy that. They want to take away from him his fellowship with God. In this they will not succeed. On the contrary, they will "go into the depths of the earth". He is close to God, they will be rejected far from God.

Their fate is that they will be “delivered over to the power of the sword” (verse 10). They have used the sword to bring down others and therefore will themselves be brought down by the sword, i.e. killed (Rev 13:10). After that, they will “be a prey for foxes”. The Hebrew word *sualim* can be translated as both “foxes” and “jackals”. Jackals are true scavengers, foxes are casual scavengers. That the enemies are prey for these animals means that they are not buried, which is a huge disgrace (cf. Isa 66:24). The disgrace will be even greater when the unholy foxes will feast on their dead bodies (cf. Rev 19:17-18,21).

In contrast, the king will “rejoice in God” (verse 11). David knows that he will ultimately rejoice in God because God will give back to him the throne from which he was expelled. God is his source of rejoicing. Those who rejoice in God will acknowledge His authority and exaltation above all. He will consecrate himself to Him and serve Him alone. He expresses this by swearing by Him.

He who swears by God involves Him in all his intentions in the acknowledgment of His authority (Deu 6:13; cf. Gen 42:15-16) and “will glory”. To glory means to boast in God, to honor and magnify Him for the help He has given in carrying out the intentions.

Liars also boast, but they speak lies. These are the people who have spread lies about God’s king. Their mouths will be stopped forever. This will be the fate of the antichrist and all his followers who have spread lies about the Christ of God. “Their part [will be] in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8).

Psalm 64

Introduction

This psalm is a continuation of the line we follow from Psalm 61. It deals with the faithful remnant's exercises of faith, their troubles and tribulations by enemies outside and within, and God's answer to their prayer and complaint.

The psalmist – and prophetically the faithful remnant – is still threatened by evildoers and those who do injustice (verse 2). They are constantly attacking him. Then God intervenes by the appearance of Christ (verse 7). As a result, the whole earth will fear God and the faithful will rejoice (verses 9-10).

Historically, the psalm is difficult to trace back to an event in David's life. Because of the order of the psalms, it is probably in the time of Absalom's rebellion. In any case, as a prophet, David is writing about the prayer of the remnant in their distress and its answer through the appearance of Christ. After the appearance of Christ, it is appropriate that the name "LORD", Yahweh, is used again (verse 10) instead of the "God", *Elohim*, characteristic for the second book of psalms.

The core of this psalm is the pride and perceived success of the wicked evildoers. But "pride goes before destruction" (Pro 16:18). They laid on their arrow and began to shoot (verses 3-4). At that moment God hits them with an arrow (verse 7). Then it will be the end of their story, over and out.

Psa 64:1-2 | Prayer for Preservation

*1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.
Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint;
Preserve my life from dread of the enemy.
2 Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers,
From the tumult of those who do iniquity,*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

David explicitly asks God to hear his voice when he complains (verse 1b). That is, he speaks aloud to God. It is not a ‘groaning’ of pain, but ‘complaining’ in the sense of ‘putting into words’ his problem. He complains because he is struggling as a result of the enemy’s threat to his life.

Dread is literally ‘fear’. He knows that the enemy is capable of killing him, but he also knows that God is capable of preserving him. Therefore, he asks God to preserve him. There is no one else to whom he can or would appeal. Only God can provide the preservation he needs against the advancing enemy.

He asks God for preservation by hiding him from the secret counsel devised against him by evildoers (verse 2; cf. Jer 36:26). The evildoers counsel in the deepest secret. David is aware of this through his dealings with God. If He hides him, they will not be able to carry out their counsel.

In the same way, satan’s thoughts “are not unknown to us” (2Cor 2:10b-11). We know how he operates and do not need to be surprised by him. God has provided us with His armor to put it on (Eph 6:14-18). Then we are hidden from the attacks of the enemy, and the fiery arrows he shoots at us cannot hit us. God’s Word and trust in Him can keep us from satan carrying out his secret counsel against us.

David is not besieged by just one enemy, but there is “the tumult of those who do iniquity”. In addition to the nature of the enmity, the hatred that the enemy has, the number of enemies is also impressive. Nor do they come at him quietly, but as a ‘tumultuous’ mob. It is an uncontrolled outburst of enmity. The entire crowd is made up of people “who do iniquity”. A more threatening situation can hardly be imagined. Only God has the power to stop this riotous mob in their evil intent.

Psa 64:3-6 | The Work of the Enemy

*3 Who have sharpened their tongue like a sword.
They aimed bitter speech [as] their arrow,
4 To shoot from concealment at the blameless;
Suddenly they shoot at him, and do not fear.
5 They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose;*

*They talk of laying snares secretly;
They say, "Who can see them?"
6 They devise injustices, [saying],
"We are ready with a well-conceived plot";
For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep.*

In these verses David substantiates his complaint. He tells God in detail how the rioting mob proceeds to put him to death. He begins with the lethal effect of their speaking (verse 3). Before they actually kill him, they first conduct a smear campaign against him to kill him spiritually. Then he no longer has the strength to resist physically. He compares the words of the enemies to a sword and an arrow (cf. Pro 25:18). They are weapons that destroy and pierce.

He compares the tongue to a sword (cf. Psa 55:21; 57:4; 59:7). Their tongue is sharpened like a sword. The words they speak are sharp and cut deep into his soul. Their speech, all of what they say, is like a poisonous arrow that penetrates deep into the body. Their arrow is dipped in bitterness. They bend their bows to shoot their arrow, aim accurately at the target, and then shoot it.

So many people are bitter at believers because they point them to the will of God whereas they don't want to know about that at all. God is blamed for all affliction, while they ignore the fact that they themselves are to blame for the affliction they are in. They shoot their bitter words like arrows at the believers, and therefore at God and Christ. This is what the believing remnant will experience in the end time.

These arrows were shot at the Lord Jesus. He has experienced the hate of the world because He "testified of it that its deeds are evil" (Jn 7:7b). Such an arrow they use when they say to Him: "We were not born of fornication" (Jn 8:41), alluding in veiled terms to the fact that He was. Another arrow is when they say to Him: "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (Jn 8:48b).

Think also of the trick questions they asked the Lord Jesus, the accusations of Him before the high priest and before Pilate, and finally the libel words when He hung on the cross. These bitter arrows they shot at the Lord. These arrows are all the more painful because they have been fired not

only by the unbelieving world, but especially by the religious world. It can also happen to believers that these bitter arrows are shot by fellow Christians. These arrows penetrate extra deeply.

The Jewish remnant will especially have to deal with the arrows coming from the antichrist and his followers. The beast of the restored Roman Empire, the united Europe, and the hostile nations surrounding them and to which they have fled will not fail to do so either. All will fire these arrows at them.

These perpetrators of iniquity also act in a sneaky manner. They “shoot from concealment” (verse 4). They are in darkness. There they feel secure. Their ambush is an excellent position to shoot “at the blameless”. They do so “suddenly”, without any fear of God or men present in them. “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom 3:18; Psa 36:1b).

The cause for which they are making a stand is “an evil purpose” (verse 5), which is how David intermediately assesses their plans and their execution. He knows that they agree “laying snares secretly”. Thus the enemies encourage each other to carry out their unjust deeds. In doing so, they are so audacious and short-sighted as to assume that no one will see their traps. Above all, they believe that God does not see them: “He has hidden His face; He will never see it” (Psa 10:11b). They think they can sin without being discovered.

They “device injustices” (verse 6) in order to find something they can use against him to achieve their criminal ends. For this they exert themselves to the utmost. They have devised the perfect crime, which they are convinced will not be discovered and will definitely succeed. With David it is the conspiracy of Absalom. With the remnant, it is the antichrist’s plan to wipe them out (Rev 13:15). With the Lord Jesus, it is the conspiracy to kill Him (Jn 11:53).

It doesn’t matter where it comes from, as long as it works for their benefit. Even if it comes from the “the inward thought and the heart” of the most depraved person, it will be accepted with devilish delight if it can render their plan feasible. The heart is a deep abyss full of iniquity.

Literally it says: “Yea, the inward part of a man and the heart is deep.” It means something like: “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is des-

perately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9). The wicked and criminal heart of man is extremely creative and resourceful. But one thing is forgotten and that is that he is dealing with a God of Whom it is said: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13).

Psa 64:7-9 | Judgment on the Enemy

7 But God will shoot at them with an arrow;

Suddenly they will be wounded.

8 So they will make him stumble;

Their own tongue is against them;

All who see them will shake the head.

9 Then all men will fear,

And they will declare the work of God,

And will consider what He has done.

As suddenly as they thought to strike the righteous (verse 4), as suddenly God strikes them (verse 7). God comes to David's aid by a sudden act of judgment on the enemies. They used an arrow to shoot at the upright (verse 3); God also uses an arrow to shoot at the wicked.

The arrow of the enemy was their bitter word; the arrow of God is His decision to send the Son (Psa 2:7). The Son is the Word; His weapon is the word from His mouth (Rev 19:15). That arrow will wound them with wounds that will silence them forever. Then every mouth will be stopped (Rom 3:19).

Their tongue, which is the weapon by which they attack the God-fearing (verse 3), will be the instrument by which they will stumble (verse 8). The word they use against the remnant will return to them like a boomerang, as the Lord Jesus says in a parable: "By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave" (Lk 19:22).

That is, God will expose them as liars and will judge them according to the lies they have proclaimed about His anointed. They will be judged according to the words they have spoken (Mt 12:37b). God's judgment comes on "all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

These are grumblers, finding fault” (Jude 1:15b-16a). These are the embittered people who blame God for their affliction.

When God stands up for His own, all men, friend and foe, will fear (verse 9). His judgment on evil awakens in all people awe of Him Who has all power and is righteous in His judgment. It has always seemed that God paid no attention to the needs of His own and that evil could continue undisturbed. But then it turns out that God only waited for the right time to judge the evil in His holy righteousness and to deliver His own from the evil one. He maintains His righteousness and will make that clear to everyone in His own time.

It is the great victory for faith and to the glorification of God when God is trusted to be in control of everything, while He seems to be absent. Then when God actually acts, it will cause all those who fear to proclaim God’s work. God’s work is the judgment that He has exercised. [There is a play on words here: God’s work (verse 9) will nullify the workers (those who do) of iniquity (verse 2).] They will declare and consider “what He has done” (cf. 1Pet 2:12).

Psa 64:10 | Joy

*10 The righteous man will be glad in the LORD and will take refuge in Him;
And all the upright in heart will glory.*

When judgment has come upon the enemies, “the righteous man will be glad in the LORD”, for He has taken care of him (cf. Rev 19:1-4). The verb form is such that you can say: The righteous man will be glad in the LORD because judgment has come upon the enemies. Then it is also an encouragement to believers who are still in the midst of the tribulation. After all, when judgment has come on the enemies, you no longer need to take refuge, because the danger is no longer there. Therefore, it is not only a joy after the fact, but a joy that is independent of the trial and that precedes salvation.

It is also possible to translate this way: “Let the righteous man be glad in the LORD.” Then it is a call, despite the fact that the enemies are still there. In this regard, Paul and Silas in prison are a wonderful example of this. They are glad in the Lord before salvation came (Acts 16:19-26).

When God judges evil, this causes gladness in the righteous, who have suffered greatly at the sight of all the injustice that apparently could be done undisturbed. Then it will be said that there is a God Who does justice on earth (Psa 58:11). It is a new exhortation to resort to Him, for He stands up for His own and judges those who would do harm to His own.

“All the upright in heart will glory” that they have such a God as God. The God Who is righteous is completely reliable in all His features. In Him we can put our hope, with Him we are safe, through Him we will reach the goal of our life’s journey: we will be with Him. Of all this we can be sure because He is righteous. Therefore we glory in God (1Cor 1:30-31).

‘To glory’ is equivalent to ‘to be glad’. This indicates that their lamentation song (verse 1b) will turn into a song of praise. The next two psalms display a song of praise.

Psalm 65

Introduction

Prophetically, the psalm speaks of the “period of restoration of all things, about which God spoke by the mouths of His holy prophets from ancient times” (Acts 3:21). This psalm has to do with the fulfillment of the day of atonement (verse 2) and the Feast of Ingathering, or the Feast of Booths (Exo 23:16). Once every fifty years is the year of jubilee (Lev 25:10-13). This year of jubilee is announced on the day of atonement, which is a preparation for the Feast of Booths. The year of jubilee is prophetically the period of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

Psalm 65 and Psalm 66 are the songs of thanksgiving that the upright will sing. They spoke of this in the last verse of the previous psalm (Psa 64:10).

Psa 65:1-4 | Song of Praise for God’s Goodness

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A Song.

There will be silence before You, [and] praise in Zion, O God,

And to You the vow will be performed.

2 O You who hear prayer,

To You all men come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me;

As for our transgressions, You forgive them.

4 How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near [to You]

To dwell in Your courts.

We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,

Your holy temple.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

This psalm is called “a song”. The lamenting (Psa 64:2) has ended and the singing has begun. It is similar to the people of Israel singing the song of salvation after their deliverance from Egypt, the first song we hear in the Bible (Exo 15:1).

Psalm 65 is the first psalm in a row of four psalms so named (Psa 65:1; 66:1; 67:1; 68:1). Like a psalm, a song is an expression of gratitude for experienced goodness. We might call it a song of praise.

The psalm begins with “praise” (verse 1b). However, it is a praise in “silence”. The reason is that injustice still reigns on earth. Also, the remnant itself does not yet know the forgiveness of their iniquities. Before the day of atonement, there is – in the Jewish tradition – a period of ten days of humbling oneself. Those ten days begin on the Feast of the blowing of the Trumpets, which is the Jewish secular New Year’s Day, and last until the day of atonement, which is particularly marked by humility. During that period of humiliation, the people must contemplate their own situation before they, represented by the high priest, will meet with God.

The “silence” is the rest and trust in God of the remnant that we have seen and discussed before (Psa 62:1b,5). We can read it in such a way that the peace and trust in God sound like a song of praise to God! It can also be read as the ‘silence’ of worship. Not a silence of emptiness, but a silence filled with Him, making words inadequate.

It is, however, a song of praise “before You, ... in Zion, O God”. Faith turns to God, Who dwells in Zion (Psa 78:68b; 132:13-14). The remnant, though still suffering from oppression and persecution, looks forward to the time when they will be able to perform the vow they have made. Their vow is that they will praise God when He delivers them from their tribulation. They trust that He will rise up and judge their oppressors.

With them is the deep conviction that God hears the prayer they have prayed (verse 2). He is ‘the Hearer of prayer’. How often have we experienced it ourselves that God has answered prayer. The remnant knows that He will deliver them. Then not only will they go to Him, but “all men”, literally “all flesh”, that is all people (Isa 40:5; Joel 2:28; cf. Rev 15:4), will come to Him. This will happen in the realm of peace (Isa 2:2-3). Then every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:10-11; Isa 45:23). It extends even beyond the realm of peace. It is about all creation, which includes the dead beneath the earth. They will bow their knee when they stand before the great white throne after the realm of peace and will be judged.

Before this can occur, something else must happen. The remnant must first be delivered from the burden of their iniquities that weighs upon them (verse 3). The God-fearing acknowledges that those iniquities have prevailed over him. We also hear the Lord Jesus speak here when He bears on the cross as the substitutionary sacrifice the sins for all those who believe in Him. On this basis the sinner can confess his sins and receive reconciliation.

The God-fearing speaks in the singular, “against me”. There is no question of him hiding behind a general confession, as we sometimes hear, ‘all men are sinners’. With a sincere confession someone speaks only about himself: ‘I have sinned.’ Then someone sees only his own sins. He sees himself in the light of God.

However, when he speaks of the forgiveness of transgressions, he speaks in the plural, “our transgressions”. He knows himself to be associated with all who share in the forgiveness. That is the believing remnant here. He also knows that forgiveness is not the result of his prayer, or of the sacrifices he has made, but that forgiveness is the work of God alone. “You” therefore has the emphasis.

Prophetically, we see in the singular “against me” and “You” that it is about the Lord Jesus as the atoning sacrifice, as the guilt offering of Isaiah 53 (Isa 53:6). The plural “our transgressions” is about the remnant. Here is fulfilled what we read in Daniel 9, that transgression is finished, sin is ended, and iniquity is atoned (Dan 9:24; cf. Zec 13:1).

Forgiveness is the part of each one whom God “chooses”. The election concerns the election of those who may draw near to God. They may dwell in God’s courts; they are chosen to be priests. No one takes for himself the honor of being a priest, but one is called (chosen) by God, as is Aaron (Heb 5:4-5; Exo 28:1; Num 16:5). Aaron and his children sinned with the golden calf. By taking refuge behind the blood of the day of atonement, they were chosen by God to be priests, to be able to draw near to God.

He who is forgiven is so because he has been chosen by God for it (cf. Jn 15:16). Therefore, he will not be able to boast of that. What he will do is recognize that he is “blessed” (verse 4; cf. Psa 1:1; 32:1-2; 41:2). Those who partake of God’s forgiveness and election are thrilled and delighted. He

cannot help but praise and give thanks to God for His great mercy that He has bestowed upon him. There was only a right to hell. Now he is forgiven by God by virtue of His election. Everything is grace.

It is a tremendous blessing to be delivered from the burden and penalty of sin and forgiven by God, but it does not stop there. There are many other blessings attached to forgiveness and election. When God gives, He gives according to the riches of His grace. Whoever is elected by God, He “brings near” to Him. Such a person may come to Him, enter into His presence.

This drawing near to God is also not limited to visiting Him now and then. Whoever is chosen by God and whom He causes to draw near, “may dwell in Your courts”. By “courts” we can think of the dwellings of the priests (cf. 1Sam 3:3; 2Chr 4:9; Psa 23:6b; 84:10). A priest may dwell in God’s presence to praise and give thanks to Him day and night for His great grace. This is the privilege of all who know the God of Zion as their God.

All who are in this privileged position “will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house”. “The goodness” corresponds to dwelling in God’s courts, which means enjoying His nearness and fellowship. This is also expressed by the fact that “the goodness” is represented as “the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple”, which is reminiscent of the offerings that, as peace offerings, form the basis of fellowship with God at His altar. The peace offering is a fellowship offering, of which first God, second the priests, and finally the offerors, enjoy their portion at the meal at His altar.

In God’s house the blessings are piled high. Those who dwell there may eat of them to satisfaction. This involves enjoying all blessings in fellowship with God. God Himself is the goodness of “Your holy temple”. In His temple He enthrones and reveals His righteousness. Everything in His temple is holy; what is in it is there for Him and speaks of Him. That is what the God-fearing may feed on. He does this by looking to the Giver through the blessing. Then he sees Who God is in His love and His holiness. This is the true food of the believer.

Israel receives all these blessings on earth and temporarily, while for the church these blessings are heavenly and eternal. Israel receives the fullness of them in the realm of peace, while we already possess the fullness of them now. We do not approach in an earthly temple, but we form “the

household of God, which is the church of the living God” (1Tim 3:15) for all eternity. We have access to the Father and are of God’s household now and forever (Eph 2:18-22).

The priests may dwell in the courts of an earthly temple. We will be in the Father’s house forever (Jn 14:1-3). There we will have fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other for all eternity through eternal life, which we are already experiencing (1Jn 1:3-4). We are children of God now and forever by virtue of our personal election by God adopted as sons to Himself through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3-7).

Psa 65:5-8 | God’s Awesome Deeds

*5 By awesome [deeds] You answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation,
You who are the trust of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea;*

*6 Who establishes the mountains by His strength,
Being girded with might;*

*7 Who stills the roaring of the seas,
The roaring of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.*

*8 They who dwell in the ends [of the earth] stand in awe of Your signs;
You make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.*

In the temple of God, God’s chosen people see that God answers them “in righteousness” (verse 5). His righteousness is related to the covenant He has made with His people. His covenant is always the measure of His actions. Now that the transgressions have been forgiven, which has happened by virtue of the blood of the new covenant, God can redeem and provide salvation.

By virtue of His righteousness, He brings Israel the long-awaited deliverance and judges the enemies of His people. By His awesome deeds done in righteousness on behalf of His people, they acknowledge Him as the “God of our salvation”. Their salvation, which will find its full fulfillment in the realm of peace, is due only to Him.

His awesome deeds in righteousness not only show that He cares for His people, but that they also have a blessed effect on all peoples “of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest sea”. These nations have always relied

on their idols. Through God's awesome acts of righteousness, they will abandon their trust in their idols and He will become their trust.

By the strength that is His own, He "establishes the mountains" (verse 6). They move when He touches them and He establishes them (Psa 104:7,31). This is also true of earthly superpowers, which are sometimes represented as a mountain (Psa 68:15-16; Jer 51:25). He is girded with might, which means that He is omnipotent, unlimited in the use of His strength. There is no one who can oppose Him or force Him to change His plan. Everything is fixed in Him.

That He is almighty is seen when He "stills the roaring of the seas" as well as "the roaring of their waves" (verse 7). The fact that we see the Lord Jesus doing that (Mk 4:37-41) proves that He is this the almighty God. What is true of the roaring seas and waves is also true of "the tumult of the peoples" (cf. Isa 17:12-13; Lk 21:25). All the tumultuous peoples are under His authority. He is in complete control of them. They can do nothing but what He permits and what is according to His plan with the world. It brings us peace when we think about it, while we see what is happening in the world.

When He intervenes in the affairs of the world by quieting the tumult of the nations, it causes fear in those "who dwell in the ends [of the earth]" (verse 8). His actions against the enemies of His people are signs to the inhabitants of the world. They do not come to repentance because of it, but must acknowledge His intervention. All who are connected to Him from where the morning dawns and the evening falls, that is, from east to west, He makes to shout for joy.

Psa 65:9-13 | Abundance of Blessing

*9 You visit the earth and cause it to overflow;
You greatly enrich it;
The stream of God is full of water;
You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.
10 You water its furrows abundantly,
You settle its ridges,
You soften it with showers,*

You bless its growth.

*11 You have crowned the year with Your bounty,
And Your paths drip [with] fatness.*

*12 The pastures of the wilderness drip,
And the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.*

*13 The meadows are clothed with flocks
And the valleys are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, yes, they sing.*

These verses describe the blessed consequence of God's awesome deeds in righteousness (verse 5). It is a description of the abundant blessing in the millennial realm of peace (cf. Deu 11:10-15,21; Eze 36:33-38). Then creation will be set free from the "futility" to which it was subjected by man's sin (Rom 8:20-21) and will bring forth an abundance of fruit.

The land owes this time of blessing to God's visiting it (verse 9). In "visit" lies the thought of taking care of someone who is in need, thinking of him, looking at him and providing for his needs. This is what God is doing with the land He has chosen for His people to live in and enjoy what it produces.

The abundance that the land produces is His work. He "causes it to overflow". He not only provides what is needed, but gives in abundance. God is a God of overflow (cf. Deu 28:11; 30:9; Jn 10:10). He "enriches" the land. All lack is past time. There is a great wealth of food. It is a paradisiacal condition. The earthly blessings of God's covenant with His people are enjoyed in full measure.

This is due to "the stream of God" which is "full of water". By "the stream of God" are meant the great reservoirs of water in the clouds (cf. Job 26:8; 38:37-38). At God's command they pour out their water on the land, so that the wheat can grow in rich abundance. God "prepares their grain". The restored Israel will acknowledge this wholeheartedly and with great gratitude: "For thus You prepare the earth." In a spiritual sense, it refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on "all flesh" when God's people are restored to their relationship with God (Joel 2:28; cf. Eze 47:1-12; Zec 14:8). For us, this is already reality (Jn 7:37-39).

God may wondrously make something grow (Jona 4:6), but His usual way is that He gives growth in accordance with the laws He has placed in creation. The farmer does have to work the land. He plows the earth. But God waters that plowed earth (verse 10). He waters its furrows and soaks it with raindrops. The crop that comes forth is blessed by God, it grows under His blessing. It is clear that God and no one else gives this growth, this abundance, this rich yield of the land.

This is also a description of the way God brings a sinner to repentance and causes him to grow spiritually (1Cor 3:6). The Spirit, through the Word of God, convicts the heart of the sinner of his sins. He plows the ground, as it were, through which iniquity is seen and confessed. Then Word and Spirit drench the heart and work the new life in him (Jn 3:5). The teaching of God's Word then soaks like a gentle rain and like raindrops that new life making it grow and bear fruit (Deu 32:2).

Throughout the year, God has given His care to the land, demonstrating His bounty (verse 11). The crowning glory is that rich harvest. In what comes forth from the earth's soil, we see, as it were, His "paths" that "drip [with] fatness". It gives the picture of God walking through the land in successive seasons, and everywhere He walks fertility, beauty and abundance appear. The magnificent vineyards, cornfields and olive trees adorn the land like a crown adorns the head. It is the crown that God puts on the land.

The dry wilderness is crowned with pastures (verse 12; Isa 35:1-2). His footsteps bedevil the pastures so that they continue to produce abundant fertile grass. The fertility and abundance cause joy. "The hills", which are presented as persons, "gird themselves with rejoicing". The green splendor around the hills seems to be a girdle that radiates joy.

The flocks in the meadows are so large that they seem like a covering for those meadows (verse 13). The valleys also have a covering: they are covered with grain. As a result, the meadows and the valleys are full of expressions of joy: "They shout for joy, yes, they sing." All nature is full of the bounty of God and is a testimony to His happiness and His beauty (Zec 9:16-17).

This description is an exhortation to the New Testament believer to testify full of joy to the spiritual blessings he has received in Christ.

Psalm 66

Introduction

This psalm is a continuation of the song of praise of Psalm 65. Whereas the previous psalm ends with the rejoicing of creation (Psa 65:13), in Psalm 66 we find the exhortation to all mankind to worship God and to sing praises to His Name (verse 4). The Jewish remnant will teach the law and the Word of the LORD to all people (Isa 2:3). The language used in this psalm is that of Israel's deliverance from Egypt (verse 6). The occasion for exalting God here is the future redemption of the remnant from the great tribulation.

This psalm is about God as the Deliverer of His people. He has done everything, He is seen in everything. It begins with the deliverance of His people from Egypt (verses 6-7). In it, He shows His power. It is the power of deliverance from enemies, but also the power that gives life out of death (verse 9).

The restoration of Israel, that is, God's acceptance and acknowledgment of them as His people again, is in fact life from the dead (Rom 11:15b). We see this in the redemption of the remnant in the end time, which is also entirely His work (verses 10-12). The result is blessing for the people in the realm of peace given to them by Him (verse 20).

It is noteworthy that the first part of the psalm, verses 1-12, is in the plural, while the second part, verses 13-20, is in the singular. This is a continuation of what the remnant began in Psalm 65. The singular makes it clear that the song of praise is not only collective, but that each is personally involved (cf. Zec 12:12-14).

Psa 66:1-4 | All the Earth Will Sing Praises to God

1 For the choir director. A Song. A Psalm.

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth;

2 Sing the glory of His name;

Make His praise glorious.

3 Say to God, "How awesome are Your works!
 Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You.

4 "All the earth will worship You,
 And will sing praises to You;
 They will sing praises to Your name". Selah.

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "a song" see at Psalm 65:1.

The psalm is anonymous. There is no event in the life of David that could be a point of reference for this psalm. However, the psalm expresses prophetically the utterances of the faithful remnant in the end time. That makes it possible that David as a prophet wrote this psalm. Indeed, we see that this psalm can be used by the remnant to praise God at the end of the great tribulation because of the redemption He gives. In doing so, they are passing on the lesson they have learned to all people, so that they too can magnify the Lord.

What never has happened will happen when the Lord Jesus reigns: all the earth "shouts joyfully to God" (verse 1b). They "sing the glory of His name" (verse 2). His Name is still despised on earth today, but then the glory of His Name will be clear to all.

His Name represents His Person and His features. His glorious Name is the sum of all His features. God is light and He is love (1Jn 1:5; 4:8,16). All His features result from this. All that is visible of Him gives rise to "make His praise glorious" which is done by singing of His features.

The poet indicates in what way, with what words, praise and glory can be given to God (verse 3). He gives the words for it (cf. Hos 14:2-3). It must be about the glorious and therefore fear-inducing actions of God. Everyone is called upon to say to God: "How awesome are Your works."

God's power is manifested in His works in such a way that even God's enemies will no longer dare to resist Him. They will pretend to submit wholeheartedly to the God of Israel (cf. Psa 18:44). Their submission is only feigned, hypocritical. They do not show their enmity because they know they will be judged immediately if they openly oppose Him (Psa

101:8). Eventually, every knee will bow and confess “that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:11).

The psalmist knows that evil will not prevail. All the earth will bow down before God once He reveals Himself in His power over evil by judging it (verse 4). As they bow down, they are to sing praises to God and God’s Name. God reveals Himself in His Name. The appropriate response of the people to this is to sing a song to His glory praising His attributes and features.

Psa 66:5-7 | Come and See

*5 Come and see the works of God,
[Who is] awesome in [His] deeds toward the sons of men.
6 He turned the sea into dry land;
They passed through the river on foot;
There let us rejoice in Him!
7 He rules by His might forever;
His eyes keep watch on the nations;
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.*

When the day of the Lord has come, God takes the government into His own hands. With the call “come and see the works of God”, people are called to come nearer and see His works of redemption and government (verse 5). God has entrusted the reign of creation to man, but he failed hopelessly. We see that with Adam and Nebuchadnezzar. Through redemption, He restored that.

When God begins to reign openly, which He does through His Son, the Messiah, He performs deeds that are awe-inspiring to the sons of men. People have thought that they could decide everything on earth. They have lived and exercised authority without regard to God. This resulted in great injustice. When God reigns, He will judge all injustice.

The psalmist cites two examples of God’s awe-inspiring deeds that He performed in the early history of His people (verse 6; Psa 114:3,5). At the passage through the Red Sea, God “turned the sea into dry land” (Exo 14:21). At the passage through the Jordan, He drained the Jordan and the people passed through the river on foot (Jos 3:14-17).

God judged Egypt and delivered His people from bondage. At the Red Sea, He completely delivered His people from the power of the enemy, for the Egyptians perished in the Red Sea (Exo 14:28-31). There, on the other side of the Red Sea, they rejoiced in God (Exo 15:1-3). Such deliverance followed by such rejoicing will also be experienced by the remnant, the Israel of God, in the end time. That is what this psalm is about.

His deeds in the past provide unconditional guarantee for the future. God has not merely shown His power once in the past, but “He rules by His might forever” (verse 7; Exo 15:18). He is mighty and remains so for all eternity. He thrones high in heaven, from where “His eyes keep watch on the nations”. Never does He lose sight of anything or anyone. “Let not the rebellious” forget this, lest they “exalt themselves” to rise up against Him. A similar warning is also found in Psalm 2 (Psa 2:9).

Psa 66:8-12 | Refined and Brought Out Into Abundance

*8 Bless our God, O peoples,
And sound His praise abroad,
9 Who keeps us in life
And does not allow our feet to slip.
10 For You have tried us, O God;
You have refined us as silver is refined.
11 You brought us into the net;
You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins.
12 You made men ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water,
Yet You brought us out into [a place of] abundance.*

The goodness of God in the history of the redemption of His people causes a new call to bless or praise God (verse 8). This is a call from the remnant of Israel to the peoples to bless or praise God for what He has done to Israel. The occasion is what is stated in verse 10, which we see by the word “for” with which that verse begins. All peoples who have come into contact with God are called upon to bless or praise “our God”, which is the God of the remnant or the God of Israel. The point is that the glory of God, His great Name and fame, is to be proclaimed loudly. His glory is what He has done in the deliverance of His people.

God's glory here is directly connected to giving life again to His people and keeping them standing firm in the way of faith (verse 9). God is to be praised because of His unique ability to give life. He is the Only One Who can do that, because He is the living God. He is also the Only One Who brings this life to maturity and leads and sustains it, and through the trials stands firm in the way of faith, so that it does not waver.

The remnant has gone through all kinds of trials and tribulations (verse 10). In these they, that is, their faith, have been "refined ... as silver is refined" (cf. Mal 3:3; Zec 13:9; 1Pet 1:7). The trial has been tough, but they see the suffering as the way and the hand of God with them. This is also how they express it in the following verses.

They see that they have been brought by God "into the net" of captivity (verse 11; cf. Lam 1:13). They are like a bird caught in a net. He can no longer spread his wings, is powerless and at the mercy of the will of the bird-catcher. God has also laid "an oppressive burden" upon their loins, rendering them powerless and unable to walk.

It is also God Who has caused "men", in whom we recognize the antichrist and his followers, to ride over their heads (verse 12; cf. Isa 51:23). It refers to the surrender into the hand of the enemy and the deep humiliation He brings upon them. They went "through fire and through water", describing the severe tribulation into which they fell with the danger of burning and drowning, of destruction and death (cf. Isa 43:2).

In our lives it can also be the case that people 'walk all over us'. They make our lives particularly difficult. How important it is then to look to God above these people, Who has deemed this necessary for our good. All the trials that are inflicted on us by people, regardless of whether they are believers or unbelievers, we may accept from the hand of God. This gives us peace in the midst of affliction. Then we no longer see the hand of men, but the hand of a loving Father.

When the trial comes to an end, it is also brought about by God Himself. God does not test beyond what someone can bear, but also gives the outcome at the right time (1Cor 10:13). The people who seemed doomed to death, He keeps in life (verse 9a). They appeared to be close to the fall, but He sustained them (verse 9b). They were caught in a net, but He gave them

room (verse 11a). They had a squeezing band around their waist, but He broke it (verse 11b). After all His acts of deliverance, He brought them “out into [a place of] abundance” (cf. Deu 8:7). His purpose with the tribulation is “to do good” for them “in the end” (Deu 8:15-16).

We will also say this once when we are with the Lord and look back on our entire life journey together with Him. So can we also say this now when we look back on difficult times in our lives. Then we see that He has always been with us, even though we have sometimes felt alone, and has led us out of the difficulties into the enjoyment of an abundance of spiritual blessing. On earth, God’s intention with the trials is that “we should partake of His holiness” (Heb 12:10). For eternity, it means that He will eventually lead us into the abundance of the Father’s house.

Psa 66:13-15 | Vow Offerings

13 I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings;

I shall pay You my vows,

14 Which my lips uttered

And my mouth spoke when I was in distress.

15 I shall offer to You burnt offerings of fat beasts,

With the smoke of rams;

I shall make [an offering of] bulls with male goats. Selah.

From now on, the psalm continues in the first person singular. Here the psalmist, the king himself, is speaking. We can also say that here prophetically the Spirit of Christ is speaking. Not only the world will sing God psalms. The redeemed will enter God’s house to fulfill his vows made to God in his distress (verse 13). This sacrificial service will be performed by God’s people in the realm of peace.

The burnt offering is in its entirety for God (Lev 1:9,13). Burnt offerings speak of the work of the Lord Jesus that He accomplished entirely to the glory of God. A vow offering is attached to the fulfillment of vows (Lev 7:16; cf. Acts 21:23-26). A vow offering is one of the forms of a peace offering. As a peace offering, a vow offering speaks of fellowship. We see this expressed in verse 16, where the psalmist involves “all who fear God”.

The psalmist's lips uttered those vows, and his mouth uttered them when he was in need (verse 14; cf. Jdg 11:30-40; Jona 2:9). These are not carefully spoken words, but words that are the result of distress. What he has said may be full of emotion, but it is no less sincere. The psalmist remembers very well what he said out of his deep distress, and he also sticks to it when the deliverance by God is a fact.

He will express his praise and thanks by entering God's house with "burnt offerings of fat beasts" (verse 15). He wants to give the best as thanks for what God has done. The "smoke of rams" surrounds him as he comes to God. The ram is the special animal used in the consecration of the priests (Lev 8:22,29). The ram speaks of the dedication of the Lord Jesus to God to the point of death. From His life, and particularly from His death, a soothing aroma ascended to God.

His offering also includes "bulls with male goats" or burnt offerings with the accompanying sin offerings. Goats are used primarily as sin offerings (Lev 4:24; 9:3,15; 10:16; 16:15). The goat as a sin offering represents the Lord Jesus in the work He did on the cross for the purpose of removing the sins of those who believe in Him. The believer will never forget that His work was imperative for the forgiveness of his sins. It is an aspect of Christ's work that he will always remember with profound gratitude.

Psa 66:16-20 | Come and Hear

*16 Come [and] hear, all who fear God,
And I will tell of what He has done for my soul.
17 I cried to Him with my mouth,
And He was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I regard wickedness in my heart,
The Lord will not hear;
19 But certainly God has heard;
He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.
20 Blessed be God,
Who has not turned away my prayer
Nor His lovingkindness from me.*

The answer to his prayer, the deliverance by God from his distress, brings the God-fearing to bear witness to it (verse 16). He calls on “all who fear God” to come and hear “what He has done for my soul”. Of this he wants to tell, of this his heart is full.

After the invitation “come and see” (verse 5) the invitation is now “come [and] hear”. ‘Come and see’ is about what is perceptible to the eye: the public acts of God that someone can see. ‘Come and hear’ is about the hidden work that God has done in someone. This is a work that no one can see, but that can be apprehended by the ear.

The psalmist wants to give a personal testimony about what God has done in his soul, that is his whole life. This applies to all the circumstances in which he has been and in which God has supported him. He wants to pass on to others and thereby encourage them, Who God has been for him in this and what He has done for him, in order that they too may go to Him with their need.

The God-fearing who is speaking here has cried to Him with his mouth (verse 17). At the same time he has extolled God with his tongue. To extol God means to honor and praise Him for His work. He has prayed and at the same time he has had the assurance that God hears him, for which he has thanked Him as he prayed. This is praying with confidence, a praying that God loves to hear and answer.

The basis for this confidence is that there are no hidden intentions in the heart while praying (verse 18). God does not hear prayers that are made from wrong motives. If He and His interests are not the focus, but the one who prays has only himself and his own interests in mind, God will not answer (Jam 4:3; Pro 28:9; Isa 59:2; Jn 9:31).

It is clear: the people of God must first cleanse their heart from sin through confession. After that, the believer can cry out to God when he is in need. The psalmist experienced this. When he says: “But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer” (verse 19), it is proof that his heart has been free from iniquity during his prayer.

The God-fearing is impressed that God has “not turned away” his prayer “nor His lovingkindness” from him” (verse 20). He says it in negative terms: not turned away. This emphasizes that he does not assert a right to

be heard, but sees it as great favor. This makes his gratitude all the more intense and he blesses or praises God from the depths of his heart.

Psalm 67

Introduction

It has always been God's intention that His people would bear witness of Him in the midst of the nations (Deu 4:5-8; Isa 43:10-13). By doing so in obedience to Him, the people would also be abundantly blessed. As a result, Israel, as the offspring of Abraham in whom all nations are blessed, would be the channel through which God's blessing would go to the nations (Gen 12:3). Israel, however, did not fulfill that mission, but turned away from God and followed the idols of the nations.

Yet God will fulfill His purposes with His people. His people will bear witness to the way He has gone with them. That testimony will have an effect; the nations will want to know their God in order to be blessed as well (Zec 8:23; Isa 2:3). All the good that God gives to Israel will serve for the good of man and the earth. That is the subject of this psalm.

It is the shortest prophetic psalm with a wonderful description of the condition of the nations during the realm of peace. It is the seventh in this series of prophetic psalms.

Psa 67:1 | Prayer for God's Blessing

1 For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

God be gracious to us and bless us,

[And] cause His face to shine upon us — Selah.

For "for the choir director; with stringed instruments" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "a Psalm. A Song" see at Psalm 65:1.

The beginning (verse 1b) and end (verses 6-7) of this prayer recall the priestly blessing (Num 6:24-26). This priestly blessing is requested here by the whole people. God's people here are, according to God's original purpose, a priestly people (Exo 19:5-6). It will be so in the realm of peace (Isa 61:6). Their priestly service relates not only to God, but also to the nations.

The blessing they seek for themselves will also go through them to the nations (cf. Rom 11:12). This fulfills the promise to Abraham: "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3b).

There is no right to blessing. Therefore, any request for blessing can only be made in the awareness of grace. That is why this prayer begins by asking God to be gracious. God is the source of all grace. In His grace He wants to bless. We must be well aware that it is mere grace when God blesses us. God can bless on the basis of the new covenant. The new covenant involves a Mediator Who fulfilled all the conditions of the covenant. Therefore, for Israel, blessing is based on grace. Another has fulfilled the conditions and paid the price.

God's blessing makes life on earth not only possible, but also pleasant. He takes away the curse and judgment from His own and in return "causes His face to shine". It indicates that He receives His own into His presence and cares for them there in love. He does so with joy.

According to an old Jewish interpretation, "His face" is the Christ. Similarly, in the New Testament we find that the glory of God has shone in the face of Jesus Christ (2Cor 4:6). 'His face to shine' means that He is gracious. That is also the meaning in Numbers 6: "The LORD make His face shine on you, and [=, is equivalent to] be gracious to you" (Num 6:25). It means that someone is pleasing to Him. The opposite is: His face is dark = He is angry.

Psa 67:2-5 | The Nations Will Praise God

*2 That Your way may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations.*

*3 Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.*

*4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;
For You will judge the peoples with uprightness
And guide the nations on the earth. Selah.*

*5 Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.*

The request for grace and blessing is not only to enjoy it ourselves, but in order that a testimony may proceed from it (cf. Jn 7:38) "on the earth",

“among all the nations” (verse 2; Gen 12:3b). Through the grace and blessing God gives His people, people on earth will know God’s way. This is the way to receive that blessing as well, which means being brought into relationship with the God of Israel. This is only possible through repentance of sin and conversion to God and faith in Christ. He is the way to God (1Pet 3:18) and came forth from Israel as Man (Rom 9:5). This is also the way by which the remnant receives that grace and blessing.

When the nations will see God’s blessing on His people, when they see His salvation that He has given His people in Christ, they will also desire to possess that salvation. Thus they will come to desire to know the God of Israel as their God. If that God is also their God through repentance and regeneration and faith in the Messiah, they will have a part in all the blessings that God has given His people. They will be allowed, by their connection with God’s people, to know the God of that people as the source of grace and blessing.

The result is that the peoples will praise God (verse 3). They will have the same incentive to praise God as His people Israel. Grace and blessing has also been given to them and the light of God’s face shines upon them as well. It is all grace alone, just as it is for God’s people (Rom 11:32). Once again the psalmist says that the peoples will praise God, while now he adds an emphatic “all”, “all the peoples”. The point is that God receives the praise of all who share in the grace and blessing.

The joy and rejoicing of the nations is not only caused by the grace granted, but also by the justice with which God will rule over the peoples (verse 4). God can show mercy when His righteousness is acknowledged. This is true for the sinner in all ages and also for the nations in the time that is coming when His people come to repentance and confession of their sins. This will happen after the rapture of the church, when He will pour out the Spirit of grace and of prayer over His people. Then they will come to repentance because they will see Him Whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10-14).

God will rule righteously and lead the nations of the earth. This is the essence of this psalm. This psalm is what is known as an ‘envelope psalm’: it begins in verse 1b with blessing and ends in verse 7 with blessing. Blessing

is, as it were, the envelope in which the psalm is wrapped. Exactly in the middle of the psalm we find in verse 4 the two sentences that form the core of this psalm, namely, that in the realm of peace God Himself will judge the peoples and guide the nations on the earth. That is the reason the nations will glorify God. God, through Israel, will teach the nations about this because of the experiences they went through in the great tribulation.

He will guide them in the way of peace and prosperity. This applies to both individuals and nations. God guides them as Shepherd and as King. His guidance does not consist of merely pointing the way. He goes before them as Shepherd and leads them into the full blessing of the realm of peace.

For the second time, the psalmist twice tells God that the peoples will praise Him and that they “all” will do so (verse 5). The first time (verse 3), the occasion for praising God is knowing God’s way and God’s salvation. This second time the reason is the righteousness of God in judgment. Everything that God reveals of Himself is cause for all who see it to praise Him.

Psa 67:6-7 | God blesses

6 The earth has yielded its produce;

God, our God, blesses us.

7 God blesses us,

That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

When God blesses His people, it means blessing for the whole earth (verse 6). The earth is now set free from the curse that came upon it because of man’s sin, which prevented it from yielding its full harvest (Gen 3:17; 4:12; Rom 8:19-21). The earth does now give “its produce”, that is, the rich harvest that the earth will produce under the blessing of God to be enjoyed by everyone on earth (cf. Lev 26:4).

Spiritually, it means that faithfulness rises from the earth. The ‘produce’ of the earth consists not only of what grows from the earth, but also consists of the people and nations who faithfully serve God and praise Him.

The blessing with which God blesses His people cultivates fear or awe of Him among all people to “all the ends of the earth” (verse 7; cf. Jer 33:9).

Now the earth is still full of people who blaspheme and challenge God, or deny His existence. In the realm of peace, these people will not be present. In the realm of peace, only people who have come to be impressed by His majesty and bow down to it, either in sincerity or hypocrisy, will enter. During the realm of peace, people who openly blaspheme and challenge God will be judged immediately.

Psalm 68

Introduction

It has been thought that this psalm, this song (verse 1a), was made on the occasion of the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion after its humiliating capture by the Philistines (1Sam 4:17,22; 5:1) and its stay in the house of Obed-edom (2Sam 6:1-2,12-18). This bringing up of the ark is accompanied by music and song (1Chr 15:27-28). Prophetically, we see in it a type of the deliverance the LORD gives by going to Zion, Jerusalem: "Listen! Your watchmen lift up [their] voices, they shout joyfully together; for they will see with their own eyes when the LORD restores Zion" (Isa 52:8; cf. Isa 30:30-31; 31:4).

In fact, Psalm 68 is a summary and culmination of the previous psalms (Psalms 61-67). It is clearly a Messianic psalm. Verse 18 is quoted by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians and applied to the ascension of the Lord Jesus (Eph 4:8).

The latter provides the key to understanding this psalm: this psalm is about the triumphal march of Christ (cf. Lk 24:44; Jn 5:39). The psalmist makes use of various exalted portions of the Old Testament, such as sayings of Moses, songs of Deborah and of Hannah, the book of Deuteronomy and even the prophecies of Balaam. Added to this is the fact that God is mentioned here by a multitude of names.

Psa 68:1-2 | God rises

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David. A Song.

*Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,
And let those who hate Him flee before Him.*

*2 As smoke is driven away, [so] drive [them] away;
As wax melts before the fire,
[So] let the wicked perish before God.*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

It is “a Psalm. A Song of David”. It is the last “psalm” in the row of four psalms called “a song”. See further at Psalm 65:1.

The psalm begins majestically: “Let God arise” (verse 1b; cf. Psa 44:26; 2Chr 6:41). This is to say that God arises to go and act and fulfill Psalm 110 (Psa 110:1b). These words recall what Moses said when the ark went up with the people in the wilderness (Num 10:35). The ark is the symbol of God’s presence and protection. It is His throne. God takes His place in front the people, at the head of His people. As a result, the enemies are scattered everywhere. “Those who hate Him” because they have no connection with Him, “flee before Him”.

When He arises in His majesty, He drives away His haters with the same ease with which “smoke is driven away” (verse 2). It is not an unequal battle, no, there is no battle at all, it is over before it begins (Psa 2:5b-6). Just His arising, without speaking a word or taking any special action, causes the disappearance of His haters. Like expelled smoke, they disappear without leaving a trace of them (cf. Hos 13:3). David uses another comparison. The enemies of God are also like wax that melts by fire (cf. Mic 1:4). No shape or resistance remains. So easily “the wicked perish before God” (cf. Isa 11:4b).

Psa 68:3-6 | The Righteous Rejoice

*3 But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God;
Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.*

*4 Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
Lift up [a song] for Him who rides through the deserts,
Whose name is the LORD, and exult before Him.*

*5 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows,
Is God in His holy habitation.*

*6 God makes a home for the lonely;
He leads out the prisoners into prosperity,
Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

The rising of God has a totally different result for the righteous than it does for God’s enemies. They are “glad” (verse 3). With them, a tremendous joy arises. While the wicked perish “before God” (verse 2), the righteous “ex-

ult before God” and “rejoice with gladness”. The wicked are perished by the presence of God, but the righteous are with great and continually increasing joy in God’s presence. The heart is full of joy and gladness, which is exuberantly and constantly expressed.

The joy of the righteous turns into an appeal to sing to God, to sing praises to His Name (verse 4; cf. 2Chr 20:1-30). The repetition indicates the intense desire to sing to Him. He is coming and a song must be “lifted up” for Him, or better “a highway” must be casted up for Him “who rides through the deserts” (cf. Isa 40:3; 62:10). To cast up a highway for Him means that the people remove all impediments to give God ample room in their lives.

It means repenting and giving Him His due place in their hearts. It is about highways in the heart (Psa 84:5; Mt 3:1-3). Heights must be lowered and valleys filled. The pride must disappear. The valleys, or lack of knowledge, must be filled. By the desert, Hebrew *aravot*, is meant the dry wilderness of Judea. This is a good description of the way of the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem in connection with the final battle. This word also appears in Isaiah 40: “Make smooth in the desert (*arava* – singular) a highway for our God” (Isa 40:3b). In the desert He has room to do His work.

Cast up a highway must be done because His Name is “LORD”. As has already been noted, in this second book of psalms the name LORD, Yahweh, is little used and substituted by God, *Elohim*. This is because the believing remnant is far away from Jerusalem. Now that God has arisen, and is on His way to His place of rest in Zion, the name LORD is used again. With this Name He has made Himself known to His people Israel only (Exo 3:15). He is the God of the covenant with His people and He is going to fulfill all that He has committed Himself to through that covenant (Exo 6:6-8). The awareness of this is cause to “exult before Him”.

The name “LORD”, Yahweh, occurs several times in this psalm. Furthermore, God, *Elohim*, Lord, Adonai, and Almighty, *Shaddai*, are mentioned throughout, for it is primarily about His supremacy, about His Divine ruling power. This God is all that Israel and all the nations need.

God is both an almighty Helper against enemies and a merciful “father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows” (verse 5; cf. Jer 49:11). His people have been like orphans and also like a widow. The cause of this is their

rejection of Him, which caused Him to leave them to themselves. But now He takes care of them (cf. Exo 22:22-23; Deu 27:19).

Thus “is God in His holy habitation”, which is heaven (Jer 25:30). That is, we now see revealed on earth that God is the Protector of the weak. In this context, the weak are the faithful remnant described as orphans and widows.

God is no different in His holy dwelling than He is in His actions on earth. Man’s actions in public are often different from those in his home, in the private sphere. With God it is not so. The holiness that marks His dwelling place also marks His actions on earth. He can be merciful to those in need because all His holy requirements have been met by His beloved Son, the Messiah and LORD of His people. He can be merciful to His people because of their confession and accept them into His holy presence.

He is a God Who “makes a home for the lonely” (verse 6). His people have been scattered and lonely. Now that He has taken care of His people, their members are together again as a household. Man was not created to be alone. God established the family in order to develop a sense of fellowship. In this way He wants to show the world the value He as a Father attaches to have fellowship with His children. It is good to keep an eye on God’s original in this regard as well, because the family as an institution of God has been rejected. The reason for this is that everything is about the satisfaction of individual needs.

God is also a God “who leads out the prisoners into prosperity”. The members of His people have been prisoners among the nations. Now God has set them free from captivity and brought them into the prosperity of the realm of peace. “The rebellious”, on the other hand, do not come into a land of prosperity, but “dwell in a parched land”, a land where there is a lack of everything (cf. Deu 21:18-21).

As an application for us, we know that after our deliverance from the bondage of sin, we have come to belong to the family of God’s children. We are “no longer strangers and aliens”, but we have become “fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household” (Eph 2:19). We have been showered with spiritual, heavenly, and eternal blessings that we may enjoy in fellowship with the Father.

Psa 68:7-14 | God Goes Forth Before His People

*7 O God, when You went forth before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness, Selah.*

*8 The earth quaked;
The heavens also dropped [rain] at the presence of God;
Sinai itself [quaked] at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*

*9 You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God;
You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched.*

*10 Your creatures settled in it;
You provided in Your goodness for the poor, O God.*

*11 The Lord gives the command;
The women who proclaim the [good] tidings are a great host:*

*12 "Kings of armies flee, they flee,
And she who remains at home will divide the spoil!"*

*13 When you lie down among the sheepfolds,
[You are like] the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And its pinions with glistening gold.*

*14 When the Almighty scattered the kings there,
It was snowing in Zalmon.*

In this section, David lists important events in the history of the people of God. He begins with God going forth before His people (verse 7; Exo 13:21). God goes forth before them "through the wilderness" (cf. Isa 43:19). This refers to the wilderness journey of God's people after they are delivered from Egypt, with the ark marching ahead of the people as a symbol of His presence (Num 10:33).

We see here a picture of the Lord Jesus going forth before His own. He does not walk behind the flock to chase them, but He goes forth before His sheep (Jn 10:4). He goes forth before the many sons of God to lead them as the Leader into full salvation (Heb 2:10). He has already gone forth as forerunner before His own in the sanctuary, to which He leads them (Heb 6:19-20).

God's going forth before His people has been accompanied by the trembling of the earth (verse 8; cf. Jdg 5:4). Prophetically this will be fulfilled during the battle for Jerusalem (Isa 29:6; Joel 3:16). When God appears,

it does not leave nature unaffected. The heavens too respond by giving streams of rain of refreshment “at the presence of God”, as the next verse also says. The mighty Mount Sinai also trembles “at the presence of God, the God of Israel” (cf. Exo 19:18). Sinai recalls the legislation, the disclosure of the conditions of God under which the people can receive the blessing (Neh 9:13).

Then the people enter the land. There God sheds abroad “a plentiful rain” on the land (verse 9). It is the land that God has chosen as His inheritance. He confirmed it with His very mild rain by the time the land was parched. This will happen during the prophecy of the two witnesses who have the power “to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying” (Rev 11:6). Then comes the moment, when the remnant has declared that the LORD is God, that the rain falls in abundance.

His “creatures settled in it” (verse 10), that is His people seen as a flock cared for by Him (cf. Eze 36:38). God in His goodness has redeemed His property, His land, for His “poor” people, the people who are in such a miserable condition.

We can also apply this to us, who are also His own people (Tit 2:14). When we are poor and exhausted, we are encouraged and refreshed by the Lord Jesus. He works this through His Spirit and His Word. Both are compared to water. Christ shows us what we have become in Him to encourage us, and He shows us Who He is and will be present to refresh us.

The Lord “gives the command” (verse 11). What He commanded is not communicated. From the context we can think of the conquest of the land when it was taken. These are the “[good] tidings”, which He proclaims by “the women” who “are a great host” (cf. 1Sam 18:6-7). The messengers mention the good news of fleeing “kings of armies” (verse 12). We can think of Miriam, who sings with the women about the downfall of Pharaoh and his horsemen (Exo 15:19-21) and of Deborah, who sings about the downfall of Sisera (Jdg 5:24-27). Similarly, the women who proclaim the message of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus thereby bring the good news that death has been defeated.

To emphasize the power of this proclamation, it is repeated that the kings flee. They have been defeated (cf. Zec 12:6). The spoil captured from them

by the victors who went out to fight is shared with the home front, with her “who remains at home” (cf. Jdg 5:29-30), by whom the spoil is also further distributed. The dividing of the spoil (Zec 14:14) is an act of blessing as a result of a victory. God let the Lord Jesus do that as a reward for His victory on the cross (Isa 53:12).

“When you lie down among the sheepfolds” (verse 13) is literally “when you lie down among the cooking stones”. A sheepfold consists of a row of piled up stones. Those lying between them are the humblest of shepherds. The “cooking stones” can also refer to utensils in a kitchen. Those who lie between the stones are then the servants in the kitchen. In the context of the psalm, the expression indicates that the humblest shepherds or even the lowest servants will share in the spoils, so abundant is the spoil.

The comparison to “the wings of a dove covered with silver, and its pinions with glistening gold” speaks of the abundance of the spoils. Everything that glitters is not fake, but real silver and real gold. The wings represent protection. God has protected them.

The dove symbolizes faithfulness and the Holy Spirit in connection with the people, that is, the remnant (Song 2:14). They have remained faithful to Him because of the power of the Holy Spirit. The silver speaks of the price paid for the redemption and reconciliation of the remnant. Christ paid the price (1Pet 1:18-19). The glistening, or green-glossy gold speaks of the Divine glory seen in the renewal of nature. Green is the primary color of nature. This is a picture of the freshness of the new life that is the portion of all who belong to Christ.

The Almighty’s action results in the scattering of kings throughout the land (verse 14). His mighty victory is associated with snowing “in Zalmon”, a mountain near Shechem (Jdg 9:47-48). Zalmon means “the dark one”, because of its multitude of tall trees. When it snows on this dark mountain – which is exceptional, because it almost never snows there – everything suddenly turns white. Thus, on that day, Israel will suddenly pass from the darkness of tribulation to the light of redemption. They will be transferred from darkness to the kingdom of light (cf. Col 1:13).

It has been assumed that this is a poetic description of the coldness of the death which due to the whiteness of the large number of corpses is remi-

niscent of snow. It may also mean that His great victory is a refreshment for the remnant, as a shower of snow is on the day of harvest (Pro 25:13).

Psa 68:15-18 | Gifts Received and Given

*15 A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan;
A mountain [of many] peaks is the mountain of Bashan.
16 Why do you look with envy, O mountains with [many] peaks,
At the mountain which God has desired for His abode?
Surely the LORD will dwell [there] forever.
17 The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands;
The Lord is among them [as at] Sinai, in holiness.
18 You have ascended on high, You have led captive [Your] captives;
You have received gifts among men,
Even [among] the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell [there].*

David points to “the mountain of Bashan” as “a mountain of God”, i.e. a mighty mountain, and as “a mountain [of many] peaks” (verse 15). A mountain is a symbol of a kingdom (cf. Dan 2:34-35,44-45). Through David, God asks the question to this kingdom why it looks with envy “at the mountain” (verse 16). By “the mountain” he means Mount Zion, which God “has desired as His abode”. Mount Zion exceeds all impressive mountains because it is associated with the Man after God’s heart. So it is with the city of Jerusalem, which surpasses all the impressive cities of the world because it is the city of the great King (Psa 87:1-7).

His purpose is fixed, and He will execute it without anyone objecting: “Surely the LORD will dwell [there] forever.” God will dwell in the midst of His people, no matter what the surrounding ‘mountains’ may think or undertake. God has made His choice which determines everything. It is wisdom to agree to that.

To realize His purpose, “myriads, thousands upon thousands” chariots are at His disposal (verse 17). They are “the chariots of God”, by which are meant His angels (cf. 2Kgs 2:11; 6:17; Heb 12:22; Rev 5:11). He, “the Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler, is with His people. He is at the head of those countless chariots. He is the Protector of Zion. It is folly to oppose Him and His purpose.

He is “[as at] Sinai, in holiness”. Again, that is after verse 8, the remnant is reminded of Sinai. The LORD Himself descended on Sinai in majesty and splendor with ten thousand angels (Exo 19:16-20; 24:16; Deu 33:2). In verse 8 it is in connection with going forth before His people; here it is in connection with His dwelling place in the midst of His people.

Here the emphasis is on the fact that by His descending on Mount Sinai the mountain was turned into a sanctuary. In the same impressive way, He appears on Zion which He has chosen as His dwelling place to dwell with His people. On Mount Sinai, the LORD made the covenant with Israel. Now He heads to Zion – from verse 8 to verse 16 – to make another covenant. The language is the language of Sinai, but prophetically it is now about the future, about the new covenant (cf. Jer 31:31-34).

After this description of the loftiness and majesty of God, David speaks not *of* Him, but *to* Him (verse 18). He addresses Him directly and says to Him, Who will dwell on Zion forever: “You have ascended on high, You have led captive [Your] captives”. There, up in heaven, He has “received gifts among men”, i.e. to distribute among men.

Paul explains the meaning of this verse in the letter to the Ephesians. He applies this verse to Christ, Who has won complete victory over the enemy, the devil and his entire system of power. As a result, He has been exalted by God above all and all. From that exalted position He distributes gifts to the members of His body, the church (Eph 4:7-8).

It is all about Christ as the Giver. Paul emphasizes both the place from which He gives, “on high”, and what He has done to be able to give: the captivity taken captive. David speaks in this victory psalm of “on high” and “led captive [Your] captives”. He has already pointed out how God scatters His enemies and causes them to flee, and that kings who rebel against Him perish before Him. For His oppressed people, God’s action means deliverance. That is why they celebrate. This scene looks forward to the beginning of the realm of peace.

Paul quotes this psalm because he knows that the victory, which will be seen openly in the realm of peace, is already a reality for faith. The Lord Jesus has gone through death, risen from death, and “ascended on high”. In the word “ascended” there is Divine power, the majesty of the Conqueror.

That He led “captive a host of the captives” (Eph 4:8) means that by His death He took away the devil’s power to hold people captive. In Hebrews 2 it says: “That through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Heb 2:14-15). For all who belong to Him, He has conquered the power of sin, death, the world and the flesh. David puts it this way, that Christ has brought the captives out of bondage and taken them to Himself.

However, it does not stop there. Christ has also given gifts to those who were captives, but have now been set free. First, God gave Christ gifts as a reward for His victory. Those gifts are the ones who have been ransomed by Him from their captivity (Jn 10:29a; 17:2). In turn, Christ bestows gifts on those who now share in His victory.

The gifts come from One Who has overcome and is now in heaven. We who were in captivity have also been set free. In this way the Lord can also bestow gifts on us. Prophetically, it means that in the realm of peace He gives gifts to His earthly people, that is all those whom He has freed from the captivity of their sins and their rulers, to serve Him with these.

Psalm 68 tells us that Christ received gifts, but tells us nothing about Him giving gifts to people. The latter is a hidden fact that could only be revealed in the New Testament. That happens in the letter to the Ephesians. There Paul says even more about Christ and His victory and the special results for those who belong to the church. That is part of the revelation of the mysteries that relate to the church. These mysteries are now made known to us by the Spirit Who has come down from heaven (1Pet 1:12).

For David, it is enough to see that God’s promises for His people on earth are fulfilled in and through Christ. The Spirit has made that clear to him. He can compose this victory psalm and sing this victory song because he knows God as his King. That King is none other than Christ.

The great purpose of what Christ has done and what He provides in gifts is that He can dwell with people and that people can dwell with Him to serve Him (Rev 21:3). Christ, the Righteous One, died for us unrighteous people “that He might bring us to God” (1Pet 3:18).

We, and all who may dwell with God, initially are among “the rebellious” mentioned in the last line of verse 18. The word “rebellious” is not mentioned in the letter to the Ephesians because this word applies to the people of Israel (Isa 65:2).

God, by His love and grace, broke our rebellion and brought us to repentance. Now we submit with profound gratitude to Him Who has shown such enormous grace to us. This will also be said by those who will dwell as the new Israel in the realm of peace in the presence of Him Who dwells on the mountain He has desired for His abode (verse 16).

Psa 68:19-23 | Escapes From death

19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden,

The God [who] is our salvation. Selah.

20 God is to us a God of deliverances;

And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death.

21 Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies,

The hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds.

22 The Lord said, “I will bring [them] back from Bashan.

I will bring [them] back from the depths of the sea;

23 That your foot may shatter [them] in blood,

The tongue of your dogs [may have] its portion from [your] enemies”.

What David said to God in verse 18 causes a blessing of or praise for “the Lord” (verse 19). In His sovereign exaltation, He bears “us”, that is, the believing remnant, “daily”. “Daily” means every day without exception (cf. Isa 46:3-4). He bears them with His strength in order that they may bear what He gives them to bear. He not only helps them bear their burdens, but He bears them (cf. Deu 1:31). That God is “our salvation”. They find in His help and in Himself all their happiness and prosperity.

God does not give only a temporary sense of blessedness. What God, “the God”, their God, gives, are “deliverances” (verse 20). This can also be translated as the God of salvations. From the word “salvation”, the name ‘Jesus’ is also derived. Jesus means ‘the LORD saves’. Here it is said that God saves. From the New Testament we know that God does so in the Person of the Lord Jesus (Mt 1:21).

There are many dangers, misfortunes and trials in the believer's life, but God delivers or saves him from all these different difficulties (2Tim 3:11; 4:18). He is the guarantee that each of His own will attain the complete deliverance or salvation of the realm of peace.

He is "GOD, the Lord", Yahweh, Adonai, the God Who has made His covenant with them (Yahweh) and has overall dominion, He rules over all (Adonai). To Him, therefore, "belong escapes from death". This means both escape from mortal danger and deliverance from the power of death itself, whereby death is presented as a person. This is possible because by Christ "death is swallowed up in victory" (1Cor 15:54b). Death is no obstacle for Him to give His people what He has promised. He is the Leader who leads them right through death into the full blessing of the realm of peace (Psa 16:9; 48:14).

Nor are the enemies a hindrance to the blessing: "Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies, the hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds" (verse 21). The enemies of His people are "His enemies". We can think here of the future king of the North and his allies bringing destruction on Jerusalem. After that destruction, he leaves an occupying force in Jerusalem and marches on to Egypt. While in Egypt, he hears rumors of an attack on his occupying force in Jerusalem. Then he returns from Egypt to recapture Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus will then shatter him, the head of His enemies (Dan 11:40-45; cf. Nah 3:18).

His enemies have tried to thwart Him in fulfilling His promises. This has always proved to be in vain, for it is impossible to thwart God's plans. They have paid for their foolish attempts to do so with death en masse (Psa 110:6; cf. Hab 3:14).

The "hairy crown" emphasizes that they have hair on their skulls. The long hair is a symbol of submission and dedication (1Cor 11:15). One of the characteristics of powers under the authority of satan, who are submissive and dedicated to him, is that they have "hair like women's hair", that is, they have long hair (Rev 9:8). Who continues to behave submissively to the devil, "who goes on in his guilty deeds", chooses death.

When "the Lord has said, I will bring you back from Bashan; I will bring you back from the depths of the sea" (verse 23), it also happens. God de-

livers His people from the strongest power of which Bashan speaks (verse 15). Bashan is the Golan Heights, the mountain range east of the Sea of Galilee, to which the remnant fled (Mt 24:16). So the LORD will bring the remnant of Judah back from there. No one can stop Him in that.

Even though His people are hidden in “the depths of the sea” and untraceable by people, God knows where they are and will bring them back to their land from there. The sea is a symbol of the nations (Rev 17:15; Isa 57:20). Here we find an indication that the ten tribes, scattered and hidden among the nations, will be brought back to the promised land by God around this time.

When His people are back in their land, the tables will be turned. God’s people’s “foot” will “shatter [them] in blood” (verse 23; cf. Ps 58:10b; Isa 63:3; Rev 14:20). This is another expression of victory over enemies that is appropriate for Israel, God’s earthly people, but not appropriate for the church, God’s heavenly people. The battle of the gospel is not a literal battle against blood and flesh, but a spiritual struggle against evil powers in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).

It indicates agreement with the judgment of God that He has righteously exercised over His enemies. Those enemies have defied God in terrible ways and ruthlessly trampled His people. The promise that “the tongue of your dogs [may have] its portion from [your] enemies” indicates God’s abhorrence of these enemies (cf. 1Kgs 21:19; 22:38).

Psa 68:24-27 | The Procession of God

*24 They have seen Your procession, O God,
The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
25 The singers went on, the musicians after [them],
In the midst of the maidens beating tambourines.
26 Bless God in the congregations,
[Even] the LORD, [you who are] of the fountain of Israel.
27 There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them,
The princes of Judah [in] their throng,
The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.*

This section is clearly prophetic. It resembles the song of Moses after the deliverance of God's people from the Egyptians (Exo 15:1-21). Here it is God Who as King in the Person of the Lord Jesus is going to take His own throne. Christ is the King-Priest, the true Melchizedek. Therefore, His throne is also His sanctuary. Now it is not about the restoration of the temple service, but about a procession or going that is also a triumphal procession or going (verse 24). The king of the North and his army have been defeated. This triumphal march takes place before the eyes of "they", that is, the world.

When God has finally defeated and humbled His enemies, He takes up His residence in the sanctuary. Full of delight, which we hear in the exclamation "O God", the psalmist says that as the ark was carried up to Jerusalem, the spectators saw its procession into the sanctuary. The procession of the ark is the procession of God, for the ark is His throne. This God David calls "my God, my King", indicating a personal relationship with Him (cf. Jn 20:28).

It is a procession that not only has spectators, but in which a crowd joins in the procession (verse 25; 1Chr 15:14,25). "The singers" go in front, after them come "musicians in the midst of the maidens beating tambourines". It recalls what Miriam and all the women do with tambourines after the deliverance from Egypt and the passage through the Red Sea (Exo 15:20-21).

God wants to meet with a people "in the congregations" where they bless or praise Him as the almighty Creator "God" (verse 26). He is also "the LORD", the covenant God of His people. He wants them to praise Him as LORD as well. Those who are called to do so are "of the fountain of Israel". The fountain or origin of Israel is God Himself (Isa 51:1; cf. Psa 87:7). All who are connected to Him as the living Fountain – which is only possible if they have received His nature (2Pet 1:4) – can praise Him.

All twelve tribes – for by now the lost ten tribes are also back in the land (verse 22b) – will come and bless God in the congregations (verse 27). They are represented by Benjamin and Judah from the south and Zebulun and Naphtali from the north. Benjamin is called "the youngest" because he is

the youngest son of Jacob and the smallest tribe of Israel (1Sam 9:21). It is, however, the tribe that rules, that robs and divides the spoil (cf. Gen 49:27).

“The princes of Judah”, the king’s tribe, are present to bring up the ark. They lead the way in “their throng”, which is the company of Judah that also walks along. Judah is much larger than Benjamin, has many considerable people and a large company. Yet Benjamin seems to be in the lead in this procession. Thus Benjamin is mentioned prior to Judah. It is also written of him that he rules, which may indicate that he controls the procession.

Zebulun and Naphtali are far from the temple. Yet they are tribes known for their dedication to God in a time of decay (Jdg 5:18). Over the territory of these two tribes contempt is brought. It is symbolic of spiritual darkness. The first coming of the Lord Jesus changed this (Isa 9:1-2; Mt 4:12-16). This will happen again at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, His return to earth. Then He will not be rejected, but accepted and will establish His realm of peace and righteousness.

Psa 68:28-31 | Kings Bring Gifts

*28 Your God has commanded your strength;
Show Yourself strong, O God, who have acted on our behalf.
29 Because of Your temple at Jerusalem
Kings will bring gifts to You.
30 Rebuke the beasts in the reeds,
The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples,
Trampling under foot the pieces of silver;
He has scattered the peoples who delight in war.
31 Envoys will come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.*

God has made His people strong in their battle against the king of the North (verse 28; Zec 12:5-6; cf. Jos 1:9). Now they ask Him to give even more strength and to reinforce what He has done to them. There is a desire for more strength so that what God has done will be even more evident. We are able to nullify what God has done to us by working on it ourselves. Here we see that the strength we have been privileged to experience from

God should lead us to ask for even more strength so that it becomes ever more evident that God is at work in our lives.

Their request to show Himself strong in relation with God's action on their behalf applies first and foremost to His temple in Jerusalem (verse 29). They would like to see God's strength put into action in kings of foreign powers who bring Him gifts for the sake of His temple in Jerusalem. That is what those kings will do when they see that with all their might they are powerless against the mighty God (cf. Isa 49:7; 60:5). At the birth of the Lord Jesus they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt 2:11b). At His return they will bring gold and frankincense (Isa 60:6). There will be no myrrh with them then, because myrrh speaks of the suffering and dying of the Lord Jesus and that is accomplished.

The second question concerns the revelation of His power toward their enemies. They ask Him to "rebuke the beasts in the reeds" (verse 30). By the beasts they mean the nations and possibly the Egyptians in particular (cf. Eze 32:2a). "The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples" represents the oppressors and misleaders of the peoples or tribes of apostate Israel (cf. Psa 22:12).

The leader of apostate Israel, the antichrist, submits himself with "pieces of silver" to the nations. He buys the favor of God-hostile nations (Europe) to oppose the disciplinary rod of God (Assyria). But in faith the psalmist sees the victory of God: "He has scattered the peoples who delight in war." All the armies that have gathered and find joy in war against God and His people are scattered by Him like chaff in the wind. He drives them out and exterminates them.

God will judge the rebellious nations. A remnant from those nations will come to His dwelling place in Jerusalem. There will "envoys come out of Egypt" to bow down to the true God, the God of Israel (verse 31; Isa 19:20-22). "Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God" (cf. Isa 45:14). This means that they will do what they need to do quickly: Begging Him to spare them. This is what stretching out their hands to Him speaks of.

Psa 68:32-34 | The Majesty and Strength of God

| 32 *Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth,*

Sing praises to the Lord, Selah.

33 To Him who rides upon the highest heavens, which are from ancient times; Behold, He speaks forth with His voice, a mighty voice.

34 Ascribe strength to God;

His majesty is over Israel

And His strength is in the skies.

The “kingdoms of the earth” that were spared from the judgments are called to “sing to God” (verse 32). Here we see the “great multitude which no one could count” (Rev 7:9-17). They are to sing “praises to the Lord”. It is He who “rides upon the highest heavens” (verse 33; cf. Deu 33:26). It represents in an unparalleled way His majesty from eternity and everywhere in the heavens. He is the unlimited Lord of the universe which cannot contain Him, but which He spans (1Kgs 8:27).

This He expresses with His voice: “He speaks forth with His voice, a mighty voice.” He reveals Himself in His speaking. We hear it in nature through thunder. We hear it in His Word spoken by His prophets, and “in these last days” we hear Him speak “in [His] Son” (Heb 1:1-2).

The subject of the praise of the subjected nations must be God’s sovereign power (verse 34). He has displayed His majesty over Israel. He has chosen this people to be His people. Therefore, the countless enemies who have sought to wipe this people off the face of the earth through all ages have not succeeded in their goal. God has preserved His people for Himself. Now He makes them the center of blessing for the earth because He dwells in the midst of them.

His strength which He has shown in their protection is the same power with which He governs the clouds [skies is literally clouds]. He rides on them as on a chariot. He sends rain from there upon the earth, whereby He can accompany the rain with dazzling lightning and deafening thunder. He reveals Himself in blessing for His people and in judgment for His enemies.

Psa 68:35 | God Gives His People Strength and Power

35 O God, [You are] awesome from Your sanctuary.

The God of Israel Himself gives strength and power to the people.

| *Blessed be God!*

David is deeply impressed by God's strength. In the first line of this last verse, he addresses God again with the words "O God". He, Who reveals His strength in the clouds, is "awesome" (cf. Deu 10:17) from His sanctuary, the heavens where He resides, places above the clouds.

He is again "the God of Israel", for the period of Lo-Ammi, that is not My people, is over. Israel has no other God but Him, and He has no other people of whom He is the God in that way. It has often been asked where the God of Israel is when it comes to the suffering that has come upon His people. All questions about that come to an end when He reveals Himself as the God of Israel in His time.

"He gives strength and power to the people" (cf. Zec 12:5) so that they will not go down in all the attacks that will be made on them in the end time. They will not owe it to their military superiority or clever defense strategy. That the people will enter the blessing of the realm of peace is due solely to Him.

Therefore, nothing remains but to say with admiration: "Blessed be God!" Then He enthrones upon the praise of Israel (Psa 22:3).

Psalm 69

Introduction

After the series of Psalms 61-68, which is more or less chronological, we now find a new series: Psalms 69-72. These psalms give a review of the time of the great tribulation, a summary of the sufferings, first of Christ and then of His people, that is, the faithful remnant.

Immediately following the psalm of return to heaven of the Lord Jesus (Psa 68:18) is the psalm that deals with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings (Psalm 69). The victor of Psalm 68 turns out to be the same Person Who, as Psalm 69 shows, suffered severely 2,000 years ago.

We also see this in Revelation 5, where first the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Victor, is presented, Who then turns out to be the same as the Lamb Who stands there as slain (Rev 5:5-6a). Each climax is possible only because of Christ's humiliation. All the blessings described in the preceding psalms are the result of the suffering of the Messiah described in this psalm.

The suffering of the Messiah is partly, that is, from the side of man, also the suffering of the faithful remnant in the end time. In all the psalms in which the suffering of the remnant is described, we hear the Spirit of Christ.

Here again we have clearly a Messianic psalm about the suffering of the Lord Jesus. This psalm is quoted several times in the New Testament:

Verse 5 – Jn 15:25

Verse 10 – Jn 2:17; Rom 15:3

Verse 22 – Mt 27:34,48; Mk 15:23; Jn 19:28-29

Verse 23 – Rom 11:9

Verse 24 – Rom 11:10

Verse 26 – Acts 1:20

These quotes show that the book of Psalms speaks of the Lord Jesus (Lk 24:44; Jn 5:39).

We find four prayers in this psalm, namely in verses 1b,6,13-18,22-29. The psalm ends with a song of praise about prayer being answered. Despite all the suffering, the struggle of prayer ends in a declaration of trust in God (verses 30-36) and becomes a song of trust in God that has been tested through suffering.

Psa 69:1-5 | Prayer in Need

1 For the choir director; according to Shoshannim. [A Psalm] of David.

Save me, O God,

For the waters have threatened my life.

2 I have sunk in deep mire, and there is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters, and a flood overflows me.

3 I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched;

My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head;

Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies;

What I did not steal, I then have to restore.

5 O God, it is You who knows my folly,

And my wrongs are not hidden from You.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “according to Shoshannim” or “upon lilies” see at Psalm 45:1.

It is a psalm “of David”. This is what Romans 11 is also saying. There verses 22-23 of this psalm are quoted, with the quotation preceded by the statement “David says” (Rom 11:9-10). David is the speaker, but the words are from Him Who is so much greater than David, which is Christ. Christ is the Son of David and at the same time His Lord (Mt 22:42-45). David experienced these sufferings to some degree, but the wording that is used is beyond David’s experiences. As a prophet, David described the experiences of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:29-31), and to a lesser extent, the experiences of the believing remnant.

The Messiah is in deep suffering and cries out to God to save Him (verse 1b). He exclaims: “The waters have threatened my life [literally: have come to the soul]” This means that He is in danger of drowning. The need is exceedingly great. He sinks deeper and deeper into the mire, for there is no

foothold (verse 2; cf. Jer 38:6). He is in mortal danger. The mire is suffocating. Just a little while longer and it will be over and out with Him (cf. Jona 2:3; Psa 40:2). This is how the Lord Jesus experienced the enmity of men against Him. This is also the experience of the remnant in the end time. They suffer greatly because of the enemies from outside and the antichrist with his followers from inside.

His suffering is so intense that He cries out that He has “come into deep waters” and that “a flood overflows” Him (cf. Jona 2:5). The Hebrew word for flood, *shibboleth*, according to Jewish scholars, is best translated as ‘whirlpool’. Then the meaning of the phrase is: “A whirlpool drags me away” (cf. Psa 124:3-4). The whirlpool and the mire pit occur in the wadis when it has rained heavily in the wilderness.

Christ continually cried out to God (cf. Psa 22:2; Heb 5:7) and grew weary with it (verse 3). This is not so much a physical weariness, but His throat is parched from praying and His eyes fail while waiting for His God. His throat is parched so that He can no longer cry out. He no longer has a voice. His eyes, too, “fail”. Always He is waiting for God, He looks imploringly to Him with in His eyes the cry for help.

His enemies are people who “hate” Him “without a cause” (verse 4). The Lord Jesus quotes this word in His teachings to the disciples about His rejection (Jn 15:25). The fulfillment of this word is further evidence that this psalm is primarily about Christ. It also makes it clear that His contemporaries deliberately rejected Him.

After all, there is no reason for hating Him. He has always been among them in love and grace and goodness. He has spoken words of grace and done acts of mercy. Yet they have hated Him. It demonstrates the wickedness of man’s heart and the truth of God’s Word.

He has always sought and done good for them, but He has received hatred for the love He has given. The number of enemies are “more than the hairs of my head”, He complains. The intention of His enemies is also clear: they want to kill Him. The reasons are false, made up because of their own benefit. How hardened is a man who rejects God, Who reveals Himself to him in grace and goodness.

His enemies are not only numerous, but they are also powerful. They are in control of Him. This is only possible because God's time has come. However, this does not diminish the feelings of suffering of the Messiah. But what moves Him most is that He must give back what He did not steal. By this the Lord Jesus means the honor which man has stolen from God through his sin. He must return that honor to God. He has done just that. He has completely honored God at the place where man has so deeply dishonored God, which is on earth (Jn 8:49).

He has also given back to God as the true Guilt offering more than man has robbed Him of (Lev 5:16). He paid the 20% extra on the cross as the true Guilt offering. This goes beyond just the removal of sins. This also allows God to give greater blessings to man than he has forfeited through sin.

He speaks to God that God knows His folly and that His wrongs are not hidden from Him (verse 5). What the Lord Jesus says here refers to the fact that He takes upon Himself the sins of everyone who believes in Him. He identifies Himself here with their sins. He calls this "my wrongs". He, Who is Himself the sinless and guiltless One, Who has committed no sin, speaks here of "my wrongs" which are not hidden from God.

This is really substitution. He does not pretend, but really makes the debts of repentant sinners His own. In doing so, He says that they are not hidden from God. This means that He confesses them before God and is judged by God for them.

He has *not* borne the sins of the whole world, He has *not* confessed the debts of all men. He has *borne only* the sins of those who believe in Him and *confessed only* the sins of those who acknowledge that they are guilty before God. God knows the sins of all for whom Christ suffered on the cross and has judged them there in Him, so that they are free from judgment.

It is true, though, that the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross is sufficiently great *to offer* salvation to all people. Everyone *may* come. No one will be able to say that it was not for him or her. No one is excluded from the offer of being saved through faith in Him: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Tim 2:3-4; cf. Acts 17:30-31; Mk 16:15).

Psa 69:6-12 | Complaint

6 May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts;

May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel,

7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;

Dishonor has covered my face.

8 I have become estranged from my brothers

And an alien to my mother's sons.

9 For zeal for Your house has consumed me,

And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

10 When I wept in my soul with fasting,

It became my reproach.

11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,

I became a byword to them.

12 Those who sit in the gate talk about me,

And I [am] the song of the drunkards.

While the Lord Jesus is in the deepest suffering, He still thinks of others (verse 6). This is characteristic of Him. In the night in which He was betrayed, knowing all that would come upon Him, He loved His own to the end (Jn 13:1) and instituted the Lord's Supper (1Cor 11:23-25). On the cross He cared for Mary (Jn 19:26-27) and for the one repentant criminal (Lk 23:40-43). There He did pray for the people: "Father, forgive them" (Lk 23:34a).

In this psalm, He asks God that because of His suffering, others will not be ashamed of their trust in God after all. He has always expected His help from God and in spite of that He is now enduring great and deep suffering. How will this affect those who also expect their help from the "Lord, GOD of hosts"?

Because of the suffering that the Lord Jesus endures, it may seem that seeking the "God of Israel" is useless. He therefore asks God that through Him, through His suffering, those who seek God will not be dishonored. He asks this because despite His present suffering and the apparent absence of God, He still trusts in God completely.

His suffering is not useless, but provides an example of trust in God especially in the deepest suffering. The suffering He undergoes has a cause and a purpose. Its cause is the sin that has come into the world, dishonoring God. Its purpose is for God to regain the honor that has been stolen from Him by man's sin. Only when we see this there is perseverance in trust in God. In that, God is glorified. The awareness of these two aspects will sustain the remnant in the end time.

The reproach that the Lord Jesus has borne, He has borne for the sake of God (verse 7). He links everything that happens to Him to God. The reproach done to God, He bears. The dishonor done to God covers His face.

His complete identification with God in what sinful men do to Him has caused a deep separation between Him and His brothers after the flesh (verse 8; cf. Mk 3:21; Jn 7:3-9). He has become an alien to them. He does not belong to His family. They do not even know Him anymore. He complains: "I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons." This speaks of deep loneliness.

All the suffering the Lord has endured stems from His zeal for God's house (verse 9). He devoted Himself with all His energy to God's dwelling place on earth. It is the place where God wants to gather with His people and have fellowship with them. That place must fully respond to His holiness. For this the Lord Jesus worked with a zeal that consumed Him, a zeal that cost Him everything (Jn 2:17).

God's people made that house a place of business and a den of robbers (Jn 2:16; Mt 21:13). Thereby they have reproached God. The Lord Jesus speaks of "the reproaches" with which God has been reproached. This defamation has been inflicted on Him in many ways and countless times. It shows how deeply God has been grieved by it. All that libel has fallen on the Lord Jesus. It is again that identification of Him with God.

This also has a practical application for us. We learn this from Paul in the letter to the Romans, in a section where he tells us not to please ourselves, but our neighbor for his good (Rom 15:1-3). Thereby he sets Christ as an example for us and then quotes this verse (Psa 69:9b). Throughout His life, Christ had the honor of God in mind. That is what He lived for, and not for Himself. That is why He could say to His Father at the end of His life on

earth: "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (Jn 17:4).

He was so fully in His dealings with God that He felt the reproach with which God was reproached as His own. His example gives us the strength to do what is required: to bear the weaknesses of others and to please our neighbor for his good.

Christ felt that reproach more deeply than we are ever capable of feeling. It moved Him to tears; He wept over it (verse 10). The sorrow over that situation merged with the fasting of His soul. His tears and His fasting, however, did not evoke pity and even less self-judgment from the people, but instead it became His "reproach".

The sackcloth which He put on as His clothing revealed the feelings of His heart (verse 11). This, too, didn't win Him any acclaim for His sorrow for the dishonor done to God. On the contrary, in their scorn they made Him a byword because of His appearance in sackcloth.

Not only did the common people despise Him. He has been the talk of the day of those who "sit in the gate" (verse 12). These are the dignitaries and judges of the people, the upper class of the population (Mt 27:41; Jos 20:4; Rth 4:1-2; Lam 5:14). The lower class of the people, the drunkards, the people who cannot control themselves, also feasted on Him (Mt 27:44). They have laudingly sung a song of derision about Him. All that He has done for His God, all that He has been burdened with, has been met with contempt and ridicule by the people, from high to low (cf. Lam 3:14).

Psa 69:13-18 | Prayer for Salvation

*13 But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, at an acceptable time;
O God, in the greatness of Your lovingkindness,
Answer me with Your saving truth.*

*14 Deliver me from the mire and do not let me sink;
May I be delivered from my foes and from the deep waters.*

*15 May the flood of water not overflow me
Nor the deep swallow me up,
Nor the pit shut its mouth on me.*

16 Answer me, O LORD, for Your lovingkindness is good;

*According to the greatness of Your compassion, turn to me,
 17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant,
 For I am in distress; answer me quickly.
 18 Oh draw near to my soul [and] redeem it;
 Ransom me because of my enemies!*

The psalmist – and prophetically the Lord Jesus – in all his distress turns in prayer to the LORD his God (verse 13). The whole life of the Lord Jesus was entirely “prayer” (Psa 109:4b), especially during His suffering. Literally it says here “but I, my prayer ...” In Hebrew, “I” has emphasis. The psalmist, in his deep suffering of the preceding verses, seeks refuge in the God of the covenant, the “LORD”.

That he addresses God as “LORD” implies that he is counting on the “greatness” of God’s “lovingkindness” – that is, God’s faithfulness to the promises of His covenant – that assures him of God’s salvation. As we have seen earlier, in this second book of psalms the name LORD is mentioned rarely. However, at the moment when the faithfulness of God in connection with the covenant is in question, the name of the LORD comes up again.

He knows that there is “an acceptable time” (cf. Isa 49:8; 2Cor 6:2). He looks forward to that. We can read it as an observation, that is, that prayer is a time of acceptance. That is because the psalmist is completely assured of the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God.

That time of acceptance comes because of “the greatness of Your lovingkindness”. The Lord Jesus knows that lovingkindness and He trusts in it. He asks for the answer to His prayer because He knows “the saving truth” of God. We can think here of His prayer in Gethsemane (Heb 5:7). What He further says is also reminiscent of this.

The Lord Jesus sees Himself in “the mire” by which He feels surrounded (verse 14). The mire here is not a picture of sin. Here the principle of paralleling between the first and second line of the verse applies. Then it appears that by “the mire” in the first line the “foes” are meant and that “the deep waters” in the second line refer to the same thing. The hatred, in word and deed, of these hostile persons can pull you down so much that it

stifles your spiritual life. It can make your heart bitter, bringing you down spiritually. The Lord Jesus asks God to deliver Him from that.

The deliverance He asks for concerns two forms of suffering He underwent. Firstly, He asked to be delivered from His foes. Secondly, He asks to be delivered from a second suffering, a suffering greater than the first. He expresses in three forms of imagery the enormous severity and depth of that suffering (verse 15). Firstly, He speaks of “the flood of water” – that is a whirlpool – that it will not “overflow” Him – meaning that the whirlpool pulls Him down. Secondly, He speaks of “the deep” that it will not “swallow” Him “up”. Finally, about “the pit” that it will not “shut its mouth” on Him, shutting Him off from light and life.

The pit is a subsurface, pear-shaped, water tank that can be closed with a stone to prevent an animal from falling into it and rendering the water unusable. It is a hewn pit that, when dry, can be used as a prison (Gen 37:23-24; cf. Jer 38:6). If the opening is closed, it is impossible to escape. The pit is often a picture of the danger of the realm of the dead (cf. Psa 55:23; 88:6).

These three expressions – the flood of water, the deep and the pit – indicate how severe He sees the judgment that God will bring on Him because of the sins He takes upon Himself. He is drowning in it, devoured by it and cut off from fellowship with God. He sees the end of His life on earth before Him, cast out from living in the presence of God. As a faithful God-fearing Jew, this thought is horrible to Him. His only desire has always been to live with and for God. That this should come to an end and in such a dramatic way, fills him with horror.

This leads Him to ask again for the answer to His prayer (verse 16). He asks for it on the basis of God’s “lovingkindness” which is “good”. Likewise, He asks that God turns to Him because He understands the “greatness” of God’s “compassion”. God’s good lovingkindness and the greatness of His compassion are the basis of His prayer.

He reminds God that He is His “servant” (verse 17). David is called the servant of the LORD several times (Psa 18:1; 36:1; Isa 37:35). The Lord Jesus is also called “the servant of the LORD” in the second half of the book of Isaiah. David prays to the LORD on the basis of the covenant – the lovingkindness of the LORD – and on the basis of having a special relationship

with the LORD as His servant. The latter applies in a surpassing way to the Lord Jesus.

He has always served Him unconditionally and with unfailing faithfulness. Then God cannot hide His face from Him, can He? The fear of it oppresses Him. He cannot live without the presence of God. Therefore he begs God to answer him quickly.

The psalmist's prayer is the question to the LORD to act actually and immediately by drawing near to him (verse 18; cf. Mal 3:5). When he experiences that, when God comes to him, redemption takes place. No power can stand in the presence of God. He asks to ransom him for the sake of his enemies. He does not want them to think that God is incapable to ransom him from impending doom. He is also thinking of the honor of God here.

Psa 69:19-21 | Broken and Sick

19 You know my reproach and my shame and my dishonor;

All my adversaries are before You.

20 Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick.

And I looked for sympathy, but there was none,

And for comforters, but I found none.

21 They also gave me gall for my food

And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

The psalmist appeals to God's omniscience, "You know" and "are before You" (verse 19; cf. Heb 4:13). As a result, God is also familiar with the evil deeds of his enemies. His enemies persecute him, oppress him, and cause all this reproach, shame and disgrace to him. Again, this applies to the Lord Jesus in particular.

God knows that His standing up for the honor of God is what causes all this suffering. God also knows exactly who it is that is distressing Him by falsely accusing and mocking Him. This gives Him peace in His relationship with God. He can entrust it to Him Who judges righteously (1Pet 2:23).

Nevertheless, all that people have done to Him has broken His heart and made Him so sick (verse 20). He is not insensitive to what men do to Him. Nor is He insensitive to what people fail to give Him. Thus, He has looked

“for sympathy” and “for comforters”. His conclusion is moving: sympathy “there was none” and comforters He “found none”.

There is no sympathy with His enemies, but neither is there with His disciples. When He speaks of His impending suffering at the institution of Supper, they dispute among them as to which one of them is regarded to be greatest (Lk 22:19-24). In Gethsemane, His soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death because of the work that lies ahead of Him. He has asked the three disciples who are with Him to watch with Him. But they fall asleep (Mt 26:37-40). What a deep disappointment to Him! When the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered (Zec 13:7; Mt 26:31).

His enemies gave Him something else: gall (verse 21; Mt 27:34,48). To give bitter gall – Hebrew: poison – as food to someone is a very mean way to satisfy someone’s hunger. The same goes for giving vinegar to someone who suffers from thirst. Thus, instead of offering sympathy and compassion, they offered a kind of food and drink that added to His suffering. This is what we call sadism: taking pleasure in intentionally hurting or humiliating another. The Lord was spared nothing.

Psa 69:22-29 | Prayer for Judgment

*22 May their table before them become a snare;
And when they are in peace, [may it become] a trap.
23 May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see,
And make their loins shake continually.
24 Pour out Your indignation on them,
And may Your burning anger overtake them.
25 May their camp be desolate;
May none dwell in their tents.
26 For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have smitten,
And they tell of the pain of those whom You have wounded.
27 Add iniquity to their iniquity,
And may they not come into Your righteousness.
28 May they be blotted out of the book of life
And may they not be recorded with the righteous.
29 But I am afflicted and in pain;
May Your salvation, O God, set me [securely] on high.*

The suffering that people, and especially God's people, inflicted on the Lord Jesus raised their sins to heaven. It demonstrates the utter hardening of man (cf. Gen 6:11). They fill up the measure of the sin of their fathers (Mt 23:32). Then there is nothing left for God to do but let the righteous retribution of His judgment come. That is what the Lord Jesus asks for (verse 22).

Here, in particular, it concerns the judgment on the earthly people of God. We learn this from Paul who applies verses 22-23 to God's people as evidence of the judgment of hardening that God will bring on "the rest" of the people (Rom 11:7-10). 'The rest' is the apostate mass of God's people.

That the Lord Jesus asks this is not inconsistent with His prayer to His Father on the cross to forgive them the sin of His rejection. He thereby asks the Father not to impute that sin to them as an unforgivable sin (Lk 23:34). They are thereby given the opportunity still to flee to the city of refuge, i.e. to repent (Acts 2:38). In this psalm it concerns hardened enemies, people who do not want to know about repentance. In the end time these are the antichrist and his followers, that is, the apostate Israel.

These people have "their table". From it they have given David spoiled food and drink. About that food and drink he has spoken in verse 21. Now he asks – according to the principle: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exo 21:24) – that God will do to them what they have done to him.

We can also say that by "their table" is meant the altar in the temple, which is called "the table of the LORD" (Mal 1:7,12). However, that table is called "their table" here. It is with it as with the feasts of the LORD that are later called feasts of the Jews (Jn 6:4; 7:2). The table is a symbol of fellowship (1Cor 10:18-21). The Lord's Table is the symbol of fellowship of believers with Him and with one another. 'Their table' is the symbol of a community of apostates. It is a table of demons, with demons in charge.

That fellowship will "before them become a snare". "Them" are all those who join in their rebellion against God and His Christ. To them that table, where they feel themselves at peace, will become "a trap". This happened historically in the year 70, at the destruction of the temple. Then hundreds of thousands of Jews were slaughtered by the Romans. This will happen again in the end time when the Assyrians conquer Jerusalem and massacre the apostate mass (Zec 13:8). We can also think of the alliance of the two

beasts of Revelation 13, the beast coming out of the sea and the beast coming out of the earth (Rev 13:11-15). Their fellowship leads to their common fall (Rev 19:20).

Those who persistently oppose God and His Christ will be deprived of all light on the things of God (verse 23). They will never see the light again. "Their loins" will be deprived of strength, resulting in their continual shaking. They will waddle their way like drunken people. Spiritually, Israel is blind and without strength. Only Christ can heal them. When a remnant of the people shall "turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (2Cor 3:16).

In clear and powerful terms, the psalmist asks God to pour out His indignation on them and that His burning anger overtakes them (verse 24). This is what they deserve because of their posture and attitude against all that is of God.

Not only should they be personally affected by judgment, but also their entire living environment (verse 25). "Their camp" refers to the environment to which they belong, we would say the neighborhood where they grew up and live. "Their tents" refers to their own homes (cf. Num 16:26). It is all poisoned, for the devil is in control and they allow themselves to be swayed by him in every area of their lives. They are bitten by the poisonous snakes, a picture of satan and his demons (Num 21:6)

Moses, in response to the rebellion of Korah and his followers, says: "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, or you will be swept away in all their sin" (Num 16:26). The psalmist's wish is for these wicked men to be totally eradicated, root and branch, so that they will never, ever return.

In this verse we recognize Judas, the betrayer of the Lord. This verse is applied to him by Peter under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:16,20) in choosing someone to take the vacant place of Judas in the midst of the twelve apostles. Judas is a type of the antichrist and the leader of the apostate crowd who took the Lord Jesus captive. This once again makes it clear that the enemies of whom the Lord speaks in this psalm are truly hardened people.

This is further evidenced by their persecution of the Man Who was smitten by God (verse 26; cf. Isa 53:4b,10). In the suffering of Christ inflicted on

Him by God, they see cause to mock Him. The remnant will also confess that as sin (Isa 53:4b) and recognize that He was wounded for their transgressions and crushed for their iniquities (Isa 53:5a). The apostates, however, know of no repentance. They speak mockingly of the sorrow of Him Who was wounded by God. It recalls what David experienced through the curses of Simei (2Sam 16:5-8).

By every crime they did to Christ, they added one iniquity to another (verse 27). God must put those iniquities together and judge them therefore (cf. Isa 40:2). These apostates must not and will not come to God's righteousness, that is, to God's salvation, for they will never be released from criminal prosecution. They will never be able to escape God's righteous judgment.

Their portion must be to be "blotted out of the book of life" (verse 28). This means, first, that they must die, and second, that they will not stand in the final judgment (Psa 1:5). God, of course, does not need a book, but it is said in this way to help us understand His purpose with life. The book of life here is the book in which every human being who has ever been born is written.

God "takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Eze 33:11). If the ungodly does not do so, God removes him from this book of life (cf. Rev 3:5; 22:19). Before the great white throne, this book will be opened. Then it turns out that it is not their names that are in it, but their wicked works (Rev 20:12). Because their names are not in it, they will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:15).

The names that remain in the book of life are the names of all those who are associated with the Lamb. Their names are also in another book: "the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain" (Rev 13:8; 17:8; 21:27). The Lamb is the name of Christ specifically associated with His humiliation. The names of all who followed Him in His humiliation have been written since the foundation of the world in the book that bears His Name. The names of those who have been erased from the general book of life are missing from that book. They are not written down in it.

In his deep suffering, the psalmist continues to place his trust in God's salvation. Prophetically, the Messiah speaks one more time of the affliction

and pain in which He is (verse 29). It is a reassurance that God will punish injustice righteously. With a pleading “O God” He asks God to put Him securely “on high” through His salvation. Then He will be delivered from His affliction and pain. God has done this by raising Him from the dead.

Psa 69:30-36 | Praise to the Name of God

*30 I will praise the name of God with song
And magnify Him with thanksgiving.
31 And it will please the LORD better than an ox
[Or] a young bull with horns and hoofs.
32 The humble have seen [it and] are glad;
You who seek God, let your heart revive.
33 For the LORD hears the needy
And does not despise His [who are] prisoners.
34 Let heaven and earth praise Him,
The seas and everything that moves in them.
35 For God will save Zion and build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there and possess it.
36 The descendants of His servants will inherit it,
And those who love His name will dwell in it.*

Up to four times the psalmist has prayed for salvation (verses 1b,6,13-18,22-29). The first three times his prayer is followed by a complaint. In verses 22-29 we have the fourth prayer. This is followed in verses 30-36 not by a complaint, but by a song of praise. He has prayed at the end of the prayer in verse 29b that the salvation of God will protect him. The psalmist is so sure of the answer to this prayer that he then breaks out into songs of praise. For us, it is the Lord Jesus, Whose Name means ‘the LORD saves’ or ‘the LORD gives salvation’.

The Messiah praises the Name of God with song (verse 30). He is heard because of His piety (Heb 5:7) and for that He honors God. He magnifies Him with thanksgiving. He has always magnified God with thanksgiving, even at a time when His rejection by the people is evident (Mt 11:25a). Having been delivered from the dead, He also glorifies God for what He has done in His raising from the dead.

His thanksgiving is to the LORD more pleasing “than an ox” or “a young bull with horns and hoofs” (verse 31). We see here that even in the Old Testament, thanksgiving is more pleasing to the LORD than animal sacrifices, which is not to say that animal sacrifices were not necessary. From the New Testament we know that these animal sacrifices are only shadows of the reality, that is, of the sacrifice of Christ.

The answer to the prayer of the Messiah causes gladness with the humble when they see what God has done to Him (verse 32). The humble are the faithful remnant. They have suffered much, including the despair they have felt because of the humiliation done to them. Their humiliation is like the humiliation that was inflicted on the Messiah. Yet they too have continued to seek God. Because of what they see, their hearts are revived. They will inherit the earth with the Messiah (Mt 5:5), the true Humble One (Mt 11:29).

They recognize in the deliverance from need, which is the part of Messiah, that “the LORD hears the needy” (verse 33). These needy are also the faithful remnant. They are those poor in spirit who have been oppressed. Now they may enter the kingdom, in the wake of the Messiah, the true Poor in spirit, for the kingdom is theirs (Mt 5:3).

The humble of verse 32 are here called “the needy”. They are poor and oppressed and unable to offer great sacrifices such as an ox or a young bull, not even small livestock, but perhaps a dove. In any case, the remnant can offer a song of praise. That is more precious to the LORD than great sacrifices like an ox or a young bull.

They are also “His prisoners”. They will be taken away into captivity, but He will never lose sight of them or let them go. They may have been captives of the nations, but have remained first and foremost His captives. In His time He will bring a turn in their fate. He will work repentance in their hearts. Then they will experience that He does not despise them.

This great work of deliverance results in “heaven and earth praise Him” (verse 34). The book of Psalms ends with the words: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Hallelujah!” (Psa 150:6). Even “the seas and everything that moves in them” are called upon to do so. What God has done for the benefit of His Messiah and the believing remnant has bene-

ficial consequences for all creation. Creation is then freed from the curse that has come upon it through man's sin (Rom 8:21). For this, praise and honor are given to God and His Son, the Lamb, for all eternity (Rev 5:13).

Through the salvation of Zion, there is a center of blessing on earth (verse 35). From Zion, blessing will flow to the ends of the earth. That blessing will be seen first and foremost in the rebuilding of the cities of Judah. The LORD will rebuild Jerusalem (Psa 147:2). Thereby the remnant will also go to work, causing them to be called: "The repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets" (Isa 58:12). And also the nations will participate, for "foreigners will rebuild your walls" (Isa 60:10; 61:4).

God's people will dwell there and possess it. There is no longer an enemy in sight who is a threat of them losing the blessing again. They will inherit the land and live quietly and carefree in their cities. It is clear that in Israel's history this has never been fulfilled. Since not the smallest letter or stroke [Lit one *iota* (Heb *yodh*) or one projection of a letter (*serif*)] shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished, this portion is prophetic, which means it is yet to come.

Their inheritance will no longer fall into enemy hands, but will remain in the possession of the family (verse 36). The people here are called "His servants". This emphasizes that they and also their descendants will receive the inheritance because they have served Him faithfully. They have not served Him as submissive slaves, however they are, but out of love. They live there because they "love His Name". This is in all future generations the portion of everyone who loves His Name (Isa 45:25; 60:21-22).

Thus, this psalm that describes an extraordinary suffering of the Anointed of God and of the believing remnant ends with a great song of praise to God. The suffering and bitterness will give way to eternal peace and never-ending joy for Christ and His redeemed. This peace and joy at the end of creation, that is, in the realm of peace, are better than the beginning, at its origin (Ecc 7:8a; cf. Job 42:12).

The joy of salvation here is the "joy set before" (cf. Heb 12:2). Through this they receive strength to endure the cross and to despise the shame. This is perfectly fulfilled by the Lord Jesus. It also applies to the remnant and also to us.

Psalm 70

Introduction

This psalm describes the desire of the God-fearing to be saved by God from people who are after him. This is true about Christ and the believing remnant who speak in this way by the Spirit of Christ. Through the suffering Christ endures, He connects Himself with the remnant in their suffering.

Like Psalm 69, the need is high and the water threatens the life (Psa 69:1b). Because of that, this psalm has an SOS character, the 911 emergency number is called (verse 1b). The prayers are short and powerful, without repetition of words, something you don't have time for in a time of need. Several times a cry for help is heard: "O God, [Hasten] to deliver me; O Lord, hasten to my help!" (verse 1b), "Hasten to me, O God!" (verse 5a) and "O LORD, do not delay" (verse 5b).

Psa 70:1-5 | Prayer for Prompt Help

1 For the choir director. [A Psalm] of David; for a memorial.

O God, [hasten] to deliver me;

O LORD, hasten to my help!

2 Let those be ashamed and humiliated

Who seek my life;

Let those be turned back and dishonored

Who delight in my hurt.

3 Let those be turned back because of their shame

Who say, "Aha, aha!"

4 Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;

And let those who love Your salvation say continually,

"Let God be magnified."

5 But I am afflicted and needy;

Hasten to me, O God!

You are my help and my deliverer;

| O LORD, do not delay.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “[a Psalm] of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

The phrase “for a memorial” is also found in the heading of Psalm 38. The phrase means ‘to call to mind’. It is a call to God to remember what He has said in His covenant and His promises. Reminding God of something is an indirect request to intervene. The expression can also mean that the believer is called to remember God and call upon Him in his need.

Verses 1b-5 are almost word-for-word similar to a section in Psalm 40 (Psa 40:13-17). Yet it is not a repetition in the sense that these verses have been copied from Psalm 40. The slight differences between the two portions indicate that David is here in even greater distress and praying with even greater urgency. In Psalm 40, for example, he says to the LORD: “Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me” (Psa 40:13a), whereas in this psalm he says to God: “O God, [hasten] to deliver me” (verse 1b).

The text in this verse is short and comes in punches, like someone in great distress. Literally: “O God ... to my deliverance ... LORD ... to my help ... hasten.” We find this great need in Psalm 71 (Psa 71:12). The Lord Jesus also prayed the same word three times in Gethsemane (Mt 26:44). At the same time, there is a climbing fervor in His prayers (Lk 22:44a).

We too often use the same words to say something to God. Yet, when doing it in the right way, it is not a formal repetition, but each time a new experience of dealing with God. We also regularly go through the same exercises, crying out to God with the same words. This, by the way, is of a different order than the *inspired* repetition we have in the prayers in God’s Word.

The place between Psalm 69 and Psalm 71 is also not coincidental. In both psalms the cry to God for His speedy help occurs (Psa 69:17; 71:12).

David begins with an urgent request to “God” to make haste to save him. God is the name of the almighty God. He also cries out to the “LORD”. With that Name he appeals to the God of the covenant with His people to come to his aid soon. It is about God’s promises to him and His people.

This call to God to hasten is similar to the call of the church: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20b). However, the reason for asking Him to come soon is not so much to ask for help but the desire to be with Him (Rev 22:17a).

David asks for God’s speedy help because he is in mortal danger (verse 2). They seek to kill him. When God rescues him from this mortal danger, those who want to kill him will be brought to shame and humiliated. They have thought that God has abandoned David. David knows this is not so. Therefore, he cries out to God.

He asks that God will cause those who “delight” to injure him – which proves their inner wickedness – to turn back and be dishonored, that is, to lose face. This is a severe humiliation and intolerable to the Israelites (cf. Psa 44:10,15; Hos 4:7). He does so because he knows God. He knows that God will never assist such people in their wicked attempts to kill a righteous man. God will always punish righteously the evil that is done to His own. However, He also determines the time for this, which we sometimes forget.

David asks God that He will turn back his persecutors “because of their shame” (verse 3). That is, they will return empty-handed because they did not succeed in their plan to kill him. These persecutors say “aha, aha!” about the misfortune that befalls the righteous. It is an expression of gloating and also of contempt. It makes clear the attitude of these enemies of the remnant. The Lord Jesus experienced this on the cross, where the bystanders told Him the same (Mk 15:29-30). He feels what is being done to the remnant because He knows it from His own experience. He identifies Himself with them in their suffering.

In the midst of the distress, David also asks God to make all who seek Him “rejoice and be glad” in Him (verse 4). He knows that this is the result of God’s deliverance. This is reflected in the feasts of the LORD, in the thanksgiving and worship of God. It is about being joyful and glad in God.

There are many things that make us joyful and glad. We may be glad about all that God gives us, but here it is about being glad in God. Thereby the believer is thinking not only of himself, but of “all” who seek Him. This is not about sinners seeking God, but about those who seek help from God and not from themselves.

It is the result of the salvation of God (cf. Rom 13:11; 1Pet 1:5; Rev 12:10). The believing remnant looks forward to this and loves it. Paul speaks in this context of loving the appearing of the Lord Jesus. There is a special crown attached to this, which is not only for him, but for all who have loved His appearing (2Tim 4:8).

The appearing of the Lord Jesus heralds God's salvation of the realm of peace. There all need has come to an end and the full blessing, the full joy in God, is enjoyed by all who partake of this salvation. They will "continually", unceasingly, magnify God for His salvation.

However, it is not yet that far. "But" says David – and in him prophetically the remnant in the end time – "I am afflicted and needy" (verse 5). David is indeed God's anointed king, but is in a situation where he is in mortal danger. There is with him no posturing or boasting of his position. This also applies to our lives now. We are a kingdom, we will be allowed to reign with Christ, but now we still have to walk a path of faith, which often involves suffering.

David ends the psalm as he began it, with the urgent plea to God to hasten to him. It is again a so-called 'envelope psalm' (see at Psalm 67:4), where the beginning and the end are alike to emphasize that this psalm is about need and that the need is extremely high.

He has grown in his confidence throughout his cry for help. In the beginning, he has asked that God hastens to his help. There the need is paramount. Now he asks not for help, but for the Helper and Deliverer Himself, Whom he calls "my help and my deliverer". He has a personal relationship with Him.

From that personal relationship he prays even more insistently to the "LORD" not to wait any longer. A personal, living relationship with the God of the covenant gives great boldness to implore God to intervene quickly and deliver from life-threatening circumstances.

Psalm 71

Introduction

The psalm does not mention a writer. It has been assumed, that David wrote it. This is supported by the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which mentions that this psalm is of David. It is said to have been written during his flee from his rebellious son Absalom. That the writer does not mention his name places all emphasis on the content of the psalm. The psalmist speaks of the faithful care of God throughout his life, from his mother's womb to old age.

In this we see a clear prophetic description of God's faithful care for Israel from the beginning of their history to the end. The psalm shows an appeal to that faithful care that as they come to the end of their history – what is called old age here – He will not forsake them even now.

In Psalm 69 we have seen the suffering of Christ and in Psalm 70 the great need of the remnant. In Psalm 71 we see how the remnant draws new strength from expecting the LORD (cf. Isa 40:30-31).

We also see the spirit of Christ in this psalm. Much of it applies to Him. In it we see His connection with the faithful remnant in the end time. The end of His life on earth bears witness to similar trials, though with Him they are deeper and perfect.

Psa 71:1-4 | Prayer for Deliverance

1 In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge;

Let me never be ashamed.

2 In Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;

Incline Your ear to me and save me.

3 Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come;

You have given commandment to save me,

For You are my rock and my fortress.

4 Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,

Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man,

Both verse 1 and verse 2 begin and thus place great emphasis on the basis of the psalmist's supplication. Verse 1 begins with "In You, O LORD" and verse 2 begins with "In Your righteousness". The conviction that the LORD, the faithful God of the covenant, is mighty (verse 1) and always acts in righteousness and therefore in accordance with His covenant and His word, is the basis of the psalmist's confidence that He will deliver him (verse 2; cf. Psa 31:1b-3b).

The mention of "You" (the Person of God) and His righteousness is also found in verses 14-15, in verse 16, and in verse 19. The psalmist has experienced the faithfulness of God from his youth (verse 5) and it will continue to be true in his old age (verse 18).

The psalmist turns directly to the LORD to tell Him that he has taken refuge in Him (verse 1). This is the only thing a person should do when he is in need. He also asks that the LORD will see to it that he will never be ashamed.

One of the worst disappointments that can happen to a person is that his trust in someone is ashamed. With people this happens regularly and even in the most intimate relationships. With God it is impossible. The fact that the psalmist asks for this, does not mean that he doubts God's faithfulness. It is the expression of a mind that is aware of its inability to remain faithful himself in the circumstances of need in which he finds himself.

That he does not doubt the faithfulness of God is shown by his appeal to God's "righteousness" (verse 2). The righteousness of God is His righteous action in accordance with His covenant and His promise and His word. This is the pleading ground for deliverance and rescue. This implies that the psalmist is unjustly persecuted. There is no cause in either his actions or words to hunt him down. He asks that God inclines His ear to him, that is, that He listens to him with attention and saves him.

Also, salvation is not the ultimate goal of God's righteousness, but that God will be a rock in which he can dwell (verse 3). To dwell with God as a rock means to be at home with Him and to be in safety. It is a place he wants to be in constantly because danger is constantly threatening. He longs to be with God, in His presence. The longing for God is felt most strongly when the world reveals itself in all its hostility.

At the same time, there is the certainty that salvation will come because the psalmist knows that God has given the command to save him. If God has commanded something, there is no power in the universe that can stop its execution. It is like Balaam who is hired to curse God's people. However, God has commanded that Balaam should bless His people and so it is done (Num 24:12-13). The psalmist counts on God's salvation and protection, for he knows God as his "rock" and his "fortress".

The psalmist has to deal with someone who is wicked, who is a wrongdoer and who is a ruthless man (verse 4). This is a description of the antichrist. He asks to be rescued from the hand of that person. He mentions this twice in this verse. It means that he feels in the grasp of the wicked one. At the same time he looks above him to God Who is able to rescue him from his grasp. The psalmist here is a type of the remnant. He needs deliverance because he is surrounded by enemies led by the antichrist (verses 4,10-11).

Psa 71:5-9 | The Occasion for Prayer

*5 For You are my hope;
O Lord GOD, [You are] my confidence from my youth.
6 By You I have been sustained from [my] birth;
You are He who took me from my mother's womb;
My praise is continually of You.
7 I have become a marvel to many,
For You are my strong refuge.
8 My mouth is filled with Your praise
And with Your glory all day long.
9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
Do not forsake me when my strength fails.*

The psalmist tells God why he appeals to Him (verse 5): God is his hope. His hope in affliction is not in people, but in God. He knows Him from his youth as the "Lord GOD", Adonai Yahweh. From his youth God has been his confidence. We also know of others who put their trust in God from their youth, such as Josiah (2Chr 34:3) and Timothy (2Tim 3:14-15).

When the psalmist says that he has been sustained by God from his birth, literally "upon You I have been supported" (verse 6), he is not speaking of

himself, but the Spirit through him is speaking of the Lord Jesus. Only the Lord Jesus can say that He has been supported upon God from the mother's womb. Leaning on God is an act. It is something that only someone can do who knows that he needs that support. This is so with the Lord Jesus, from the moment He is born. It shows the wonder of His Person. He is God and Man at the same time.

He also knows that God took Him from His mother's womb. This means that He has known God as His Helper from His earliest existence as Man, when He still was in His mother's womb. This is also known by every human being who has come to faith. That is the moment he started counting on God's help. Every God-fearing person will acknowledge that God has helped him in life from the womb. This is also the confession of restored Israel in the end time. God has been the Helper of the people from the very beginning of their existence. This awareness of God's care from the beginning brings about great thankfulness. This thankfulness is constantly expressed in praise of God.

The remnant will have hope through and draw confidence from examples in Scripture, how in the very beginning of the nation they had put their trust in God and were not ashamed. They also know how Christ always put His trust in God. The birth of Isaac is a wonder sign, that is characterized by Abraham's faith and trust in God. The birth of Israel as a people redeemed from the bondage of Egypt is also marked by wonder signs.

During the course of his life, the God-fearing has "become a marvel to many" (verse 7). The word "marvel" can also be translated as 'wonder'. It is a sign of God. Attacks have been made on his life time and again, but they have been unsuccessful. His enemies did not succeed in their intentions. Every salvation is a wonder. It is also a sign. This sign is that he is under the protection of God. God is his "strong refuge". He owes his survival not to his own cleverness or strength, but to the protection of his God from Whom he seeks refuge.

In the same way, Israel is a wonder and a sign. The people still exist, despite all attempts to eradicate them. They owe this not to their military strength and intelligent defensive tactics, but to God's providential protection. All attempts that are still being made to exterminate them will fail. The reason

is that God has chosen this people to be His people. The whole world will see it when the Lord Jesus will reign there. Their existence means that God is there and is standing up for His people. In this way, our life can also be a sign, it can have meaning for those around us, because it is seen that we owe everything to God.

Now the psalmist has come to the end of his life. He tells God that his mouth will be filled with His praise and His glory all day long (verse 8). Earlier (verse 6) he has said that God's care for him from his formation in the mother's womb makes him praise God constantly. Now he tells God that he will do this all day long and that not only with respect to praising God, but also with making known His glory.

The reason for this is that he has become old and his strength is failing (verse 9). When strength fails, one becomes uncertain in his movements (Ecc 12:5a). But even in old age God is the same (Isa 46:4). The old believer who continues to remember this will ask God to help him every day.

There is no better preparation for old age with its diminishing strength and its increasing weaknesses than to seek the Creator in youth and to think of Him in childhood and the prime of life (Ecc 12:1). Old age is a new phase of life, but one in which the upbuilt life with God is built up further. Experiences with God are gained that were not possible before.

Psa 71:10-13 | Call For Urgent Help

*10 For my enemies have spoken against me;
And those who watch for my life have consulted together,
11 Saying, "God has forsaken him;
Pursue and seize him, for there is no one to deliver."
12 O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, hasten to my help!
13 Let those who are adversaries of my soul be ashamed [and] consumed;
Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor, who seek to injure me.*

As the years climb, strength declines, but not the enmity of the wicked. The God-fearing aged one finds himself in the midst of enemies who talk about him and plot against him (verse 10). They want to kill him. There is

no patience to wait for the day of his death which, given his age, will not be long in coming.

They see the waning strength as a sign that God has forsaken the God-fearing (verse 11). This makes them feel free and even strengthened to pursue and seize him. They see that he is on his own. There is no one, they believe, who will stand up for him and save him, not God and certainly not man.

Thus, in the end time, the unbelieving part of the people, led by the anti-christ, their false king, will pursue the believing remnant without fear of God to seize and exterminate them. They will do so under the assumption that God has forsaken them. The circumstances will also be such that it will indeed look like that God has forsaken them.

The God-fearing feels the pressure his enemies are putting on him and cries out to God not to be far from him (verse 12). He needs the close proximity of God now that the enemies are pressing so hard on him. He knows God as “my God”, the God with Whom he has a personal relationship, and asks Him to come to his aid soon.

For his adversaries, he asks that God cause them to be ashamed and consumed (verse 13). They seek to injure him. Therefore, he asks that God let them be covered with reproach and dishonor. Their portion is in every way the opposite of what he expects for himself from his God. This is not selfishness, but a proper understanding of what is evil in the eyes of God.

Psa 71:14-18 | Continually Hoping in God

14 But as for me, I will hope continually,

And will praise You yet more and more.

15 My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness

[And] of Your salvation all day long;

For I do not know the sum [of them].

16 I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD;

I will make mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone.

17 O God, You have taught me from my youth,

And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.

18 And even when [I am] old and gray, O God, do not forsake me,

Until I declare Your strength to [this] generation,

| *Your power to all who are to come.*

“But as for me” is emphatic (verse 14). It means that the purpose of heart of the psalmist is emphasized. With it, he says that no matter what happens, he will continue to hold fast to the faithfulness of God.

This is also the language of the believing remnant in the time of trial. It is the time when the faith of the remnant emerges. Trials have that goal. They keep hoping. No matter how severe the trial, their confidence remains in God. Faith expresses itself powerfully. No matter what happens, they will continually remain hopeful that God will help (cf. verses 1-2) and that they will praise Him even more, literally “add upon all Your praise”. Faith sees salvation already before it is a fact.

Experiences with God are based on God’s “righteousness” (verse 15). God is not random and not fickle in sending trials. He has a righteous basis for testing the faith of His own. He has that same righteous basis for the outcome of the trial. He always acts in accordance with His standard, that is, His word, His promises, and here His covenant.

Therefore, there need be no doubt about the nature and outcome of a trial. God ultimately gives salvation. The dimensions of it, the magnitude, all that salvation involves, is far beyond the comprehension of any human being.

What the psalmist can come to God with and with what God is pleased to see him come to praise Him are “the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD” (verse 16; cf. Deu 3:24; Psa 106:2). Those mighty deeds are also connected to His righteousness. Every mighty deed is an affirmation of His righteousness. These the psalmist will “make mention of”. Only those deeds are worthy of mention and none of their own. Whatever a believer may have done also happened only by the power and grace God has given.

The psalmist’s whole life from his youth has been a succession of being taught and formed by God and of proclaiming His wondrous deeds (verse 17). He has trained him up “in the way he should go” (Pro 22:6). This also clearly applies to the history of the people of God. And can we not also say it with regard to our own lives? The older we get, the more material we have to proclaim God’s wondrous deeds. Our whole personal history bears witness to the teaching the Lord has patiently given us.

The request not to leave him, “even when [I am] old and gray”, shows the awareness that even in aging, God’s assistance and help are indispensable (verse 18; Isa 46:4). Therefore, he asks God not to forsake him. He does so also because he sees that his life’s task is not yet finished. He is not tired of life, but sees another challenge.

Life always has meaning, especially when we have grown older. Then we can proclaim to the new generation we see God’s power. To “all who are to come”, that is, all future generations, he wants to proclaim God’s power. This may be the desire of every elder. If we are elderly believers, do we have anything to pass on in terms of experiences we have had of the power and strength of God?

Psa 71:19-24 | The Certainty of the Hearing

19 For Your righteousness, O God, [reaches] to the heavens,

You who have done great things;

O God, who is like You?

20 You who have shown me many troubles and distresses

Will revive me again,

And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

21 May You increase my greatness

And turn [to] comfort me.

22 I will also praise You with a harp,

[Even] Your truth, O my God;

To You I will sing praises with the lyre,

O Holy One of Israel.

23 My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to You;

And my soul, which You have redeemed.

24 My tongue also will utter Your righteousness all day long;

For they are ashamed, for they are humiliated who seek my hurt.

The psalmist ends the psalm with an ode to the righteousness of God (verse 19). The righteousness of God is manifested in many ways, it is manifested when He reveals His wrath against men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom 1:18), when He saves and declares righteous a sinner who believes (Rom 1:16), but also in His governmental ways with believers.

The righteousness at issue here is that which the people have come to know, both in judgment on sin and in the fulfillment of God's promises to His people. God's righteousness reaches to the heavens, where God dwells (cf. Psa 36:5). Thus, the earth is joined to heaven. This is the result of the "great things" that He has done for His people in His righteousness. Of these they are deeply impressed. They express this by crying out in admiration to God: "O God, who is like You?" (cf. Exo 15:11; 2Sam 7:22; Psa 35:10; Isa 40:18; Mic 7:18).

They have gone through the great tribulation. In it they have seen "many troubles and distresses" (verse 20). But look, they do not attribute this to their opponents, but to *God*. He has brought it all upon them and made them see it. That also determines the outcome at the same time, because He has a purpose in doing so. He wants to give them the experience of the resurrection. They will not be delivered up to death, He will revive them again and bring them up again from the depths, the deep waters of the earth. It is a poetic description of the resurrection from the death and the grave. The acceptance of Israel by God after the great tribulation is no different than "life from the dead" (Rom 11:15; Hos 6:2).

After the revival of Israel, the people will enjoy great prestige in the world (verse 21). The reproach has turned to admiration. They have become the head instead of the tail (Deu 28:13). However, the people also need comfort after so much misery and the severe trials in which they have been. When they come out of the great tribulation, God Himself will wipe tears away from all faces (Isa 25:8; cf. Rev 7:17; 21:4). He will not only comfort them, but surround them with His comfort, He will comfort them on every side (Darby Translation). They are at the center of His compassion. He walks around them, as it were, to assure them that His comfort is complete, without overlooking anything that needs comfort.

"The winter" of the great tribulation "is past. ... The time" of the realm of peace "has arrived for singing" (verse 22; Song 2:11-12). Musical instruments accompany the singing of praises. God's truth – or faithfulness, it is the same word – is praised. It is the truth of "my God", for that's how they got through that tough time. It confirms the truth of His promise, which He has fulfilled in His faithfulness. Because of this, they also entered into

the blessing of the realm of peace. The remnant will sing psalms about this to God with the harp.

The God whom they praise and Whose faithfulness and truth they praise, is the Holy One of Israel. This title occurs here for the first time in Psalms and twice more hereafter (Psa 78:41; 89:18). It is a title that the prophet Isaiah likes to use. In his book he calls Him so 25 times. Thus the restored Israel acknowledges Him here. He is their God, the Holy One. He has proven this throughout their history, both in His judgment on their sins and in their redemption.

In addition to the musical instruments, the words used by the remnant to shout for joy when they sing praises to God are also heard (verse 23). They not only sing of the outward redemption from the enemies, but also of the redemption of their soul. This applies to us to an even greater degree. With us it is not about enemies of flesh and blood, but about the salvation of the soul that we may already enjoy (1Pet 1:9-12).

What the praise is ultimately about is God's righteousness (verse 24). The righteousness of God runs like a thread through this psalm. The psalmist uses the phrase five times (verses 2,15,16,19,24). The God-fearing will utter that righteousness with his tongue all day long. He can sing about that because those who seek his hurt have been righteously judged by God. They are ashamed.

They have been unable to carry out their evil intentions through God's protection of His godly one. God's intervention in favor of the God-fearing has humiliated them. God is the Victor, not they. Of this the God-fearing is certain. He speaks of it as if his opponents had already been made ashamed and had already have been humiliated.

Instead of him being ashamed, for which he prayed at the beginning of the psalm that it would not happen (verse 1), they are ashamed. This is characteristic of the faith that has grown during the psalm into an expression of certainty. Thus the psalm, which began with a prayer for salvation, ends with a victory call. Victory takes shape in the next psalm, the last of the second book of psalms. It is a royal psalm that describes the glory of the coming king.

Psalm 72

Introduction

With Psalm 72, the second book of Psalms ends. Just as the second book of the *Torah*, Exodus, ends with the coming of the glory of the LORD in the tabernacle, so the second book of Psalms ends with the coming of the king-priest in justice and righteousness.

There is no mention in this psalm of suffering or persecution or battle, but of peace and blessing. The psalm presents the great Son of David as the Source and Guarantor of the blessings of the millennial realm of peace. It is the fulfillment of the prayer: “Your kingdom come” (Mt 6:9-10).

The psalm is the answer to the prayer in Psalm 71, in which the remnant puts its trust in God. This answer is the revelation of the glory of the coming King. This can happen because the remnant has been redeemed (Psa 71:19-24). The realm of peace can now begin.

Psa 72:1-7 | Righteousness and Peace

1 [A Psalm] of Solomon.

Give the king Your judgments, O God,

And Your righteousness to the king's son.

2 May he judge Your people with righteousness

And Your afflicted with justice.

3 Let the mountains bring peace to the people,

And the hills, in righteousness.

4 May he vindicate the afflicted of the people,

Save the children of the needy

And crush the oppressor.

5 Let them fear You while the sun [endures],

And as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

6 May he come down like rain upon the mown grass,

Like showers that water the earth.

7 In his days may the righteous flourish,

| *And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.*

The psalm is “of Solomon” (verse 1a). Solomon is a picture of the Lord Jesus as King in the realm of peace, as the Prince of peace. Solomon means ‘peace’, ‘peaceable’, ‘peacemaker’. The psalm begins with a prayer to God for “the king”, that is Solomon, that God give him His “judgments” and His “righteousness” (verse 1b). As a result, he will be able to speak God’s justice, that is, to reign in righteousness over “Your people” and especially over “Your afflicted” (verse 2). Judgments and righteousness and the afflicted recur in the two following verses.

Such a prayer is appropriate for an enthronement (1Kgs 1:38-40). Asking that God will give him His judgments means that God will give him an understanding of God’s justice and the authority to carry it out. He represents God in His government on earth. Then everything must be judged according to the law of God.

In the prayer God is also asked to give “to the king’s son” – that is again Solomon, the son of David, a type of the great Son of David – His righteousness. Here the demand is that Solomon will act in a righteous manner according to the law, without regard to any person. This means that evil must be punished and good rewarded.

We also see the importance of righteousness with respect to the realm of peace in this that ‘righteousness’ is mentioned in every verse in verses 1-3. It is the most important attribute of Christ’s government, an attribute that is not present in any human government. Justice and righteousness are the foundation of the Messiah’s throne (Psa 89:14). A government in righteousness results in peace in the kingdom.

The psalm is in fact about the Lord Jesus, as we hear in the announcement of the birth of the Lord Jesus (Lk 1:32-33). It speaks of a worldwide and eternal government and it will be exercised by Christ alone. On top of that, the Lord Jesus is the true Son of David and therefore “more than Solomon” (Mt 12:42).

The psalm is set in the future tense from verse 2 onward, as the recurring word “may” indicates. This can also be read as a wish. Not Solomon, but the Lord Jesus will perfectly fulfill all that is spoken about in this prayer. What now follows in this prayer flows from verse 1.

The Lord Jesus will “judge” God’s “people with righteousness” (verse 2). Before nations have to deal with the justice of God, there is first justice for the people of God. All the wicked will be judged according to a perfectly righteous justice.

As already noted, the “afflicted” in particular will be judged “with justice”. They have persevered under severe oppression and slanderous accusations in their trust in God and have not denied His Name. Now they are being done – not ‘beneficence’ but – *justice*. That they are called “Your afflicted” means that they, that is, the believing remnant, have a special position in the heart of God. They are the “apple of His eye” (Psa 17:8; Deu 32:10; Zec 2:8).

By “the mountains” are possibly meant princes of God’s people (verse 3). They will no longer oppress and exploit their subjects, but “bring peace to the people”. They will work to maintain peace for their people. Because it is about the realm of peace we can think by “the mountains” as kingdoms or high powers, and by “the hills” as lower authorities or the judiciary. They will no longer abuse their responsible position to enrich themselves at the expense of others.

Peace (verse 3) comes after righteousness (verse 2). The coming King is the true Melchizedek. In Hebrews 7 the meaning of that name is explained: He is “first of all, by the translation [of his name], king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace” (Heb 7:2). By speaking of “first of all ... and then also” the order – first righteousness and then peace – is emphasized. The reason is found in Isaiah 32, where we read: “And the work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever” (Isa 32:17; cf. Jam 3:18).

Once more it is said that the Messiah will “vindicate the afflicted of the people” (verse 4; verse 2; cf. Isa 11:4). This does prove how much the interest of the afflicted is on Messiah’s mind. He will reward them for the trials they have endured and do justice by giving them the promised blessing. This will not only compensate for the injustice they have suffered, but make them forget it completely.

He also thinks of “the children of the needy”. Children, unwillingly, are the greatest victims of a situation of affliction into which parents, guilty

or innocent, have fallen. They are taken by the creditors as 'payment' for the debts of the parents (cf. 2Kgs 4:1). The Messiah takes their fate to heart and will save them. He not only removes them from the power of the oppressor, but He crushes the oppressor so that they will never have to fear him again.

The Messiah's performance of justice and righteousness will create fear among the inhabitants of the land (verse 5). One shall beware of doing anything evil. This respect or awe will be there "while the sun [endures], and as long as the moon", that is, for the thousand years of the realm of peace. "Throughout all generations" this fear will be present. In the people of Israel, the generations do not follow one another in the sense of one generation going and another coming (Ecc 1:4a), but new generations are continually added to already existing generations (cf. Isa 59:21). The oldest generation will have to be characterized most by the fear of God. After all, they have enjoyed the blessing of the realm of peace for the longest period of time.

The coming of the Messiah is compared to the "coming down like rain on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth" (verse 6). That the rain falls on the mown field means that it falls on a field from which the harvest has been brought in. When the rain falls on this ground, it is on a field that is ready for the new crop that must now grow. This evokes the picture of abundant refreshment that is present in the Messiah and comes upon the people who are ready to receive Him.

The field has been mowed, that is, all the apostates have been judged. Mowing is a picture of judgment, the cutting off of life (Rev 14:14-16; cf. Isa 26:9b). It also means that the remnant has condemned themselves in acknowledgment of their guilt in the death of the Messiah (Zec 12:10-14). What a relief it is for them to discover that through that same death the Messiah has made reconciliation for their sins with God. As a result, they also know that they are righteous before God.

A mowed field may look sad, dry and yellow after a dry spell. But when the rain comes, the dry field will look fresh and green again, full of new life (Isa 35:1; Eze 34:26; Acts 3:19). Thus, the coming of Christ will change the earth. He will come first to reap, to bring judgment on the apostates.

Then the realm of peace will dawn, which is also called “the regeneration” of the earth (Mt 19:28). In other words, He “renews the face of the ground” (Psa 104:30b).

His coming with His refreshing has the effect that “in his days ... the righteous flourish” (verse 7). “His days” are the days of His government. They are days marked by His presence on earth in power and blessing. His days are all the days of the realm of peace, days of an “abundance of peace till the moon is no more”. The peace is abundant because it is everywhere on earth. The peace is also abundant because there will be no end to it (Isa 9:6).

On the new earth there will be no more sea (Rev 21:1). This verse seems to indicate that after the realm of peace, on the new earth that is then created, there will also be no more moon – “till the moon is no more”. After all, we also read that there will then be no more night (Rev 22:5).

Psa 72:8-11 | World Domination

8 May he also rule from sea to sea

And from the River to the ends of the earth.

9 Let the nomads of the desert bow before him,

And his enemies lick the dust.

10 Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents;

The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.

11 And let all kings bow down before him,

All nations serve him.

The government of the Messiah is universal (verse 8; cf. Isa 42:4). There is no area that is not under His rule or can hide from it. His rule pervades everything and everyone. Obviously, this does not refer to the reign of Solomon. This applies only to the Messiah. It is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:8; cf. Zec 9:9-10; Psa 2:8).

The inhabitants of the most desolate regions, the free-spirited “nomads of the desert”, who acknowledge no rule, will “bow before him” (verse 9). These are the nomads, the vagrants with no fixed abode, which also means with no fixed authority to which they must be obedient. They will

acknowledge His authority. His adversaries, “His enemies”, will be humbled to the dust, which they will “lick” (cf. Isa 49:23).

The mighty of the earth, “the kings”, those who occupy a place of authority on earth, will also submit to Him (verse 10). There is mention here of the kings “of Tarshish and of the islands”. Tarsis is in southern Spain, a trading city with which Solomon traded (1Kgs 10:22). The islands are the coastal lands on the Mediterranean Sea. Both areas lie to the west of Israel. They will show their submission by bringing presents to the Messiah in Jerusalem. Also “the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts”. Sheba is in present-day Yemen and Seba in Upper Egypt. They are both rich countries that lie far to the south of Israel.

There is no ruler who will not bow before Him. “All kings” – this leaves no exception – will “bow down before him” (verse 11). There is no nation that will not serve Him. “All nations” – this leaves no exception – will “serve Him”. The Messiah is God. Kings bow down before Him and worship Him. The Messiah is Lord, the “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 17:14). Every knee bows “of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11). The nations will serve Him in obedience.

The nomads (verse 9) on the one hand and the kings of Tarsis (verse 10) on the other represent nations near and nations far. All of them (verse 11) are to bow down before Him.

Psa 72:12-14 | Nature of the Reign of Messiah

*12 For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help,
The afflicted also, and him who has no helper.*

*13 He will have compassion on the poor and needy,
And the lives of the needy he will save.*

*14 He will rescue their life from oppression and violence,
And their blood will be precious in his sight;*

The word “for” (verse 12) indicates that the reason for what has been said above now follows. His reign, for which everyone from high to low and from friend to foe will be in awe (verses 9-11), turns out to be a reign of

compassionate love. It is not about “Your afflicted” (verse 2), the afflicted of God’s people, but about the afflicted from among the nations, everyone who needs Him.

By His power He has put an end to all opposition and enmity. In His love He delivers “the needy when he cries for help”. He also delivers “the afflicted, and him who has no helper”. To those who have no helper, He is a Helper. Elihu testifies of Him to Job: “Behold, God is mighty but does not despise [any]” (Job 36:5a). However, as long as we still have our own tools and use them, He cannot help us. He can only help us when we are at our wits’ end and we cry out to Him in our distress. Only then can and will He help us (Psa 107:23-32).

Even “the poor and needy” will experience the benefits of His reign (verse 13). The considerable and rich have exploited and not spared them. The poor have been unable to repay their debts and therefore have had to sell their possessions, their children and themselves. This is how they ended up in slavery. But He will “save” them, spare them and not impose burdens (Mal 3:17).

This will mean healing for them of the many wounds with which they have been beaten by their exploiters and oppressors. Thus He will save “the lives of the needy” from all their sufferings. “Save” has the meaning of release from the power of another, in this case from the exploiters and oppressors. This word is also used for “redeem”, as Boaz does in the case of Ruth.

They have so often been victims “of oppression and violence” (verse 14), but He will rescue their souls, that is, their very persons, from them. “Their blood” and their tears and their suffering will be “precious in his sight” (cf. Psa 116:15). They were ransomed by the Messiah-King and thus delivered from their oppressed condition.

Their blood is so precious to Him that He will not allow it to be shed unjustly. He can do that by saving them when their lives are in danger. And if it is shed, He regards their blood as so precious that He will not leave it unrevenged. It means that to the King their life is as precious as His own. He will never be indifferent to their safety or their reputation.

They will realize that He has not forgotten them nor what was done to them. What they have suffered has called to Him and come to His ears (cf. Gen 4:10; Jam 5:4). Now the time has come to answer all those prayers unanswered at the time.

Psa 72:15-17 | Blessing of the Reign

15 So may he live, and may the gold of Sheba be given to him;

And let them pray for him continually;

Let them bless him all day long.

16 May there be abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains;

Its fruit will wave like [the cedars of] Lebanon;

And may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth.

17 May his name endure forever;

May his name increase as long as the sun [shines];

And let [men] bless themselves by him;

Let all nations call him blessed.

The exclamation “so may He live” is a wish (verse 15). Life is the great characteristic of the Messiah. That He will live means that His life will have no end (Psa 21:4). He lives “according to the power of an indestructible life” (Heb 7:15-17). His kingdom is therefore an eternal kingdom. The blessing of the realm of peace is inseparable from His life. Where He reigns in blessing, life is enjoyed in all its fullness. Life is only really life and is only really lived when it is lived in fellowship with Him.

The appreciation of that life, which is visible everywhere in the realm of peace, is expressed by people in various ways:

1. “May the gold of Sheba be given to Him.” The gold that is given to Him is His (Hag 2:8). That they give it to Him means that they acknowledge His right to the most precious thing in creation. In doing so, they are acknowledging His right to all of creation.

2. “Let them pray for him continually.” In the preceding verses, the King has brought blessings to the needy, to His people, and to the world. In response, they will pray for Him and wish Him God’s blessing. There will be prayed for Him “continually” that He will continue His blessed reign

throughout the realm of peace. These prayers reflect the desire for an endless continuation of His reign.

3. "Let them bless Him all day long." To bless Him "all day long" means to wish Him well throughout 'all day' of the realm of peace, to speak good things of Him. Literally it says 'always all the day' and has the meaning of 'every day'.

Under the blessed reign of the Messiah, there "may be abundance [or: handfuls] of grain in the earth, on the top of the mountains" (verse 16). Not only does the realm of peace have no lack, but it is characterized by abundance. Faith is already experiencing that a handful of grain can become a great quantity if we go to the Man of God with that little bit (1Kgs 17:12-15). In the realm of peace, there is an abundance of grain in the valleys and on the mountains. On the mountains, grain normally does not grow, but then it will. The full ears of corn will "wave like [the cedars] of Lebanon".

Abundant harvests will keep pace with the growth and flourishing of the population in the cities (cf. 1Kgs 4:20; Gen 15:5; Isa 9:3a). There is no fear of over-population, no fear of shortage of food, no fear of mismanagement of supplies. Everything is perfectly managed and distributed by the Ruler in righteousness, Who also acts absolutely righteously in this.

Everything depends on Him, Whose Name will endure forever (verse 17). With His Name He guarantees the immediate enjoyment of all benefits and abundance of blessing. He also guarantees that this will not end. The eye is turned away from the blessing to Him Who blesses, to His Name. The blessing can only be enjoyed by the coming generations in connection with His Name. It is not the blessing that will increase or sprout forth, but His Name, and with it the blessing.

This will happen "as long as the sun [shines]". He Himself is "the sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2). In the light of the Sun, the coming generations will be "blessed". The blessing of the realm of peace will continue uninterrupted because He is and remains the Source of blessing. This He is not only for His people Israel, but for "all nations". They, too, do not bless themselves because of the blessing, but bless Him through Whom they receive the blessing.

Psa 72:18-19 | Blessed

*18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who alone works wonders.
19 And blessed be His glorious name forever;
And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen, and Amen.*

With this wish of blessing or this giving thanks the second book of Psalms closes. It is an elaborated version of the blessing or thanksgiving with which the first book concludes (Psa 41:13). After describing the Messiah's overall rule and the blessing this means for all creation, reference is made to Him Who is its source. This makes it obvious that fundamentally the LORD and He Who is King are the same Person. He is both at the beginning and at the end of all blessing.

He is "the LORD God, the God of Israel" (verse 18). God stands with this people in a special relationship. The blessing of the realm of peace is the blessing that flows from God's relationship with this people to the ends of the earth. "LORD" is the name of God by which God has made Himself known to His people as the God of the covenant. On that basis He fulfills all the promises He has made to His people. The fulfillment of these promises is the realm of peace.

All the blessings He gives to His people in the realm of peace are wonders from Him. On the people's part, there is no right. They have not kept the covenant. But God can fulfill all the promises because the Messiah has taken upon Himself all the obligations of the people, as well as the punishment for their failure. God's righteous demands have been met by Him. That is the great wonder that He alone has done.

The response cannot be other than an exuberant and eternal praise of "His glorious Name" (verse 19). His glory will fill all the earth (Isa 6:3). All creation will radiate His perfections, both in the macrocosm, the vast universe, and in the microcosm, the smallest details. Above all, His glory will be seen in all who are full of the knowledge of Him. They are the special wonders of His grace through redemption that is their portion because of Christ's work. They will proclaim His glory forever.

The praise, which goes on forever, is followed by an appropriate “Amen, and Amen”. It is both a conclusion, and an assent: so it is, surely, so it is.

Psa 72:20 | The Prayers of David Are Ended

| *20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.*

That David’s prayers end here does not mean that no more prayers of David follow. We will still regularly hear prayers of David in the following psalms, such as Psalms 86 and 138-145. The point here is that with the coming of the realm of peace, all of David’s prayers will be fulfilled.

David here calls himself “the son of Jesse” and not ‘the king of Israel’. By this he refers to his natural and humble origins. He takes a step back, as it were. It is not about him, but about the Messiah, the Son of David. The Lord Jesus is the Shoot that will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch from His roots that will bear fruit (Isa 11:1-2).

Something similar to what is said here of David’s prayers is seen in “the last words of David” (2Sam 23:1a). Neither are these his last words in a literal sense, for we hear more words from him afterward. His ‘last words’ are about the reign of the Messiah.

In those last words, as here in this psalm, he calls himself “the son of Jesse” (2Sam 23:1b). The issue for him, in fact, is “He who rules over men righteously, Who rules in the fear of God” (2Sam 23:3-4). With this Ruler he sinks into nothingness (2Sam 23:5a), a place he is happy to take. Thus he makes way for the Messiah, the anointed King of God.

Psalm 73

Introduction

With Psalm 73, a new book of Psalms, Book 3, with Psalms 73-89 as its contents, begins. In the second book of Psalms (Psalms 42-72) we see that the faithful remnant of Israel has been rejected by their brethren after the flesh under the leadership of the antichrist. The remnant has fled abroad (Mt 24:14-20), where they are also persecuted by the nations. In this great distress, they wrestle with the question of how the ungodly Israelites can experience prosperity. That wrestling drives them out to God and His sanctuary (Psa 73:17). There they come to repentance (Joel 2:12-17).

The second book of Psalms is about the need of the believing remnant during the great tribulation, because of the persecution by the antichrist and his followers. This persecution takes place from within. This causes great distress to the remnant. In response to their cry for help, the LORD sends His discipling rod Assyria (Isa 10:5) or the king of the North (Dan 11:40).

In this third book of Psalms we find the effects of this (Psa 73:18-19; 74:1-8; 78:62-64; 80:12-13; 83:2-4; 89:40-46). Because of the distress, now caused by Assyria from without, we find in this third book the prayers and spiritual exercise of the remnant.

The third book of Psalms corresponds to the third book of the *Torah* (the five books of Moses), which is the book of Leviticus. In this 'Leviticus book' of Psalms we find the remnant seeking refuge in the sanctuary, for Leviticus is pre-eminently the book of the sanctuary. The main subject of the book of Leviticus is fellowship with the LORD, and therefore being holy before the LORD (1Pet 1:16). We find several references to the LORD's holiness in this third book of Psalms.

Asaph is the author of Psalms 50 and 73-83. Psalm 50 is about the condition for revealing God's glory to His people. Psalms 73-83 are about the revelation of God's glory. We find in them the meaning of the sanctuary for us. Psalms 84-89, which are partly of the Korahites, are about what God's

glory works out of in the hearts of those who form the faithful remnant. We find therein the meaning of the sanctuary for God. Several psalms of this third book of Psalms contain a reference to the sanctuary.

Psalm 73, as the first psalm of the third book, shows the general characteristics of this third book of Psalms. The characteristic of this third book is the entering into the sanctuary (Psa 73:17). There the psalmist finds the solution to the problem he has in Psalm 73, namely, the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous.

The prosperity here is the prosperity of the unbelieving part of the people led by the antichrist (verses 1-12). In the sanctuary, the believing remnant sees the end of the wicked. By the Assyrian – and this is especially the distress in the third book of Psalms – Israel is disciplined and the unbelieving part of the people will be destroyed in an instant (verses 18-20).

This third book deals primarily with the history of Israel as a people, and includes teaching for the believing remnant. We too can learn from this teaching (1Cor 10:6,11). We find only one psalm of David in it (Psalm 86). Psalms 73-83 are of Asaph, Psalms 84-85 and 87-88 are of the sons of Korah, and Psalm 89 is of Ethan.

In the time of David we read of 38,000 Levites assisting the priests in the service in the temple (1Chr 23:3,28), 4,000 of whom provide the music (1Chr 23:5). Of these 4,000, 288 men are set apart to be singers (1Chr 25:7), divided into twenty-four groups. These are placed under the direction of some conductors. One of them is Asaph, who makes himself heard with cymbals (1Chr 16:5).

Asaph is also a prophet (1Chr 25:1-2), who wrote songs together with David (2Chr 29:30). The prophetic characteristics of these psalms we will see at their explanation. Even after the exile, Asaph's descendants continued to be singers who also praised the LORD with cymbals in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:10; Neh 11:22).

Psa 73:1 | God Is Good to Israel

*1 A Psalm of Asaph.
Surely God is good to Israel,
To those who are pure in heart!*

This is “a psalm of Asaph” (verse 1a). It is the first psalm in a row of eleven psalms he wrote (Psalms 73-83). See further for “of Asaph” at Psalm 50:1, where his name is mentioned for the first time in the heading of a psalm.

The second part of verse 1 is the theme of the psalm. The rest of the psalm is the elaboration of it. In this psalm Asaph describes his wrestling with the question of how God can allow the wicked to live in prosperity, while the God-fearing have to contend with adversity. In this first verse he immediately relates the conclusion to which he has come after his wrestling. With a powerful “surely”, or “verily”, or “yes”, he expresses the certainty that God is “good to Israel”.

To this he does add that this applies “to those” in Israel “who are pure in heart”. The Hebrew word “pure” means “empty”, “clean”, “absence of defilement” (cf. Psa 19:9; Pro 14:4). This is the true Israel living separated from evil. Pure or clean of heart is one in whom the inner is in harmony with the outer. Firstly, the heart is pure or clean because God has created a new and clean heart. Secondly, it is the presence of the purity or cleanliness of a steadfast spirit in the believer not to defile himself – that is his responsibility (Psa 51:10).

Nowadays we speak of a ‘true’, ‘not hypocritical’ faith when the faith is not an outward ‘religion’, but an inward ‘relationship’ with the living God. The life of faith then comes from the dedication of the heart, from (the first) love. What is done comes from love to the LORD. They are Israelites like Nathanael, of whom the Lord Jesus with His perfect knowledge of the human heart says: “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” (Jn 1:47). This is not to say that Nathanael is sinless, but that he is sincere.

God’s goodness to Israel is manifested in His mercy, His willingness to gladly forgive a repentant sinner (Psa 86:5). His goodness is also evident in the blessings He gives to them by virtue of the covenant. He gives everything they need in food and drink, in fruitful fields, in peace in their homes, and in protection from their enemies. They may serve Him and He blesses them. He dwells in their midst. He does not abandon them if they are unfaithful to Him, but rebukes them in order to bring them back to Himself (cf. 2Tim 2:13).

Psa 73:2-12 | Envious of the Arrogant

*2 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling,
My steps had almost slipped.*

*3 For I was envious of the arrogant
[As] I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

*4 For there are no pains in their death,
And their body is fat.*

*5 They are not in trouble [as other] men,
Nor are they plagued like mankind.*

*6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
The garment of violence covers them.*

*7 Their eye bulges from fatness;
The imaginations of [their] heart run riot.*

*8 They mock and wickedly speak of oppression;
They speak from on high.*

*9 They have set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue parades through the earth.*

*10 Therefore his people return to this place,
And waters of abundance are drunk by them.*

*11 They say, "How does God know?
And is there knowledge with the Most High?"*

*12 Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease, they have increased [in] wealth.*

In the Hebrew, "but as for me" (verse 2) or "but I" (with emphasis), occurs three times (verses 2,23,28). In verse 2 it is in connection with the tribulation the psalmist is going through. In verse 23 and verse 28 it is connected with emerging purified after the trial. He is then able to withstand it (1Cor 10:13).

Asaph is going to tell about a time in his life when he wrestled with the question of how the goodness of God to the pure in heart could be reconciled with what he saw around him. In that regard, Psalm 73 is a good complement to Psalm 1. Psalm 1 speaks of the prosperity of the God-fearing and the adversity of the wicked. Psalm 73 begins with the practice in which the believer does not always see what God says in His Word. This is a test for faith.

The psalmist knows God and His government, but when he looks around, it seems as if He is not there. He does not see God's goodness for the pure in heart of Israel, of which he is one. On the contrary, he sees goodness for the wicked (cf. Jer 12:1b), while for him, a pure in heart, there is only adversity.

That perception has caused, he honestly admits, that his "steps had almost slipped" in the path of faith (verse 2). He almost crashed in his faith. His "steps had almost slipped" because he had no solid ground under his feet any longer. He had no basis for his faith any longer. Everything he had firmly believed in was not only tottering, but was on the verge of disappearing.

In verses 3-12 he tells at length the cause of his 'near-fall'. He confesses that at the time he "was envious of the arrogant" (verse 3). The Hebrew word for arrogant means, firstly, to be haughty and, secondly, to behave foolishly (cf. 1Sam 21:14). It refers to people who are foolish because they arrogantly set God aside. The latter is also evident from the parallel with verse 3b "the wicked". He looked at them and saw "the prosperity of the wicked".

It is obvious that when he writes this in Psalm 73, he has already come to repentance, for he calls the people he describes "arrogant" and "wicked". He writes this as a retrospective, to pass on the lessons of his past to believers in the future. He has been blind to their true character in his envy of them. The wicked, he has thought, are only well off after all. They have plenty of money, lots of fun, and they live in peace. What an attractive life that is. They have power and prestige, wealth and health, while God's true people are oppressed, persecuted and killed by them with impunity. The psalmist thought: "Why should I stay on the side of the losers?"

The wicked – that is, in the future, the followers of the antichrist – go about their business unhindered until they die (verse 4; cf. Mal 3:15). There are "no pains in their death", there is no fear of death at all. They dare to set up a big mouth against God (Psa 2:2-3). Nothing shows the displeasure of God with their lives, nor when they leave the world. They live in prosperity and die in peace. Nothing and nobody hinders them.

Physically, they have no problems. They are in perfect health. "Their body is fat" or "their strength is fresh", for they wake up refreshed every morning. They are not plagued by bad dreams or insomnia (cf. Job 7:13-14). All this also makes them powerful and enables them to suppress the remnant.

Many people are in trouble, for example because of financial worries, but that does not apply to them (verse 5). Those troubles seem to pass them by. They live a very comfortable life. If suddenly something unpleasant happens in their lives, they are well insured or they buy it off. After all, money provides protection from calamity (Ecc 7:12a).

Nor are they tormented by their conscience. With other people, the conscience speaks when they have done something evil. If they do not confess it, their conscience torments them. This does not affect the wicked, because they have seared their conscience, and it no longer speaks.

It is no wonder, "therefore", that "pride is their necklace" (verse 6). They see their way of life as an ornament. Everything is all arrogance. Those who are haughty are hard, ruthless. The "violence" they use is part of them; it "covers them" like a "garment". Their boastful behavior and their violent acting show how pleased they are with themselves. Any compassion for anyone else is absent.

Their eyes are almost shut because of their puffy face, swollen by fat (verse 7). Through the small slits you can still see something of their eyes. Therein you can read their gluttony. You can see it in their fat bodies. "The imaginations of [their] heart run riot", they have imagined a great deal about their lazy, miserable life, but what they experience is beyond their wildest expectations (cf. Jer 5:28). Here we see the contrast between the prideful, depraved heart of the wicked and the pure heart of the believer (verse 1).

They don't have a good word to say to their neighbors (verse 8). They mock all those poor people who in an honest way try to make something of their lives. About such people they "wickedly speak of oppression". They can easily exploit them to live an even more luxurious life and become even fatter. Puffed up, conceited, they look down on them from on high.

The wicked "speak from on high", which indicates that they imagine themselves to be God. Therefore, of course, heaven is also the target (verse

9). That's where God dwells. They do not tolerate Him above them or beside them. They set their mouths against Him (cf. Rev 13:6).

Wherever they are on earth, their tongue parades. They see the earth as their unlimited possession. They make this clear by using abusive language for their neighbors and with slanderous language toward God. They claim total freedom of speech, in which everyone and everything is targeted (Psa 12:5).

Their lives without any involvement of God put the people of God on the wrong track (verse 10). The people drink in the evil lifestyle to the full. Their refreshment is not the water of God's Word, but what the wicked do and teach. They want such a life. Then you take out of life what is in it, however disgusting it may be. You squeeze out of life what is in it for you.

It leads them to say: "How does God know?" (verse 11). God doesn't respond to anything. Then He must simply not know what is happening on earth. He may be called "the Most High", but it is highly doubtful that He has any knowledge of what the wicked are up to.

Just look at those wicked people (verse 12). They live life totally according to their own will, without regard to God. Yet they are "always at ease, they have increased [in] wealth". Asaph here comes to a kind of conclusion of the life of the wicked. This is what it looks like: rest in the world and increasing their wealth. What more could you want?

Psa 73:13-22 | In God's Sanctuary

13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure

And washed my hands in innocence;

14 For I have been stricken all day long

And chastened every morning.

15 If I had said, "I will speak thus,"

Behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children.

16 When I pondered to understand this,

It was troublesome in my sight

17 Until I came into the sanctuary of God;

[Then] I perceived their end.

18 Surely You set them in slippery places;

*You cast them down to destruction.
 19 How they are destroyed in a moment!
 They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!
 20 Like a dream when one awakes,
 O Lord, when aroused, You will despise their form.
 21 When my heart was embittered
 And I was pierced within,
 22 Then I was senseless and ignorant;
 I was [like] a beast before You.*

In light of the prosperity of the wicked, Asaph sees all his efforts to live pleasing to God as futile. God is good to those who are pure in heart, he said at the beginning (verse 1b). Well, he has kept his heart pure (verse 13), but he hasn't noticed anything of that goodness.

In his despair, he expresses with a powerful "surely" that it made no sense at all to purify his heart because he wanted to live in fellowship with God. It seems much better to do what one's heart dictates and enjoy life. Washing his hands in innocence doesn't make any sense either (cf. Psa 26:6). After all, there is no benefit with God in not participating in evil practices.

Just look at his life. It's all doom and gloom all day long (verse 14). It starts in the morning when he wakes up. Every morning there is God's chastening. He can't see that as His loving care for him, to keep him close to Himself and to keep him from going astray. He really can't rejoice that he "encounters various trials" (Jam 1:2). In verse 16 he tells of his difficulty in understanding the ways of God. He cannot reconcile his suffering and the prosperity of the wicked.

It has sometimes occurred to him to speak like the wicked and pretend God is not there (verse 15). You can then escape torment and enjoy life, he thought. But this thought was going too far for him. To him, doubt is a gateway to apostasy. That is why he turned directly to God to tell Him that he did not want to be unfaithful to His children. If he started speaking like the wicked, it would be apostasy from the covenant that God had made with His people, His children.

"Your children" here is an indication of God's covenant people (cf. Deu 14:1-2). In a Western society, the identity of a person is primarily individu-

al. In the Bible, as in an Eastern society, the person is seen in a communal context. There is a strong interaction between a person and the group to which he belongs. The influence of a person on the group is great, which is also true the other way around.

He has shied away from becoming a stumbling block to his fellow believers by defecting to the enemy camp. It proves his love for them. We see here a special characteristic of the new life the believer possesses. The new life loves God and it loves the children of God. He who says he loves God, when there is no love for the children of God, is a liar (1Jn 4:20).

The problem was still there. He had “pondered to understand this” (verse 16). He racked his brain about it, but “it was troublesome” in his sight. He failed to figure it out because he looked at the problem in the light of his own intellect. Never has human thinking been able to solve this mystery of the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortunes of the righteous. It is like the under side of an embroidery: if you look at it, you will not see any pattern, because all threads of it run crisscross through each other.

Then comes an “until” (verse 17). Suddenly everything becomes clear to him. That happened when he “came into the sanctuary of God”. There he “perceived their end”. That completely changed his view of the wicked. To determine the value of something or someone’s life, we must pay attention to its end (Deu 32:20,28-29; Heb 13:7).

To flee into the sanctuary is not to flee *from* reality, but *into* reality. There we see the upper side of the embroidery: we see that the threads are woven in such a way as to reveal a beautiful scene. The only place we learn to see life on earth in proper perspective is from above, in the sanctuary, literally ‘sanctuaries’ (plural) that is, in God’s holy presence.

This will be important in the future, when the sanctuary (singular) in Jerusalem is in the hands of the antichrist. The believing remnant can then still experience God’s presence in His sanctuaries, that is wherever they experience God’s presence, for God is not bound to a place. The remnant will meet God in spirit and truth (cf. Jn 4:23).

In the sanctuary, the remnant comes to know God’s strength and glory (Psa 63:2-3) and is determined by the lovingkindness or covenant faithfulness of the LORD. In the light of the sanctuary we learn to know the will of

God and we submit our will to His. There we learn about God's patience with evil, while it becomes clear that He will judge evil, the wicked, at His time.

With certainty, "surely", it can then be said that He sets the wicked "in slippery places" (verse 18). They come to their end, not by natural death, but by an act of God. The way they are walking on, and which Asaph has almost begun to walk with them, is slippery. Their feet will slip with the result that they are "cast ... down to destruction".

This happens "in a moment" (verse 19). Suddenly they are no more, "they are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!" Prophetically, this will happen when these wicked followers of the antichrist will be swept away by the disciplinary rod of God, Assyria (Isa 10:5-6), causing two-thirds of the people to die (Zec 13:8).

The speed with which they are swept away is similar to what happens to a dream when one awakes (verse 20). There is still a memory of the dream, but the dream itself is abruptly over after awaking. The prosperity of the life of the wicked is a dream. The reality of the end of life presents itself.

We see the same thing when Hezekiah takes refuge in the sanctuary with the threatening letter from the king of Assyria. He spreads this letter out before the LORD. The response is that the Angel of the LORD wipes out Sennacherib's army in one night (2Kgs 19:14,35). We will also see this when the Lord Jesus brings retribution with flaming fire on the wicked (2Thes 1:8-9).

The wicked of whom Asaph was envious are confronted with the "Lord", Adonai. He, the sovereign Ruler, has awakened, that is, He considers the time has come to deal with them. Then, to their dismay, they will find that He does not esteem, but despises the image they have made of themselves, which people have been impressed with (cf. Dan 12:2b). Their image has been a sham.

Asaph comes to himself and repentance because of what he has seen in the sanctuary of the end of the wicked. He acknowledges that his heart was bitter against God when he saw the prosperity of the wicked (verse 21). About this he humbled himself and came to the honest acknowledgment

of how he was. This is only possible if someone has been in the sanctuary. With Isaiah he says, as it were, “woe is me” (Isa 6:1-5).

God was, in his eyes, unfair that the wicked could go about their business undisturbed, while he did his best to be pleasing to God and was chastened for it. He “was pierced within”, literally he “was pierced in his kidneys”. His kidneys were pierced in him because he found such a life meaningless. The kidneys are the innermost part of the human being (cf. Job 19:27). In this innermost being, where only God can reach him, he has become numb or insensitive. That is why he confesses this to God.

Now that he looks back, he sees how senseless he was then (verse 22). He says honestly: “I was senseless and ignorant.” And toward God he compares himself to “a beast”. A beast has no sense of God. Only a human being walks erect and can raise his gaze upward. When Nebuchadnezzar did not acknowledge God, he became like a beast (Dan 4:28-33). Only when he acknowledged God the Most High did he become a full human being again (Dan 4:34). So it will be prophetically with the antichrist, the man of sin, who displays himself as being God (2Thes 2:3-4). He is called “the beast coming up out of the earth”, which is Israel (Rev 13:11).

Asaph lost all self-esteem in the sanctuary, “before You”. He has experienced what Job experienced who has also wrestled with this question and has also accused God of injustice. When Job finally stands before God, he says, deeply convinced of his presumption to judge God in His ways: “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth” (Job 40:3-4; cf. Pro 30:2-3).

Psa 73:23-28 | The Nearness of God

23 Nevertheless I am continually with You;

You have taken hold of my right hand.

24 With Your counsel You will guide me,

And afterward receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven [but You]?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

*27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.
28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;
I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
That I may tell of all Your works.*

The condition of Asaph and of every God-fearing person stands in the greatest possible contrast – indicated by the word “nevertheless” – with that of the wicked. Asaph can confidently say to God: “Nevertheless I am continually with You” (verse 23). It is also possible and probably better to translate “nevertheless I had been with You always”. All the time he was doubting, God was with him, without him being aware of it. God had grasped his right hand. This indicates a firm grip, a grip that does not slacken. God has also taken a firm hold of our hand and will never let go of us (cf. Jn 10:28-30). Thus He walks with us on the path toward His final goal, also and especially in times of trial.

On the way to His appointed goal of blessing, He leads the faithful remnant through His counsel, so that in the darkness that may surround them, when they are caught in doubt, they follow the right path (verse 24). Thus they will enter the blessing of the realm of peace. The ultimate goal for God is to accept the faithful remnant in the realm of peace, after His glory has descended in it in the new temple, and allow them to share in the promised blessing.

Once this is clear to his mind, Asaph says, and the believer says, that he has no one but God in heaven (verse 25). And if God is all in heaven, is there anywhere on earth that besides Him the believer can find joy in? To ask the question is answering it. In fact, the point is that the God of the heavens is enough on earth. Although the psalmist is on earth, he desires nothing apart from fellowship with the God of the heavens.

His flesh and his heart may fail through all the trials of life, but not God (verse 26). No matter how he himself weakens, no matter how his earthly tent is broken down, God is the “strength”, literally “rock” of his heart. His heart builds on Him. God is also his portion forever. He will never lose Him. He is inextricably bound to Him forever. It is similar to what the prophet Habakkuk says in Habakkuk 3 (Hab 3:17-19).

Those who are not close to God, who have no need of His presence, but keep themselves far from Him, “will perish” (verse 27). Such people deliberately choose to be “unfaithful” to Him. This amounts to ‘whoredom’ [“are unfaithful” is literally “go to a whoring from”]. They break the lawful connection with Him and join themselves to idols (Jer 5:7). It is the breaking of the covenant with God that is also compared to the breaking of the covenant of marriage. Therefore, it is whoredom, in the sense of adultery (cf. Hosea 1-3). God will destroy them because of their apostasy.

Asaph’s choice is totally different (verse 28). Although everyone makes a different choice, as far as he is concerned, only one thing is “good” and that is to be “in the nearness of God”. This is the good part (Lk 10:42). He began the psalm by saying that God is good to Israel (verse 1b); now he says that being near to God is good for himself. Through his experience, a general truth – “God is good to Israel” – has become a personal truth – “the nearness of God is my good”.

Something similar we see in Job. After his trial he says: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear”, that is, as a ‘general truth’, “but now my eye sees You”, that is, it is now a ‘personal truth’ (Job 42:5). The useful effect of tribulation, namely, that one is able to endure it (1Cor 10:13), is now a reality. The psalmist has been exercised by discipline, which brings a peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11).

He wants to live in close fellowship with Him. His feet had almost slipped, and therefore he had “made the Lord GOD” his “refuge”. God is the “Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler, and He is “GOD” or “LORD”, Yahweh, the God of the covenant with His people.

From the very presence of that God he will tell all God’s works. Now that he has seen himself in the light of God, God can use him. Here the psalmist is like Isaiah. Only after Isaiah had come to self-judgment the LORD could ask him the question: “Whom shall I send ...?” (Isa 6:5-8). In connection with the lessons Asaph learned, he will speak of what he saw in the sanctuary. God’s works cannot always be understood by people, but they are always completely reliable.

Verse 27 and verse 28 form a conclusion and summary of all Psalm 73. It paints the deep contrast between the wicked and the righteous. The difference is only seen clearly in the light of the sanctuary.

We must learn to look with the eyes of God to see the glory of His works. Things that we try to understand, but are unable to fathom, we can accept when we see God at work in the sanctuary. Then we can tell about them to those who also wrestle with what they perceive in the world around them (Rom 8:28-39).

Psalm 74

Introduction

In Psalm 73, Asaph desperately asked God questions about the prosperity of the wicked. In Psalm 74, he cries out for help in great distress and asks God desperate questions about His rejection of His people, which to him is evident because of the destruction of the temple.

This psalm is a touching prayer to God to intervene after a great national disaster. That disaster concerns the destruction of God's sanctuary, the temple, His dwelling place in Jerusalem. The disaster that Asaph describes is in the future, because the temple was built by Solomon in Asaph's time. Asaph is called a "prophet" by the Lord Jesus when He quotes a word of his from Psalm 78 (Mt 13:35; Psa 78:2). It is a prophetic psalm, expressing feelings that are present among the believing remnant at later events.

The Holy Spirit worked in Asaph feelings which the God-fearing has who experience the actual destruction of the temple. We can think of the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. We can also think of the destruction by the Romans in the year 70. Prophetically it is about the destruction by the Assyrians of the temple which – now soon – will be built by the Jews (Dan 9:27). Of this, the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar is a foreshadowing. All these destructions were a painful experience for the God-fearing Jews. They wondered how God could allow His sanctuary to be so profaned and destroyed.

The disciples of the Lord Jesus – they are a picture of the remnant – are also quite impressed by the temple. It did not occur to them that this magnificent temple could be destroyed again. In response to their admiration for the building, the Lord foretells its destruction (Mt 24:1-2).

We can divide the psalm as follows:

In verses 1-11 we hear the complaint about the destruction of the temple.

Verses 12-17 mention Who God is and what He has done in the past.

Verses 18-23 are a prayer to God to remember His people.

Psa 74:1-8 | The Destroyed Sanctuary

1 A Maskil of Asaph.

O God, why have You rejected [us] forever?

Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

2 Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old,

Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance;

[And] this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.

3 Turn Your footsteps toward the perpetual ruins;

The enemy has damaged everything within the sanctuary.

4 Your adversaries have roared in the midst of Your meeting place;

They have set up their own standards for signs.

5 It seems as if one had lifted up

[His] axe in a forest of trees.

6 And now all its carved work

They smash with hatchet and hammers.

7 They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground;

They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name.

8 They said in their heart, "Let us completely subdue them."

They have burned all the meeting places of God in the land.

This is the ninth of a total of thirteen psalms that are "a maskil" or "a teaching" or "an instruction" (verse 1a; Psalms 32; 42; 44; 45; 52; 53; 54; 55; 74; 78; 88; 89; 142). For "a maskil", see further at Psalm 32:1.

For "of Asaph" see at Psalm 50:1.

The God-fearing believer cries out to God "why" He has "rejected" His people "forever" (verse 1b). We ask the question of the "why" of disasters that befall us when we do not understand God's ways and works. That question can come from a tormented, humble mind, but also from a rebellious mind. Asaph asks this question from a humble mind. His question is not why God has rejected him, because that he understands. His question is why God has "rejected forever" (cf. verse 10).

The occasion for his question, as the psalm further makes clear, is the destruction of the temple. To the awareness of the God-fearing Israelite, the presence of the temple in the midst of the people is the same as God's presence in their midst. The presence of the temple is necessary to him if

God is to dwell in their midst. This thought is justified when the people serve Him, but unjustified when the people depart from Him. Because the people departed from Him, He had to depart from them (Eze 8:3-4; 9:3; 10:3-4,18-19; 11:22-23).

They see in the destruction of the temple that God's anger has been kindled against them, "the sheep of Your pasture" (cf. Psa 79:13; 95:7). That the righteous present themselves to God as the sheep of His pasture increases the tenderness of their appeal to Him. How can the Shepherd of Israel be inflamed in anger against His own sheep whom He provides with pasture, that is, with food? But God's anger has come upon His people as a whole, and they are part of it. They are part of an ungodly people.

At the same time, in contrast to the ungodly people, the apostate mass, they turn to God with their need. They ask Him to think of them because they are His congregation (verse 2). This is not about the New Testament church, but about the congregation of Israel. He has purchased that people "of old" (Deu 32:6; cf. Acts 20:28). Asaph points out to God that He acquired His people many centuries ago to be His own people (Deu 32:9; Exo 19:5). It means that this people is a very precious treasure to Him (cf. Mt 13:44).

Precious means not only precious in value, but there is an emotional attachment to this treasure which makes its value to the owner a multiple of its real value. The value of the children of God to the Lord Jesus lies in the fact that they are a gift of love from the Father to the Son. Thus, the New Testament believers are mentioned seven times in John 17 as those who were given by the Father to the Lord Jesus (Jn 17:2b,6a,6b,9,11,12,24).

He has redeemed His people from the bondage under which they were burdened. This redemption happened for a purpose: God wanted a people to live in the midst of. He therefore brought His people into the land and chose Mount Zion as His dwelling place. There He has dwelled.

And does God not see what has happened to His dwelling place? Let God turn His footsteps to go and see (verse 3). By presenting it this way, Asaph indicates that God has left His sanctuary. He has to return to it. Then He can observe that His dwelling place is changed in "perpetual ruins".

This, Asaph says, was done by “the enemy”. The enemy was – as a foreshadowing of what will happen in the end time – Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. Then it was the Roman armies led by Titus in 70 AD. And in the near future, toward the end of the great tribulation, it will be the king of the North, or the Assyrian. The enemy “has damaged everything within the sanctuary”. To Asaph, as a singer in the temple, this is unpalatable. He is deeply affected by this in his inner self. His heart is completely attached to that place. How can it be that God did not notice this? Why didn’t He intervene? And why is He still not doing anything?

The adversaries are not Asaph’s adversaries, but “Your adversaries”, that is, those of God (verse 4). How they have roared and ranted like drunks in “Your meeting places”. The temple has some places of encounter between God and His people. In the court He meets His people and in the sanctuary the priests. These are holy places where the requirements of holiness are appropriate to Him Who is the Holy One.

“Your meeting places” in Hebrew is *mo’ed-eka*. The word *mo’ed*, which means meeting place, also appears in Leviticus 23 and is translated there as “appointed time” (Lev 23:2). It means that God invites people to be with Him to have a time of celebration. He determines the place and time, just as we do when we make an appointment and agree on a time and place. The place is the place He has chosen to have His Name dwell (verse 7). That is first the tabernacle and later the temple. The time is the time of the feasts of the LORD.

But there is no longer a place to meet God. In the place where it was possible, the nations have set up their idolatrous badges of honor. This is repugnant to the God-fearing Jew (cf. Mt 24:15). It is as if the idols of the nations had won the victory over the living God. Surely God cannot allow this to continue without punishment.

Asaph suggests to God – as if to convince God of the ruthlessness of the nations – how the enemies have acted with a heart full of hatred and have held nothing, absolutely nothing, sacred. As lumberjacks lifted their “axes in a forest of trees”, so they raided the temple (verse 5). They have beaten on it ferociously. The ornate carvings were smashed to pieces “with hatchet and hammers” by brute force (verse 6).

After the destruction, they “have burned Your sanctuary” (verse 7). The dwelling place of God’s Name they profaned “to the ground”. No profaning act was spared God’s dwelling. Whatever the heathen could think of to cover the dwelling place of God’s Name with defilement, they did.

Today it happens in movies and events that ridicule and slander the Lord Jesus in the most disfiguring way. This takes place under the cloak of freedom of speech, in which nothing is sacred and nothing is spared. In particular, God and Christ are slandered. This goes to the heart and soul of the believer.

Spurgeon (1834-1892) applies Psalm 74 to the way Bible critics try to destroy the church with their false teachings. This has not turned to the better since his time. For example, the existence of hell as the place of eternal pain for those who will not submit to God’s command to repent is questioned regularly. The opponents of the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment get a stage in church or via Christian media and are allowed to smash with hatchet and hammers.

When we look at marriage, we see that here too the enemy destroys God’s intention with regular hammer blows. Marriage between one man and one woman is the only form of cohabitation God has ordained and recognizes in which sexuality may be experienced. However, what do we see happening in and through the church? The church has raised the rainbow flag as evidence of the victory that gay relationships can also be consecrated.

The Lord’s Supper, instituted by the Lord Jesus, is a meal of remembrance for the members of His spiritual body, the church. It is celebrated in His house, also a picture of the church. It is open to all of God’s children, provided that someone is not living in sin and does not have a false doctrine about Christ and God’s Word. However, what happens in God’s house? Anyone who wants to may partake of the sacrament. It is said: ‘You are welcome as you are, as you feel, and however you live.’ The sign of the unity and solidarity of those who belong to God’s church has become a sign to which everyone is free to give their own liberal meaning.

All of this, and much more, all the destructive teachings and practices that have been introduced into the church, chills the believer to the bone who has a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. He shares in God’s pain over

it. Instead of crying out to God to put an end to this through judgment, he will beg God for perseverance to remain faithful to His Word himself.

Then we are true followers of the Lord Jesus. He has borne witness to the truth in meekness and has not threatened retribution (Jn 18:22-23; 19:9-11; 1Pet 2:23). In doing so, He has felt the reproach that was done to His God as His own (Rom 15:3).

Asaph, by the Spirit's enlightenment, even knows the deliberations of the heart of God's enemies (verse 8). They proceed according to a pre-made plan. What they do not say out loud, they carry out in malice. They plunder and burn God's dwelling place, which is the temple. In the end time they will also burn God's meeting places in the land, the synagogues. If God allows this, it is because He wants to eradicate all orthodox, lifeless form worship. To Him, orthodox Judaism has no value. For this purpose God uses a terrible disciplinary rod: Assyria (Isa 7:17; 10:5).

Psa 74:9-11 | The Silence of God

*9 We do not see our signs;
There is no longer any prophet,
Nor is there any among us who knows how long.
10 How long, O God, will the adversary revile,
[And] the enemy spurn Your name forever?
11 Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?
From within Your bosom, destroy [them]!*

The God-fearing remnant, whose feelings Asaph expresses, no longer see their signs, by which they see that God is with them (verse 9). By this they mean that the temple has disappeared with the altar and the priestly service. There is also "no longer any prophet", someone who can comfort and encourage them in their circumstances on behalf of God or make God's will known to them about the way they should go. To the agonizing question of "how long" this situation is to last, no one can answer, for no one knows (cf. Acts 1:6-7).

The Lord Jesus speaks of a sign that answers the question of 'how long': "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN

COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” (Mt 24:30-31).

The remnant also connects the question of “how long” with the reproach the adversary puts on God (verse 10). The question implies, besides a question about time, faith. There is faith that one day the defamation of God will come to an end. Surely it cannot be that the enemy will blaspheme God’s name “forever”? We know that God limits that time to three and a half years (Rev 13:5; Mt 24:22). The time of the abominable performance of the king of the North is even shorter, for that performance takes place at the end of the great tribulation.

The big question that continues to trouble the remnant is “why” God does withdraw His hand, even His right hand (verse 11). God’s hand represents God’s action. God’s right hand represents His acting in power. Why doesn’t He act forcefully against the defamation of His holy Name? Isn’t He omniscient and omnipotent? Because He has withdrawn His strong right hand from His people, He has given the enemy a free hand. This they do not understand.

But they have the deep conviction that God is mighty and retains control over everything. Therefore, they call upon Him to bring out His hand from His bosom, where He has hidden it (cf. Exo 4:6). He must let His hand come forth and put an end to all slander and blasphemy. They ask: “Destroy [them]!” With this the believing remnant says to God that He has to destroy the enemy once and for all. This will indeed put an end to all slander and blasphemy. This corresponds to the prayer of the remnant: “Hallowed be Your name” (Mt 6:9b).

Psa 74:12-17 | God Reigns

*12 Yet God is my king from of old,
Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth.
13 You divided the sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters.
14 You crushed the heads of Leviathan;*

You gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.

15 You broke open springs and torrents;

You dried up ever-flowing streams.

16 Yours is the day, Yours also is the night;

You have prepared the light and the sun.

17 You have established all the boundaries of the earth;

You have made summer and winter.

After the complaint and the questions, suddenly the certainty of victory breaks through. That certainty is substantiated by what God has done in the past. It is now not a common memory, as in verse 9 for example, but a personal memory. The believer who suffers with God's people finds in his personal relationship with God a certainty that cannot be undone by the disastrous condition of God's people.

He confesses from the depths of his heart: "Yet God is my king from of old" (verse 12). It is the certainty that God sits on the throne and governs everything. Nothing gets out of hand for Him. That applies to His people as a whole as well as to the individual members. The latter aspect is of primary importance here. It is not a general confession that God is King, but He is "my king".

That He is my King "from of old", means from the birth of Israel, when Israel was delivered from Egypt (verse 13; cf. Exo 15:18). At the same time it points to the eternal kingship of God (Psa 10:16a). It is the realization that God has always had supremacy, but that is now applied by the believer to his own life as well.

Therefore, it is not a general confession of faith, but an expression of personal faith when the believer says of God that He "works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth". It is the conviction that not evil has the last word, but God. He will give His people as a whole and the individual believer the full blessing of salvation in the realm of peace.

When God brings salvation here on earth, His eternal kingship is revealed in time ("of old") and place ("earth"). The thought is: the God Who worked redemption then, would He not be able to redeem now? After all, He is the God Who created the earth in the beginning (verse 16). He, the Creator and the Redeemer, would He not be able to redeem now? In Revelation 4 and 5

we find the same connection between the Creator and the Redeemer (Rev 4:11; 5:5-7,9; cf. Rom 8:32).

The faith of the God-fearing sees the convincing evidence of the power of God in the history of God's people. Many times God has demonstrated His power in the deliverance of His people. This redemptive, delivering acting of God in the past guarantees that He is able to do so again, in their situation. Asaph presents God, as it were, with some of the proofs of the exercise of His power. Thereby he repeatedly emphasizes that it was He, "You", Who did it.

The first evidence is the revelation of His power at the dividing of the Red Sea (verse 13). He says to God: "You" did that. The dividing of the sea, with the water becoming like a wall, only God can do (Exo 14:21-22; 15:8). This is an unparalleled wonder of God and proves His dominion over nature. What is the way of deliverance for Israel is the way of breaking "the heads of the sea monsters in the waters" – this is a picture of the Egyptians (Eze 32:2). The Egyptians all perished in the Red Sea (Exo 14:26-28).

God has "crushed the heads of Leviathan" (verse 14). The many-headed monster is also a reference to Egypt, but then more emphatically to the power behind it, which is the devil (cf. Job 41:1,6; Psa 104:26; Isa 27:1; 51:9; Rev 13:2b). Asaph expresses the complete humiliation of this enemy by saying that God "gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness". He is not buried – which may be a reference to the dead Egyptians on the shore of the Red Sea (Exo 14:30) – but given for food to the wilderness dwellers, the wild animals.

After the example of the destruction of the enemy follows the example of God's care for His people after their deliverance (verse 15). This also shows His omnipotence. Who can supply water to a people of millions in the wilderness? No one, except God. Who can bring this people out of the wilderness into the promised land, through an ever-flowing river, the Jordan? No one but God. God demonstrates His power in favor of His people in His authority over creation. He gives His people water for refreshment and dries up waters that seem to hinder the progress of His people toward the promised blessing (cf. Zec 10:11).

God has authority over creation because He is its Creator and also its Sustainer (Heb 1:2-3a). "The day" and "the night" (verse 16) remind us of day one of the six days of creation. That's when God created the light (Gen 1:3-5). It also reminds us of day four. That's when God created the sun (Gen 1:14-19).

Asaph – and in him the God-fearing in the end time, and also we who live in the end time – confesses with all his heart that both "the day" and "the night" are God's property. In application, "the day" refers to prosperity and "the night" to adversity. Both are in God's hand. In the realm of peace there will be no more night (Rev 21:25), for "the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun" (Isa 30:26a).

Heathen can oppress and drive out God's people and destroy God's sanctuary. However, this does not change God's government over creation, His judgment on His enemies, or His redemption of His people. He determines the day and He determines the night for His people and for the heathen (cf. Isa 45:7; 60:1-2; Mt 4:16). As long as God maintains day and night, He will not break the covenant with His people (Jer 33:21-22).

God has "prepared the light and the sun". The light shines in the darkness. The Lord Jesus is the light of the world (Jn 8:12; 1:4-5). He, the light, reveals how dark the world is. This darkness is not only there because of the absence of light, but it is a darkness that is present within man. Therefore man is not able to perceive the light. Therefore, God had to send a man, John the baptist, to testify of the light (Jn 1:6-9).

The Lord Jesus, Who is the light, also reveals Who God is: "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained [Him]" (Jn 1:18). That revelation is to give those who have accepted Him the right to become children of God (Jn 1:12), allowing them to address God with "Abba Father" (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6).

Christ is also the Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2). The realm of peace is a realm of light because the Lord Jesus will shine there as the Sun of righteousness. Just as the sun has dominion over the day, He has dominion in the realm of peace.

In His omnipotence and wise policy, God "established all the boundaries of the earth" (verse 17; cf. Acts 17:26). God did this with Israel as the start-

ing point and center (Deu 32:8). Thereby the God-fearing also refers to God's covenant with Noah. This covenant is based on the burnt offering Noah brought on an earth cleansed by the flood (Gen 8:20-22). The realm of peace is a kingdom cleansed by judgment. All the blessing God gives in the realm of peace is grounded in Christ's sacrifice for God.

Psa 74:18-23 | O God, Plead Your Own Cause

*18 Remember this, O LORD, that the enemy has reviled,
And a foolish people has spurned Your name.
19 Do not deliver the soul of Your turtledove to the wild beast;
Do not forget the life of Your afflicted forever.
20 Consider the covenant;
For the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.
21 Let not the oppressed return dishonored;
Let the afflicted and needy praise Your name.
22 Arise, O God, [and] plead Your own cause;
Remember how the foolish man reproaches You all day long.
23 Do not forget the voice of Your adversaries,
The uproar of those who rise against You which ascends continually.*

After the confession of the certainty that God reigns in the previous verses, the remnant continues to pray to God again (verse 18). They cry out to God to remember that the enemy has "reviled" the LORD. God will not let this go unpunished. His Name has been blasphemed by "a foolish people", that is, the nations (Deu 32:21). The nations are foolish because they have no regard for God at all (Psa 14:1; 53:1).

The remnant, with this call, is showing that ultimately it is not about them, but about the LORD. LORD is His covenant name. The call to God to remember this testifies to their relationship with Him. God wants His own to call upon Him with reference to Who He is and what He has promised (cf. Isa 62:6-7; Eze 36:37).

The remnant sees the nations as wild beasts, as wolves in the midst of whom they are like sheep (verse 19). In the face of these tearing animals, they speak to the LORD of themselves as "Your turtledove" (cf. Psa 68:13). The turtledove is a fragile and faithful bird. The remnant is aware of its vul-

nerability. A turtledove has no natural weapons as a defense against predators. The remnant is also aware of their faithfulness to God and knows that He sees them as a defenseless and faithful dove (Song 2:14). Therefore, they ask Him not to forget them “forever” after all. After all, they are “Your afflicted”. They are in miserable circumstances because they are His property. In their circumstances they feel forgotten by Him (Isa 49:14).

First the psalmist thought of the power of God as Creator and also of His love and care as Redeemer. Then he thought of the honor of the Name of God. The Name of God was dishonored by the enemy, while the remnant is but weak. Therefore, the psalmist now appeals to the covenant (verse 20) and asks God to arise and take action (verse 22).

The remnant reminds God through the psalmist of “the covenant” (verse 20). Let Him behold it and act accordingly. When He beholds His covenant and then looks at “the dark places of the land”, He must see how much it contrasts with the light of His covenant. For “He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him” (Dan 2:22b). In that all-discovering light, surely He sees that those dark places “are full of the habitations of violence” against Him and His own.

The God-fearing further ask God not to let “the oppressed” return ashamed (verse 21). That is what happens when God sends the one who prays back home without paying attention. On the contrary, let God hear “the afflicted and needy” and deliver them from their enemies. The result will be that they will praise His Name.

The remnant cries out to God to arise and plead – not their cause, but – His own cause (verse 22). When God arises, the enemies must flee. That clears the way for God’s people to inherit the blessing. The cause concerns the defamation that fools inflict on God “all day long”, which is the period when the Assyrians, the king of the North, enter the land and rage against people and buildings with unprecedented violence.

The psalm does not end with praise, because the tribulation is not yet over (verse 23). God has not yet accomplished His purpose with His people. The God-fearing person calls upon God once again not to “forget the voice of Your adversaries” (cf. verse 19). Surely He has not forgotten the uproar of those who rise against Him, has He? After all, it “ascends continually”.

Psalm 75

Introduction

Psalm 75 is God's answer to the prayer (of the remnant in great distress) in Psalm 74. Opposite the devastating onslaught of the wicked, the God-fearing remnant looks up to God. The supplication of Psalm 74, that God should arise to plead His cause (Psa 74:22), is answered in Psalm 75. God stands up as Judge (verse 7).

Psa 75:1 | Thanksgiving

*1 For the choir director; [set to] Al-tashheth. A Psalm of Asaph, a Song.
We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks,
For Your name is near;
Men declare Your wondrous works.*

For "for the choir director" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For "Al-tashheth" see at Psalm 57:1.

For "a Psalm of Asaph" see at Psalm 50:1.

This psalm is also "a Song", meaning it is a song of praise.

The remnant bursts into praise because of what God is going to do (verse 1b). Usually we give thanks to God for what He has done and given, but by faith the remnant, like Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20, give thanks to the LORD for what He is going to do (2Chr 20:21). The repetition "we give thanks" emphasizes the thanksgiving. God is the object of it.

The reason is that God's Name is "near". This means that the moment is near when He will act in favor of His own and make His Name known on all the earth. It also means that God is near in their thoughts (cf. Phil 4:5b). He is no longer the absent God as they experienced Him in the previous psalm, where the Name of the LORD is blasphemed (Psa 74:7,10,18).

The wondrous works of God that are declared are those of His redemption of His people. They have heard of His wondrous works; they have been declared to them. By this they have been reminded of the history of

redemption. This encourages them in view of the imminent deliverance from the affliction in which they are.

Psa 75:2-3 | The Messiah Judges With Equity

2 *“When I select an appointed time,
It is I who judge with equity.*
3 *“The earth and all who dwell in it melt;
It is I who have firmly set its pillars. Selah.*

In these verses the Messiah speaks. He does so in the I-form (verse 2). He, and no one else, will “judge with equity”, when He has received what is appointed for Him. God has appointed the heavens and the earth for Him to rule over them. At the time appointed by Him, He will give Him the government in His hands (Mk 13:32; cf. Psa 2:8).

The Hebrew word *mo'ed* – which is translated here as “appointed time” – means a certain or destined time and place. At the time appointed by the Father, Christ will act, and that in accordance with the will and thought of God. When God has given Him the government in His hands, He will begin His government by judging evil (Jn 5:27). His judgment will be “with equity”; it will be carried out absolutely righteously according to the evil committed.

When He accepts His government, it will cause “earth and all who dwell in it” to “melt” (verse 3). All human governments appear to have no foundation because they have ruled according to corrupt principles. By His righteous judgments, which He brings upon them through the king of the North, they will become aware of this. Thereby all their strength will melt. What He now brings instead is stability (cf. Psa 104:5). He firmly sets the pillars of His government inviolable and unshakable.

Psa 75:4-8 | Warning

4 *“I said to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’
And to the wicked, ‘Do not lift up the horn;
5 Do not lift up your horn on high,
Do not speak with insolent pride.’”*
6 *For not from the east, nor from the west,*

Nor from the desert [comes] exaltation;

7 But God is the Judge;

He puts down one and exalts another.

8 For a cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams;

It is well mixed, and He pours out of this;

Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain [and] drink down its dregs.

Against the background of His coming reign, warnings follow addressed to the boastful and the wicked (verse 4). It is, as it were, a final call to reflect on their boasting and belief in their own strength. The boastful are advised not to boast by taking a haughty attitude against God. The wicked He tells not to lift up their horn, the symbol of strength.

Let them not lift up their horns on high, i.e. to God (verse 5). It is supreme folly to contend with God for power (cf. *Psa 2:1-4*). They will also do well to “not speak with insolent pride [literally: neck]”. In their haughtiness toward God, they stretch out their necks to appear greater.

They must remember that “exaltation” does not come from some place on earth (verse 6). It comes “not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert”. “The desert is the south. The north is not mentioned. Possibly that direction is not mentioned because from that direction come the judgments as the disciplinary rod of God, which mean humiliation and not exaltation.

In any case, exaltation does not come from any agency or man on earth, but from God, for “God is the Judge” (verse 7). Both humiliation and exaltation come from Him and are done on the basis of a judicial decision of Him. “He puts down one” because He as Judge decides it. By virtue of that same capacity as Judge, He “exalts another”. He acts according to right, not in preference or at will.

Those who exalt themselves He humbles (*Lk 14:11; 18:14b*). This is what the presumptuous wicked will experience. “A cup is in the hand of the LORD”, a cup filled with the judgment of the Judge (verse 8). The wine of judgment “foams” and is “well mixed”. This indicates the impetuosity and sharpness of judgment (cf. *Rev 14:10; 16:19*).

God pours out of the cup. He pours it out completely. “All the wicked of the earth must drain [and] drink down its dregs” (cf. *Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15*).

The cup contains nothing but the anger of God over the sinful lives of the wicked. Every sip from this cup is completely deserved. Therefore, they must drink it down to the last drop; there will be no residue left in the cup. Reduction of sentence is not possible.

When the time comes to judge, there is no escape. Nor is there any mitigation possible. Even the dregs must be drunk, that is, even the king of the North will ultimately be destroyed (Dan 11:45). The judgments come sparing nothing and completely on all the wicked. None of the wicked will escape them. “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31).

Psa 75:9-10 | The Messiah Honors God

9 But as for me, I will declare [it] forever;

I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

10 And all the horns of the wicked He will cut off,

[But] the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.

The end result is sung by the Messiah (verse 9). Singing is the consequence of redemption. There is no doubt about the redemption. He will proclaim what God has done in the judgment of the wicked and the deliverance of His people forever. He will also “sing praises to the God of Jacob”.

God is the God of Jacob. This points to the connection between the mighty God and the weak Jacob. God fulfills all His promises to a people who so often behaved like Jacob by going their own ways. Therefore, the God of Jacob is the God of election and the God of grace. The life of Jacob is an illustration of the school of God in the life of a believer, how God transforms Jacob from a heels holder into Israel, which means the prince of God.

The wicked have continually boasted on their own strength – horns are a symbol of strength (verse 10; cf. Rev 17:12). The Messiah will “cut off” their horns, as warned of in verse 4 and verse 5. He will break their strength.

In contrast, what happens to the horns of the righteous: they “will be lifted up”. The strength of the righteous is not his own, but he derives his strength from the strong God. He is his strength. He lifts up his horns as a heave offering in order to offer it to God. By doing so, he indicates that he owes his strength to Him alone.

The LORD will also use the righteous, that is, the faithful remnant, that is, give them strength to defeat the enemy (cf. Zec 12:6; cf. Jos 10:24; Rom 16:20).

Psalm 76

Introduction

This psalm is about God breaking the power of the enemy. It is about the breaking of the power of Assyria or the king of the North, by the appearance of the LORD, that is the Lord Jesus. The presence of the Lord Jesus in the city of the great King (Mt 5:35) is the response of God to the power of the enemy. From that time on Jerusalem is given the name Yahweh *Shammah*, which means ‘the LORD is there’ (Eze 48:35).

To what historical event the psalm refers is not given. The defeat of the Assyrians does give an impression of what is represented in the psalm (2Kgs 19:32-35; Isa 37:36). This impression is supported by the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In the title of this psalm, the Septuagint mentions “on the Assyrians”. In any case, God will rescue His people in the future from the encirclement of hostile nations by breaking the power of those nations.

Psa 76:1-4 | God Is Known in Judah

*1 For the choir director; on stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph, a Song.
God is known in Judah;*

His name is great in Israel.

2 His tabernacle is in Salem;

His dwelling place also is in Zion.

3 There He broke the flaming arrows,

The shield and the sword and the weapons of war. Selah.

4 You are resplendent,

More majestic than the mountains of prey.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “on stringed instruments” see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of Asaph” see at Psalm 50:1.

This psalm is also “a Song”, meaning it is a song of praise.

By the extermination of the enemies of His people – that is, Judah, the two tribes, and Israel, the ten tribes, that is, all twelve tribes (cf. Eze 37:15-16) – God has made Himself known “in Judah” (verse 1b). Now He is not known there yet, He is not known, but rejected. This will change as soon as the Son of God, the Messiah, returns to Judah.

By His action in judgment against the heathen kings, “His Name is great in Israel”. He is coming for all Israel, which will consist of the righteous (Isa 60:21), for the apostates have been judged by Him. It is the day of His power, the day when His people will be a willing people (Psa 110:3).

“In Salem”, that is in Jerusalem (Gen 14:18; Heb 7:1-2), is “His tabernacle” [literally: shelter] (verse 2). Calling Jerusalem by its shortened name emphasizes its meaning. Salem means ‘peace’. He makes sure that His people can dwell in peace. The name Salem emphasizes that Christ is now truly King of peace (Heb 7:2). Now that the Prince of peace reigns, there is truly peace on earth.

And He dwells with His people in “His tabernacle”, or His shelter, indicating that He protects them with His presence (cf. Psa 27:5). The psalmist adds that “His dwelling place”, that is, His temple, is “in Zion”. Zion is the part of Jerusalem where God’s dwelling place stands. The relationship with the people of Israel is now restored. Jerusalem is now called Yahweh *Shammah*, which means ‘the LORD is there’ (Eze 48:35) and the temple has been rebuilt. The realm of peace can begin.

There, at Jerusalem, where He dwells, He has broken “the flaming arrows” (verse 3). He has also rendered useless the other weapons of attack, “the shield” and “the sword”. God has deprived the enemy of his effectiveness. Thus He has put an end to “war”. The ending of the war is not due to skillful defending by the defenders of the city, but due to God’s action. The LORD is back in Jerusalem, the war is over (Isa 2:4b).

As a result, the long despised LORD is now “resplendent, more majestic than the mountains of prey” (verse 4). ‘The mountains of prey’ – mountains represent mighty kingdoms – are a symbol of mighty rulers bent on robbery (cf. Eze 38:12-13). ‘Mountains of prey’ is difficult to translate. We can think of powerful rulers, such as the king of the North. We can also

think of the rapacious Assyrians who were killed by the angel of the LORD on the mountains around Jerusalem.

Opposite the mountains of prey, Mount Zion radiates light by which it shines. This radiance of light is the result of the presence of God Who is light. God dwells there. That is why this mountain is more powerful than all earthly predatory powers. We can also think of the great mountain that will fill the whole earth (Dan 2:35), a kingdom that will not perish in eternity (Dan 2:44).

Psa 76:5-10 | God's Majesty and Power

*5 The stouthearted were plundered,
They sank into sleep;
And none of the warriors could use his hands.
6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.
7 You, even You, are to be feared;
And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?
8 You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared and was still
9 When God arose to judgment,
To save all the humble of the earth. Selah.
10 For the wrath of man shall praise You;
With a remnant of wrath You will gird Yourself.*

When Messiah comes, He will rob the “stouthearted” of their weapons (verse 5). Their stoutheartedness doesn’t mean anything. He will rob them while “they sank into sleep”, that is, in the night (cf. Psa 121:4). They think they can gain an easy victory, but then are caught unawares. Together with their weapons, the strength in their hands is also gone.

“None of the warriors” is yet able to fight. In the past, of the Assyrians 185,000 men were slain by the Angel of the LORD in one night (2Kgs 19:35). In the future, Assyria, the king of the North, will suffer the same fate.

The punishment inflicted upon them comes from the “God of Jacob” (verse 6). Judah and Israel have no strength to defend themselves. By God’s punishment, the enemy’s entire military strength is eliminated forever (cf. Exo

14:23-28). The “dead sleep” is the sleep of death, the sleep that ends in death (cf. Jdg 4:21). No more threat emanates from them. They need have no more fear of the enemy.

The only One Who inspires awe is God (verse 7). To emphasize this the sentence begins with an emphatic “You, even You”. How awesome He has shown Himself in eliminating the enemy. This automatically raises the question: “Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?” (cf. Heb 12:29; 10:27-31). There is only one conceivable answer to this question: no one.

In the presence of Him Who has made His judgment heard from heaven, the earth is in fear, and it becomes still (verse 8). This means that the LORD will come, not only as a formidable Warrior, but also as the Judge Who will judge everyone. He is the One Who can say: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt 28:18).

That He makes His judgment heard “from heaven” emphasizes His exaltation above all else. From His throne in heaven He governs the universe. On earth everything and everyone is hushed up at the hearing of His voice. No one dares to stir his tongue anymore. “Every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God” (Rom 3:19b; cf. Mt 22:12b).

God has not only made His voice heard from heaven, but He has also risen “in judgment to save all the humble of the earth” (verse 9). The meek, or humble, are all those who belong to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. From Him they have learned to be meek, or gentle (Mt 11:29). They are being redeemed to receive the promise He pronounced in the ‘beatitudes’: they, the humble, or gentle, shall inherit the earth (Mt 5:5).

All the actions and feelings of all men are under God’s control and contribute to His glorification, often against their will. Thus, even “the wrath of men shall praise” Him (verse 10). The clearest evidence of this is the greatest sin ever committed by man. He crucified the Son of God in blind anger, while God used this sin to fulfill His counsel to the praise of His glory (Acts 2:23; Eph 1:7-12).

The “remnant of wrath”, all the anger that man still expresses under the inspiration of satan against His own, He will use for this purpose as well. For He will restrain that anger. He defines the limit of it. In this He reveals

His power. Everything in which He reveals Himself, means His glorification. Prophetically, it points to God's restraint of Assyria when it has done what God wanted. The end is the destruction of Assyria.

Psa 76:11-12 | God Is Feared by the Kings

*11 Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill [them];
Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.
12 He will cut off the spirit of princes;
He is feared by the kings of the earth.*

Deliverance has been accomplished. Now it is a matter of fulfilling the vows made in the distress "to the LORD your God" (verse 11a). This refers to the votive offering, a form of the peace offering (Lev 7:16). That is what the remnant is reminded of here.

The LORD is now their God. Like Elijah, whose name means 'the LORD is my God', the faithful remnant through the service of Elijah, the service of the *maskilim*, can now say 'the LORD is my God'. They are addressed here as "all who are around Him". They live around Him, He is in their midst. That makes the fulfillment of their vows all the more desirable.

Next, the surrounding peoples are also addressed (verse 11b). They are told to "bring gifts to Him who is to be feared". They will be wise to acknowledge Him in His supremacy which He has proved in the judgment on His enemies. They can express their fear of Him, which includes the acknowledgment of His authority, by bringing Him gifts.

The spirit or breath of the princes of the surrounding nations is in His hand (verse 12; Dan 5:23b). We see these princes in the two beasts of Revelation 13 – the beast coming out of the sea, which is the leader of the then restored Roman Empire, and the beast coming out of the earth, which is the anti-christ –, in the king of the North, and in Gog and Magog.

God cuts off their spirit, i.e. their breath, with the ease with which one 'cuts off grapes' to throw them into the wine press to be trampled on (Psa 2:1-6; cf. Rev 14:18-20). "The kings of the earth" fear Him, for He is "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev 1:5). To Him all kings must give an account. When the time of their sentencing comes, they will rightly fear Him.

Psalm 77

Introduction

This psalm is a retrospective look at the past, at the wrestling of the faithful remnant (verse 5). The people have been redeemed and are in the process (verses 4-10) of putting events in order (verses 11-13) with the result that they are magnifying God with great amazement (verses 14-20).

Psa 77:1-3 | Cry Aloud and Despair

1 For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.

My voice [rises] to God, and I will cry aloud;

My voice [rises] to God, and He will hear me.

2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;

In the night my hand was stretched out without weariness;

My soul refused to be comforted.

3 [When] I remember God, then I am disturbed;

[When] I sigh, then my spirit grows faint. Selah.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

The name “Jeduthun” is also found in the heading of Psalm 39 and Psalm 62 (Psa 39:1; Psa 62:1). See further at Psalm 39:1 and Psalm 62:1.

For “a Psalm of Asaph” see at Psalm 50:1.

Asaph, and in him the faithful remnant, begins this psalm by rising his voice to God (verse 1b). He cries aloud to Him. He lets his voice be heard in the certainty that God will hear him. The fact that he says this twice indicates the seriousness and depth of his need. At the same time he expresses the certainty that God will hear him. He trusts that his prayer will be heard by God.

Crying aloud to God with the voice is more than just wishing for something from Him. It is the expression of weakness and dependence on Him and the desire to resort to Him. Whoever does this proves that he has an

upright heart. It is not a need that he can keep to himself, but a deep need to which he must give audible expression to everyone.

After his expression of confidence (verse 1b) the path follows which the psalmist has gone to arrive at this confidence. He begins by saying that he has sought "the Lord", Adonai, "in the day of my trouble" (verse 2). This corresponds to the situation in Psalm 74. Prophetically, it is the time of the great tribulation caused by the antichrist and followed by the disciplinary rod of God, Assyria, which destroyed Israel and the temple.

He has been in great trouble. That he has sought the Lord is a good thing. The only question is with what mind of his heart he has sought. The sequel shows that he had profound doubts about God's involvement in his situation, and that this resulted in a deep crisis in his life of faith. It speaks of a time when the faith of the remnant is purified (cf. Mal 3:2-3).

Not only during the day did he stretch out his hand to God as a sign of helplessness asking for His help. He continued with it during the night. No slackening occurred. He continued to cry out for help. And it did not come. Therefore his "soul refused to be comforted". It means that he was not able to accept the situation.

The Hebrew word for comfort means to sigh deeply, in this case of relief. It was impossible for him to feel relief. He continued to wrestle day and night in prayer. A person who refuses comfort is deeply discouraged and severely disappointed in God. He sees no way out. Life has become dark and meaningless. All words of comfort are rejected by a heart that feels rejected by God.

He did think of God, but instead of the thought of God comforting him, he was disturbed (verse 3). It has only made his suffering worse. God, in his experience, is not a Helper, but Someone Who does nothing about his misery, Someone Who leaves him to his fate. The psalmist speaks for the remnant when he remembers the time when he wrestled because of the great trouble. He had forgotten what God had done in the past.

He pondered over it, but he could not understand it. On the contrary, he had fallen into a vicious circle, which had caused his spirit to faint. He had fallen into a total depression. People can talk all they want about God and

His goodness. But when God is silent, all the talking of people and all their own thinking only increases the inner pain.

Overwhelmed by the difficulties and problems, disappointed by the fact that God had not yet answered, his soul became exhausted and began to complain. The spirit too became exhausted by the difficulties. Perhaps the memory of past faults came to mind and the question arose: Does God still judge past but confessed transgressions (verse 9)? The thoughts went around in a circle. It was a downward spiral. It got darker and darker and the prospect of a solution disappeared.

Psa 77:4-9 | Has God Forgotten to Be Gracious?

*4 You have held my eyelids [open];
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I have considered the days of old,
The years of long ago.
6 I will remember my song in the night;
I will meditate with my heart,
And my spirit ponders:
7 Will the Lord reject forever?
And will He never be favorable again?
8 Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?
Has [His] promise come to an end forever?
9 Has God forgotten to be gracious,
Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Selah.*

The anguish of the God-fearing has been so great that he has not been able to sleep (verse 4). 'You have done this', he has said to God. It is not an expression of resignation, but more of an accusation. It was also a wrestling with the question: How could God redeem before, while He now rejects us? Therefore, there was disquiet and no trust. Because of his shaken trust in God, his disappointment in Him, his sleeplessness had been further proof that God did not care about him.

Further on he will come to even stronger statements that indicate how much his trust in God had been shaken. He had kept his mouth shut about

it. What should he say about his deep trouble, and to whom? After all, there was no one who understood him.

In reflecting on his circumstances he had gone back in his mind to “the days of old, the years of long ago” (verse 5). This was not to remember how God had helped then. Then his trust in God would have been restored and praise would have risen to Him. That was not the case here. He had not come to God as His refuge in need. It seems that he had been thinking of the past with nostalgia because he had lived in prosperity and happiness.

He has thought of his “song in the night” (verse 6). He remembered the times when he joyfully praised God. But what did the thought of past joys help in seeking a solution to present woes if you don’t end up with God? If we keep digging into the past to deal with problems in the present, we sink deeper and deeper into depression. We must learn to look up and ahead. Then we will see that God, Who was there yesterday, is also there today and will be there tomorrow.

During the night he meditated with his heart on the vexing questions that had brought him to his state of disillusionment. He meditated on those questions with his “heart”. Every stone should be turned over, as it were, to find the answers to his profound questions of life.

These are not theological questions, but experiential questions. They are about the experience of God’s presence in the life of the believer, while that believer doubts this very much because of the incomprehensible misery in which he finds himself. It is the wrestling of the prophet Habakkuk, who had to learn not to look at the circumstances, but to trust in God despite all adversity.

He has asked six questions about God. These questions can be answered in a theologically correct way. But then we do not take the need seriously, and we demonstrate inability to suffer with the suffering. We could even say that a believer who knows Who God is should not ask such questions. Then we are blaming the believer, while God does not. In both cases we show our lack of self-knowledge. Nor is there any realization that only the grace of God has kept us from such circumstances and such questions until now.

The six questions are:

1. "Will the Lord reject forever?" (verse 7a).
2. "And will He never be favorable again?" (verse 7b).
3. "Has His lovingkindness ceased forever?" (verse 8a).
4. "Has [His] promise come to an end forever?" (verse 8b).
5. "Has God forgotten to be gracious,?" (verse 9a).
6. "Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion?" (verse 9b).

The first question of the troubled mind is whether "the Lord rejects forever" (verse 7a). This question corresponds to two similar questions in Psalm 74 (Psa 74:1,10). The question is not so much the rejection itself, but the question is whether God has *definitively* rejected. Is it over and out? Or is there still hope? Has the lovingkindness of God – literally Adonai, His covenant faithfulness (verse 8a) – now ceased?

This question expresses the deep lack of God's nearness. It also indicates that he saw no solution. We can know that God will never reject anyone who has taken refuge in Him. We can remind a desperate believer of this time and again, without accusing him of unbelief. It is about a believer who, for whatever reason, feels rejected by God. He is desperately seeking God, but feels rejected by Him.

The second question, whether the Lord would "never be favorable again" (verse 7b), is directly related to the first. Whoever has the feeling of being 'rejected forever', no longer experiences the favor of God. This is mainly about God's inner Self, what is in His heart. Whoever thinks that God is not any longer interested in him, has lost sight of what is in God's heart.

The cause of this is to float on the miserable feelings he has and the disappointing experiences he has had with God. Then a believer thinks that God is not favorable to him when things are not going well for him. The important thing is that we continue to trust God, even when everything in our lives is going against us. If we think that God is only good to us when things are going well, the thought can quickly arise that God is no longer good to us when things are going badly. The same applies to God's lovingkindness, grace and mercy, about which the psalmist also has his questions.

From doubting God's favor toward the believer follows naturally the question whether "His lovingkindness ceased forever" (verse 8a). That God is well-minded to the believer is evidenced by His lovingkindness. Lovingkindness is a feature of love (1Cor 13:4a). In Psalms it is often said that His lovingkindness is forever (Psa 136:1-26), which refers to the realm of peace.

When everything is dark for the believer, he no longer thinks about that, but wonders if God's lovingkindness – Adonai, that is the faithfulness to the covenant – has ceased forever. This is exactly the opposite of what the covenant is about. This covenant is the basis of the people's existence. If there would be an end to the covenant, it would mean the end of the existence of the people.

The question that connects to this is whether God's "promise" has "come to an end forever" (verse 8b). The psalmist wrestled with the promise of God's statements. Those who make their feelings the standard for their relationship to God also doubt God's promises. There is no trust in the Word of God, which is unchanging for all generations. If we no longer find support in it, we become a plaything for our feelings.

In his fifth question, the desperate believer suggests that perhaps God has "forgotten to be gracious" (verse 9a). This question indicates how far the believer is from a proper view of God. How could God possibly forget to be gracious? That the believer experiences it this way indicates the depth of his depression. If there is no gracious God, the believer is doomed to die in darkness and hopelessness.

His final question is whether God has "in anger withdrawn His compassion" (verse 9b). Here He sees God as an angry God. But God is compassionate. Compassion means being moved by the suffering of another. However, God cannot show this because His anger is predominant.

Here the believer has reached the lowest point of his depression. He imagines that God is angry toward him and therefore cannot show him compassion. It sounds logical, but it is human logic. We cannot have two opposing feelings at the same time, but God can be angry and compassionate at the same time (cf. Hab 3:2c).

Psa 77:10-13 | God's Way Is In the Sanctuary

*10 Then I said, "It is my grief,
That the right hand of the Most High has changed."
11 I shall remember the deeds of the LORD;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.
12 I will meditate on all Your work
And muse on Your deeds.
13 Your way, O God, is holy;
What god is great like our God?*

In verse 10 comes the turning point. The God-fearing has been so preoccupied with his affliction and problems that he has lost faith in the goodness and grace of God. This changed the moment he saw what the real problem was: that he only had an eye for himself and his circumstances. Look how often the psalmist uses the words 'I' and 'me' in this psalm. By doing so he had lost sight of God.

When he became aware of this, his view of his situation changed completely. Then he discovers the cause, what is his "grieve", that is what wounds him inwardly, namely the thought "that the right hand of the Most High has changed". That He is the Most High means that He is above everything and everyone.

Asaph thus acknowledges that the problem does not lie with God, but with himself, with his understanding of God's actions. God's right hand speaks of His powerful actions by which His power becomes visible. God has done this in the past to redeem His people. Apparently, so he thought then, God does not do that anymore.

Asaph thought that God is a changeable God. Indeed, God does not always act in the same way. His actions with us cannot always be traced and understood by us. However, He always acts with the same goal: He wants to have us closer to Himself, to connect us more closely to Himself, that is, that we may experience that closeness more and more.

Once Asaph has discovered that the problem is with himself, thinking about himself is over. From now on he "shall remember the deeds of the LORD" (verse 11). He speaks here about "the LORD", the God of the covenant and the promises, with Whom he has a relationship and Whom he

can trust. The light breaks through in the darkness of his thoughts and feelings.

In the midst of his wrestling of faith, the psalmist decides to turn his thoughts to what God has revealed in the past. For us, it is to focus our thoughts on what God has done in the past, that He “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all” (Rom 8:32). This helps us to remember in the midst of our wrestling of faith “that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28).

God is trustworthy. All His deeds prove it. He wants to think about those deeds. With this he can mean God’s acts of creation, but he will especially think of His acts to redeem His people. He wants to think of His “wonders of old”, such as the redemption of His people from slavery in Egypt.

When the afflicted believer has risen above his distress and focusses on God again, he is able to “meditate on all Your work” and to “muse on Your deeds” (verse 12). His thoughts no longer circle around himself, but go out to God. And thinking about God is thinking about His works. God reveals Himself in His works, which here especially refers to His works in the redemption of His own.

God takes care of His creation. Thereby the value of His own far exceeds the value of creation (Mt 6:26; 10:31; 12:12). The believer can speak of God’s acts of care for him from his birth to his conversion and as long as he lives after that. He has gained an eye for the true character of life, that God governs everything. How He does that, he does not always understand, but he trusts God, that He will govern everything in a way that leads to wonder and worship. He testifies of this to others.

Asaph is at the point where he can say to God: “Your way, O God, is holy” (verse 13a). That God’s way is a holy way, a way that works sanctification of His Name. Literally it is: “Your way is in the sanctuary” (cf. *Psa* 73:17). That means that the ways and actions of God are higher than our ways.

His ways are marked by wisdom, power and majesty. Therefore, this is followed with an exclamation of wonder: “What god is great like our God?” (verse 13b) This section is about the way of God when He delivered Israel from Egypt (verses 13-20). The same cry of wonder is uttered in the song of Moses (*Exo* 15:11).

It's God's way. That is the best way. We may think differently about it if that way sometimes leads us into difficulties. When we come to the point that we agree with God's way as the best way for us, there will be peace in our hearts.

We then ask the question in amazement: "What god is great like our God?" He governs everything in His holy sanctuary. No one can be compared to Him, not in His power and not in His government. Any attempt at comparison with anything or anyone is in fact folly. There is no other living God. God is infinitely superior to the dead idols from whom men expect their help and who are worshiped by them.

Psa 77:14-20 | God's Way Was In the Sea

*14 You are the God who works wonders;
You have made known Your strength among the peoples.
15 You have by Your power redeemed Your people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.
16 The waters saw You, O God;
The waters saw You, they were in anguish;
The deeps also trembled.
17 The clouds poured out water;
The skies gave forth a sound;
Your arrows flashed here and there.
18 The sound of Your thunder was in the whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook.
19 Your way was in the sea
And Your paths in the mighty waters,
And Your footprints may not be known.
20 You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

God is "the God who works wonders" (verse 14). This refers to the wonders that are made known among the nations, in this case the wonders by which Israel was delivered from Egypt (verses 15-19). We also find this in the song of Moses (Exo 15:14-16).

God does things that work amazement. They are things that man cannot do and cannot understand. His wonders show of what He is capable. This can only be seen in retrospect, when He has done a wonder. We see it in creation, in His government of the world, and especially in the redemption of His own. He keeps all things alive, He, "who is the Savior [i.e. Maintainer] of all men, especially of believers" (1Tim 4:10b).

Well, in the deliverance of His people God made known His "strength among the peoples". The peoples have heard of it (Jos 2:9-10). God will make His strength known again in the future, when Christ will deliver His people from the power of their enemies by judging those enemies.

Asaph speaks to God about the redemption of His people (verse 15). He now looks back to the past as God wants the believer to look back to it. Then he remembers again that God redeemed His people by His strong arm – that is Christ (Exo 6:5b; 15:16). The believer, and we too, may say this to Him with a thankful heart. It is also an encouragement for the hopeless situation in which we may find ourselves.

The people of God are here called "the sons of Jacob and Joseph". This is the only time in the Bible that God's people are so called. The reason is that it is prophetically emphasized here that at its fulfillment in the future, not only Judah but also the ten tribes will be redeemed (Eze 37:15-22). Jacob is the patriarch from whom the twelve tribes originated. Joseph is mentioned because he is the most excellent among the twelve brothers. He is also the man through whom God sustained His people and who reigned in Egypt.

In verses 16-18, Asaph describes in an impressive and poetic way how God has paved the way of His people to deliverance. He speaks of "the waters" as hostile persons who wanted to block the way of God's people to deliverance. But then they saw their Creator and "were in anguish" (verse 16; cf. Hab 3:10). "The deeps also" responded to the power of their Creator: they "also trembled". Asaph says twice that the waters saw God.

The 'waters' are also a picture of the nations (Isa 17:12-13). With 'the deep waters' we can think of demonic powers that stir up the nations in their hatred of God's people. Of the demons we read, as of the deep waters here, that they 'shudder' before God (Jam 2:19). Satan and his demons can only dispose of the elements of nature as far as God allows. We see this in Job

(Job 1:12,19). The supreme authority always rests with God or Christ, Who is God (Mk 4:39).

God's appearance and its effect on the waters is followed by His performance (verses 17-18). He rules the waters on earth and in the clouds. The clouds release the water at His command and pour it out on the earth. This is accompanied by a noise from heaven, or the sound of God's thunder. Thereby God's arrows, that is lightning, "flashed here and there" and illuminate the world. Underneath them the earth trembles and shakes. The entire creation, waters and earth, will tremble and shake when God appears in majesty on behalf of His people. This happens when the Lord Jesus appears to redeem His people.

After the imposing performance of God, His people have been brought into the rest. The great distress and trials are behind them. Now they can look back and reflect on the manner God has delivered them. They say to Him: "Your way was in the sea" (verse 19). It's "Your way", it's the way God has gone. He not only mapped out that way for them, but He went before them through the Red Sea. His paths were also "in the mighty waters". They have been in the midst of great waters of distress and affliction. There, too, He has been with them (Isa 43:2a).

We cannot know in advance the way and the path of God for His people, for us. Even when we are on the way, we do not see His footprints, they are not known. Often we do not understand His way. God does not always explain to us why we get into difficulties. Just as there are no footprints at the bottom of the sea, we cannot see the way God is going with us. We may go in confidence that He does know and see the way and where that way ends up: with Him.

On the way He takes us by the hand and leads us. The psalmist reminds us of this in the last verse. The psalm ends with a retrospective glance at the wondrous dealings of God with Israel from the exodus from Egypt to the end of the wilderness journey (verse 20). He, Who led His people as a flock "by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (cf. Gen 48:15), will do so again in the future.

It is one of those amazing facts that He carried and cared for a people of millions through the wilderness for forty years. Never did the people lack

anything. Always there has been water and food, despite all the unbelief and failure of the people. God has remained faithful.

Both Moses and Aaron are mentioned here for the first time in Psalms. Moses is mentioned seven more times and Aaron eight more times after this. "Moses and Aaron" together are a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus as the Apostle (Moses) and High Priest (Aaron) of our confession (Heb 3:1). Moses is a picture of the Lord Jesus as the Teacher of righteousness Who spoke the Word of God to the people. Aaron is a picture of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest Who has compassion on the weaknesses of His people (Heb 4:12-16).

"The hand" of the Lord Jesus indicates that He took His people by the hand with His hand. Thus He has led them and led them safely through the wilderness. This is elaborated and explained in the next psalm, Psalm 78.

The psalmist, and in him the remnant, has come from the despair that controlled him at the beginning of the psalm to hope. In the psalm he has described the feelings he has gone through to get to this point. Likewise, we too may tell our distress and hopelessness and our why-questions to God. To whom can we better tell them than to Him? Then we will experience that He Himself is the answer to those questions and we will come to rest in His faithfulness and love (Rom 8:35-39).

Psalm 78

Introduction

Psalm 78 works out what the last verse of Psalm 77 says: “You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (Psa 77:20). The history of the people of Israel is used as an illustration to teach by learning from the ways of God with His people in the past. The goal is for the faithful remnant of Israel – the *maskilim*, the wise or understanding – to learn lessons from it. The journey of the people of Israel out of Egypt to the promised land is a type or example of the return of the ten tribes to Israel in the future, after the great tribulation (cf. Isa 11:16; 51:9-11; Jer 16:14,15; Eze 20:34-36; Mt 24:31). The history and also the plagues in this psalm are not described chronologically, but thematically, in a spiritual order.

Psalms 73-77 asked questions about the incomprehensible way God is going with His people Israel. Psalm 78 answers them. The psalmist-prophet Asaph shows from history both the unfaithfulness of the people and the faithfulness of God as reasons why God has chosen the way He has gone with His people. The history of God’s people reveals their continuing unfaithfulness. God’s response shows His gracious election, through which He still carries out His plans of blessing for them. God loves and protects His people, which includes punishing and disciplining them when they deviate from Him.

The purpose of the psalm is to teach us lessons from the past. A mirror is held up to us in the history of God’s earthly people to show us what we are capable of (cf. Jam 1:22-24). This is to warn us not to fall into the same mistakes (1Cor 10:6,11). It is also to show us in this history what God is capable of despite our failures.

A division of the psalm:

Verses 1-4 Core message: call to wisdom.

Verses 5-8 Call to pass on from generation to generation.

Verses 9-16 Rebellion of man in contrast with the caring hand of God.

Verses 17-31 The failure of Israel and the faithfulness of God.

Verses 32-37 Superficial repentance.

Verses 38-64 The judgment on the nations and on Israel.

Verses 65-72 The answer of God: David as the type of the Lord Jesus, the Son of David.

Psa 78:1-4 | Passing On What God Has Done

1 A Maskil of Asaph.

Listen, O my people, to my instruction;

Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable;

I will utter dark sayings of old,

3 Which we have heard and known,

And our fathers have told us.

4 We will not conceal them from their children,

But tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,

And His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.

This is the tenth of a total of thirteen psalms that are “a maskil” (verse 1a), the so-called maskil-psalms (Psalms 32; 42, 44; 45; 52; 53; 54; 55; 74; 78; 88; 89; 142). Maskil-psalms involve teaching or instruction for the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time. See further at Psalm 32:1.

For “of Asaph” see at Psalm 50:1.

Asaph addresses God’s people as “my people” (verse 1b). With this he indicates that he is not outside of them, but part of them. He asks them to “listen” to his “instruction”, for he has important things to tell to them (cf. Deu 4:1; Isa 1:2). It is similar to what Moses did in Deuteronomy 32, where he uses the history of Israel through his song to instruct the people (Deu 32:5-18). Moses, like Asaph, begins with the call to hear “the words of my mouth” (Deu 32:1-2). Moses says this to heaven and earth, to be witnesses. Asaph says it to God’s people.

They shouldn’t just listen, but “incline” their “ears to the words” of his “mouth”. This refers to a mind to listen attentively with a willingness to do what is said.

After the first verse has called for attention, the second verse reflects the desire to make it clear to the listener/reader that the literal sense has a higher or deeper meaning. This can only be understood by those who delve into the psalm. There is a desire in Asaph to serve his people with “a parable” (verse 2; cf. Pro 1:6). The word for “parable” is *mashal*, which means teaching by comparison. It refers to “dark sayings of old” that are brought into light by him to teach a new generation. These hidden things are a rich treasure, which he will utter for them.

The distinctive feature of the *mashal*, the parable, in Psalm 78 is that the psalmist, inspired by the Holy Spirit, uses the ancient history of Israel as a parable to learn lessons from it. In other cases, a fictional story is usually used as a parable, whereas here it is a story that really took place, the history of redemption in the past.

The Lord Jesus fulfills this word of Asaph by using parables. God’s Spirit refers to this verse in Matthew 13 when He says of the Lord Jesus: “All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable. [This was] to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD” (Mt 13:34-35). In Matthew 13, the Lord places “things hidden” into the light in a new way and does so by using parables or comparisons. In this quotation we also see that Asaph is called a “prophet”.

The psalmist-prophet Asaph passes on the history of Israel from God’s perspective. For this he draws on what he has heard from “our fathers” (verse 3). Again he emphasizes his connection with his people, now by speaking of their common fathers, “our fathers”. He and they have heard it and know it. They are aware of it. Their fathers have told “us”, that is him and his contemporaries.

It is an important instruction for parents today to pass on to their children and grandchildren what they have learned from the Word of God in their dealings with God (cf. Exo 12:26-27; 13:14-16). Passing it on makes it great again for the parents. They will continually praise and magnify God for it.

It makes all who have heard it responsible not to hide what they have heard “from their children”, that is, all who belong to God’s people (verse

4). The command is to “tell the generation to come” of God’s deeds. These deeds he calls “the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done”.

It is a joy to pass on all the various acts of God to those who come after us. God is worthy to be believed and praised because of all His deeds. They are truly ‘praiseworthy deeds’ or ‘deeds to be praised’. God reveals His power in those deeds. The wonders He has performed also bring His people to praise Him. Everything in which God reveals Himself, has this effect on those who have an eye for it.

Speaking to our children and grandchildren about this is not always easy in practical terms. What is especially important is that they see with us that faith is not a rational matter for us, but that it permeates our entire life. Our life of faith must be fresh, just like the manna that was freshly laid out each morning. Lambs cannot live on old grass, but on young, fresh grass shoots.

Psa 78:5-8 | Passing On What God Has Said

*5 For He established a testimony in Jacob
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers
That they should teach them to their children,
6 That the generation to come might know, [even] the children [yet] to be born,
[That] they may arise and tell [them] to their children,
7 That they should put their confidence in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments,
8 And not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not prepare its heart
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

God has revealed Himself in His power and in His wonders. He has also revealed Himself in “a testimony” and “a law” which He has given to His people (verse 5). ‘Testimony’ is more directed to the people, to whom God’s law comes, for whom God’s law is intended. By ‘law’ it is more about God, Who has given the law, the authority of the law as coming from Him.

Everything God's people do has its origin in God's Word. Not experience determines our lives, but what God has "established" and "appointed". The testimony is "established in Jacob". This refers to the practice of the people, how the people can be a testimony of God to the nations around them. The law is "appointed ... in Israel". That refers to the position of the people, what the people mean to God, what He has made of them. It follows that they must live in accordance with it in order to be a joy to Him.

These two aspects were commanded by God to "our fathers that they should teach them to their children" (cf. Deu 6:7; 4:9). The children are to learn how to testify of God and live to the glory of God and then pass this on to their children (verse 6). This is only possible by teaching them God's Word.

Passing on God's Word to the next generation is also an important task for us. Timothy, as a spiritual child of Paul, not only receives confirmation that what he has heard from Paul is the truth, but he is also to pass on that truth unchanged himself (2Tim 2:2). This is the ordinary way of passing on the truth.

Paul does not give Timothy any particular authority to preach. That authority is given by the Lord Himself (Mt 28:19; Acts 1:9). Nor does Paul ordain him in any special way. The Bible has no such thing as an official right to preach, something that should only be done by people with theological training. Passing on the truth of God's Word is the responsibility of every believer. This is especially true for parents toward their children and for grandparents toward their grandchildren.

Parents, by their example and teaching, must teach their children to "put their confidence in God" (verse 7; cf. Pro 22:19). What the children hear from parents sometimes sticks with them, sometimes it doesn't; what they see from parents they will remember; what they experience with their parents in the exercise of faith they will understand and take to heart.

Those who put their hope in anything or anyone other than God are asking for misery. We avoid this when we do "not forget the works of God". God's works testify that hoping in Him never disappoints. Directly related to this is to "keep His commandments". Hope or trust in God is justified only for those who listen to Him with the desire to do what He says.

By keeping God and His works and His commandments in mind, the children will be kept from becoming like their fathers (verse 8). Asaph holds up to the children how God judges their fathers: it is “a stubborn and rebellious generation”. The reason is that this generation “did not prepare its heart” and their “spirit was not faithful to God”.

The warning is taken from a clear example. He does not say: ‘That they should not be like the nations, who know not of God’, but: that they should “not be like their fathers”. Malignant domestic examples are far more pernicious than those of strangers. Let us learn from these verses that it is not advisable to follow in the footsteps of the fathers in all things.

If there is no trust in God in heart and spirit, rebellion and disobedience is the result. If the heart is set on God, then idolatry will be put away (1Sam 7:3), including insubordination (1Sam 15:23). The “heart” is the governing body of all life (Pro 4:23). The “spirit” is meant to have fellowship with God. However, the spirit can become preoccupied with many things other than God, become unfaithful, and become defiled (2Cor 7:1). Therefore, God’s people must be on guard with their spirit, which the prophet Malachi says twice and therefore emphatically (Mal 2:15-16).

Psa 78:9-11 | Disobedient and Forgetful

*9 The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows,
[Yet] they turned back in the day of battle.
10 They did not keep the covenant of God
And refused to walk in His law;
11 They forgot His deeds
And His miracles that He had shown them.*

Despite God’s works and God’s law, “the sons of Ephraim” have departed from God (verse 9). The sons of Ephraim are the ten tribes. Beginning in verse 12, they are associated with all the people of Israel. In other words, Ephraim’s behavior represents the behavior of all the people. When Reuben forfeited the firstborn right because of his behavior, Joseph, Rachel’s firstborn, received that right. Ephraim, the son of Joseph, the superior of Manasseh (Gen 48:17-20), became the leader. When Israel took possession of the land of Canaan, it was under the leadership of Joshua, who was of

the tribe of Ephraim. When the ark of the covenant was given a resting place in the land, it was at Shiloh, which was in Ephraim.

Ephraim was the most privileged tribe, but he failed time and again. The sons of Ephraim were “archers equipped with bows”, but at the time when they should have used their weapons and skill, that is, “in the day of battle”, they had turned back and fled. It is not known which event is involved here. Nor is it important. What is important is that the interests of God were not on their mind. They placed more value on their own lives than they on working for God and His people.

Their cowardly attitude in the day of battle was the result of a wrong mind of the heart. This was evident from the fact that they had not kept the covenant of God. This is evident from the accusation brought against them, that they “did not keep the covenant of God” (verse 10). When we do not keep something, it means that we become vulnerable to wrong choices or open ourselves up to calamity. ‘Not to keep’ also means ‘not to guard’, which means something can be damaged or taken away.

In addition to the culpable failure to observe God’s covenant, there was the deliberate refusal to “walk in His law”. The “law” here is “the teaching” of God. It is the same word as “maskil” in verse 1. Through teaching one learns to know the words of God and thereby His will.

Thus they had turned their backs on God; they had lost sight of Him and He was not in their heart any longer. God was not their hope (verse 7), so they “forgot His deeds and His miracles that He had shown them” (verse 11). In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses regularly holds up to the people what they had seen with their own eyes of God’s deeds and would yet see (Deu 4:3,9,34; 7:19,22; 9:4; 10:21; 11:7,23).

God shows us His deeds and His miracles to confirm His Word and strengthen our faith. However, if there is no personal relationship with Him, His deeds in the past no longer have any effect on us because faith is lacking. Those who forget the miracle of the cleansing of their past sins become blind and shortsighted (2Pet 1:9).

Psa 78:12-16 | God Delivers and Cares

| *12 He wrought wonders before their fathers*

In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

*13 He divided the sea and caused them to pass through,
And He made the waters stand up like a heap.*

*14 Then He led them with the cloud by day
And all the night with a light of fire.*

*15 He split the rocks in the wilderness
And gave [them] abundant drink like the ocean depths.*

*16 He brought forth streams also from the rock
And caused waters to run down like rivers.*

Asaph goes on to quote examples of what God “wrought before [the eyes of] their fathers” in terms of “wonders”. He begins with the wonders “in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan” (verse 12). Zoan or Tanis was the capital of Egypt in the time of Moses. The people of Israel lived in a suburb twenty miles from Zoan known as Avaris. The writer (TJ) visited Avaris and saw a cemetery of male babies. [Those interested can read about this in T. Mahoney’s book *Patterns of evidence*.] Asaph here recalls the wonder of deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. This is the great first wonder, from which all subsequent wonders have sprung.

How clearly God intervened then by means of all the plagues He brought upon Egypt. What to Egypt were plagues, were wonders of God to God’s people (Exo 3:20; 4:21; 7:3; 11:9-10). Zoan is the name of the ancient capital of Egypt, the seat of wisdom (Isa 19:11). But that wisdom failed to stop any of God’s plagues on Egypt.

And how He devoted Himself to them afterwards. When they stood before the Red Sea and could not move, “He divided the sea and caused them to pass through” (verse 13). God *divided* the waters. The word “divide” indicates that God did a powerful act. As a result, there was a wall of water to the left and right of the people (Exo 14:21-22). God rules over all the elements of nature because He made them.

Once in the wilderness He led His people (verse 14). He did this “with the cloud by day” and “all night with a light of fire”. To lead them through the wilderness in this way is a great wonder. The cloud by day was not only a guidance, but also a kind of umbrella to protect against the heat of the sun. The shining fire was not lacking for a moment in the night. It was no

ordinary light, but fire that spread light. This indicates that the God Who led His people in the night did so as a God Who also sees and judges sin in the darkness (Heb 12:29).

As easily as God divided the sea (verse 13), “He split the rocks” (verse 15). This is another wonder. The place of action is “the wilderness”. A wilderness is a barren place where death reigns and where there is a lack of water. God gave His people water from the split rock and “gave [them] abundant drink like the ocean depths”.

Out of the rock He brought forth “streams” and “caused waters to run down like rivers” (verse 16). Everything speaks of a tremendous, unceasing flow of water. That they always had water to drink, they owed to God’s care for them. God was able to give them that care because He was looking forward to the coming of His Son, Jesus Christ.

That is why in 1 Corinthians 10 it is said of this rock from which streams of water came: “And the rock was Christ” (1Cor 10:4). Christ is the source and foundation of blessing. Every blessing that God has ever bestowed and ever will bestow upon His people, He bestows only because Christ is the people’s Redeemer. He became that because, like the rock, He was smitten. He was smitten by God for the sins of His people (Isa 53:10; Zec 13:7).

For us, who live in the time after Christ’s coming and ascension, it is no different. We too owe every blessing to Christ and the work He accomplished. The water in abundance speaks of His Spirit, which He gives without measure to those who believe (Jn 7:38-39; 3:34). The water also speaks of His Word, in which all blessings are displayed for us (Eph 5:26). It is the water of the Word that becomes alive by the working of the Holy Spirit. Living water in Hebrew is water that has been flowing.

At the Feast of Booths, a priest with a golden pitcher scooped water from the well of Siloam each day of the seven days of the feast. With loud cheering (Isa 12:3), the water was poured out by the high priest into a silver basin next to the bronze altar of burnt offering, as a reminder of the water from the rock in the wilderness. On the eighth day of the feast the Lord Jesus indicated that He was the fulfillment of this prophetic shadowing (Jn 7:37-39).

Psa 78:17-22 | The People Put God to the Test

17 *Yet they still continued to sin against Him,
 To rebel against the Most High in the desert.*
 18 *And in their heart they put God to the test
 By asking food according to their desire.*
 19 *Then they spoke against God;
 They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?
 20 "Behold, He struck the rock so that waters gushed out,
 And streams were overflowing;
 Can He give bread also?
 Will He provide meat for His people?"*
 21 *Therefore the LORD heard and was full of wrath;
 And a fire was kindled against Jacob
 And anger also mounted against Israel,*
 22 *Because they did not believe in God
 And did not trust in His salvation.*

The word "yet" (verse 17) indicates the contrast with the foregoing. God had abundantly proved His might and His provision. "Yet" it had no beneficial effect on the unfaithfulness of God's people. It is a dramatic observation: "They still continued to sin against Him" (cf. Num 21:4-7) and that, even though God had done so much good for them. This shows great ingratitude.

They rebelled "against the Most High in the desert". It was not only ingratitude, but great insolence and audacity. They were in the desert, totally dependent on Him. Instead of humbling themselves before Him they were presumptuous against "the Most High". By calling God so, Asaph shows the enormous contrast between man and God.

"In their heart" they "put" the Most High God "to the test" (verse 18). They wanted Him to prove that He really cared for them. Then they would believe in Him and obey Him. He had to provide them with "food according to their desire". After all the evidence God had given of His faithful care, this was not weakness, but rebellion.

They had grown to dislike the manna and wanted food according to their own tastes (Num 11:5). In picture it means that they disliked Christ and

were longing for the food of the world. The manna is a picture of Christ (Jn 6:30-33). When He no longer fills the heart, it is the beginning of decline in spiritual life.

The people “spoke against God” (verse 19). They spoke from a rebellious, unbelieving heart. God did “prepare a table in the wilderness” for them all along the wilderness journey. And then they boldly asked if God could “prepare a table in the wilderness”! This is not doubting God, but denying God. This showed the hardness (cf. Mk 6:51-52) and apostasy of their hearts.

With respect to the wonder of the abundance of water He had given to them from the rock, we see the same thing. They knew it: “He struck the rock so that waters gushed out, and streams were overflowing” (verse 20). Did that wonder and abundant provision have any effect on their trust in God? Not at all (cf. Jn 2:23-25). On the contrary, they wondered if He could also give bread and provide meat for His people. Instead of trusting God after the redemption and care He showed, they challenged Him to show His power again.

The people’s reaction to past wonders shows that those wonders do not guarantee trust in God when new difficulties come. It is good that we remember wonders. That memory only has a beneficial effect on our faith if we believe and trust Him today in new difficulties.

Relying on past experiences is counterproductive if we lack faith in the present difficulties. Experience can strengthen faith, but faith must be present in order to use this experience (cf. 2Pet 1:6). If we are in difficulties and there is faith, then that faith is in God Who did not spare His own Son. This faith is expressed in the firm confidence that with His Son God will also grant us all things (Rom 8:31-32).

The LORD has heard all these haughty challenges to His address (verse 21). The name LORD is not used much in these psalms. That that Name is used here highlights the fact that the sin of the people is a sin against the covenant with the LORD. This deliberate denial of His performance in goodness in the past has aroused His wrath. As if the LORD would not keep His own covenant. It is not possible to be indifferent to this. The

fire of His wrath, “was kindled against Jacob”. Jacob is again the name of God’s people seen in their practice (verse 5).

“His anger also mounted against Israel”. Israel is again (verse 5) the name for God’s people in what they have become through Him. Because they behaved so unworthily of their position, God’s wrath flared up against them (Num 11:1-3). God is slow to anger, but His wrath flares up when there is persistence in sin. He is not mocked (Gal 6:7a). His wrath was manifested by fulfilling their lusts, the fulfillment of which was at the same time a judgment from God on their unbelief (verse 31).

The reason for the flare-up of God’s wrath was that they “did not believe in God” and “did not trust in His salvation” (verse 22). Instead of trusting the LORD because of the redemption and wonder signs He performed, the Israelites used these same wonder signs as an argument to doubt that God had the power to redeem.

Unbelief is a serious sin. From it come all other sins. Not believing in God means rejecting Him as not worth believing in. It is directly related to trusting in Him. They did not trust in His promises to give them His salvation, that is, to bless them with His peace. And this while He had already given them His salvation in the rescue from slavery.

Psa 78:23-31 | Bread, Meat and Gluttony

23 Yet He commanded the clouds above
And opened the doors of heaven;
24 He rained down manna upon them to eat
And gave them food from heaven.
25 Man did eat the bread of angels;
He sent them food in abundance.
26 He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens
And by His power He directed the south wind.
27 When He rained meat upon them like the dust,
Even winged fowl like the sand of the seas,
28 Then He let [them] fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their dwellings.
29 So they ate and were well filled,

*And their desire He gave to them.
30 Before they had satisfied their desire,
While their food was in their mouths,
31 The anger of God rose against them
And killed some of their stoutest ones,
And subdued the choice men of Israel.*

Once again Asaph points out, and now in more detail and more impressively, how God provided His people in the wilderness with everything they needed. In beautiful, poetic language he speaks of how God had commanded “the clouds above” and “opened the doors of heaven” (verse 23). All the elements of nature are under His command. He has brought about the whole creation by the utterance of commands (Psa 33:9). When necessary, He intervenes in the natural course of creation and commands the individual elements to do as He pleases (Jos 10:12-13).

Heaven is the storehouse of food for His people. He opened it and “rained down manna upon them to eat” (verse 24). The fact that God rained manna indicates that He gave His people life, blessed them, and did so in abundance. This manna was no ordinary bread either. Asaph calls it “food from heaven”. The manna was of heavenly origin, it was bread from heaven (Psa 105:40; Exo 16:4; Jn 6:31; cf. 1Cor 10:3). By this the Israelites could know that heaven, that God Himself, cared for them. God wanted them to know that they were dependent on Him.

Of this heavenly food “man” ate, that is, all the people (verse 25). There was no lack, for God gave “in abundance”. He never gives meagerly; He does not ‘tip’. When He gives, it is always according to the riches of His grace. When God gives, the believer will always find that His cup will overflow (Psa 23:5b).

The heavenly wheat is called “the bread of angels” and “food”, or “provision”. ‘Bread of angels’ means that this food was given by them to God’s people. ‘Provision’ emphasizes that it was food eaten during a journey. It is a main part of the meal, not a side dish.

The wind is also under His command (verse 26). He makes use of it when He wills and determines from which side the wind must come. To give His people meat, He did not, as with the manna, open the doors of heaven. He

used the wind. Here He caused “the east wind to blow in the heavens” and He directed “by His power ... the south wind”.

As He did with the manna, “He rained meat upon them” (verse 27). He made meat rain down on them “like dust”. He sent “winged fowl like the sand of the seas”, that is, in such an immense quantity that they could eat themselves to death (Num 11:33). He also determined where the meat in the camp, which Asaph calls “their [literally His] camp”, ended up (verse 28). It fell “in the midst of His camp” and “around His dwellings”. God dwelt with His people.

The thought of His presence among them should have deterred them from following their lusts. There was no question of that, however. It also fell “around His dwellings”, that is, the tabernacle with its various rooms. When He dropped it there, would the people then come to their senses?

But there was no thought of God with them. When they had received what they had desired, they attacked the food and “were filled” (verse 29). There was no thanks to God. With their stomachs full, they looked with covetous eyes at the stock of meat that was still there. Their stomachs were full, but still they were not satisfied, that is, their desire, their lust, was not satisfied (verse 30). They continued to insatiably wallow and chew on the last bit of meat they had been able to stuff into their mouths and had not yet swallowed.

While their food was in their mouths, “the anger of God rose against them” (verse 31; Num 11:33). Sometimes God waits a long time to express His anger. When He admonishes us to be “slow to anger” (Jam 1:19), He is admonishing us to show a feature of Himself. Here God was quick to show His anger because it was a sin of apostasy that revealed a long-standing aversion to His people.

God Himself judged. His death sentence struck “some of their stoutest ones”. The “stoutest ones” are those who have indulged themselves the most, the most voracious. Another category affected by His judgment included “the choice men of Israel”, the most prominent, the most influential, the strongest and most responsible. Literally it says “the young men of Israel”. This is reminiscent of the admonition we receive to “flee from youthful lusts” (2Tim 2:22).

Psa 78:32-39 | Judgment, Compassion, Forgiveness

*32 In spite of all this they still sinned
And did not believe in His wonderful works.
33 So He brought their days to an end in futility
And their years in sudden terror.
34 When He killed them, then they sought Him,
And returned and searched diligently for God;
35 And they remembered that God was their rock,
And the Most High God their Redeemer.
36 But they deceived Him with their mouth
And lied to Him with their tongue.
37 For their heart was not steadfast toward Him,
Nor were they faithful in His covenant.
38 But He, being compassionate, forgave [their] iniquity and did not destroy
[them];
And often He restrained His anger
And did not arouse all His wrath.
39 Thus He remembered that they were but flesh,
A wind that passes and does not return.*

“In spite of all this”, that is, in spite of all His favors and in spite of His chastisements and in spite of His wonders, “they still sinned” (verse 32; cf. Rev 16:8-11). God left no stone unturned to keep His people faithful to Him, or to bring them back to faithfulness to Him. There was a hardened heart with them that “did not believe in His wonderful works” (cf. Jn 12:37; Mk 8:16-21). The greatest wonders are of no avail if the will to believe is lacking.

As a result of their unbelief, “so”, for that reason, “He brought their days to an end in futility and their years in sudden terror” (verse 33). A life without involving God is “futile”, vanity, empty and meaningless. There is nothing of lasting value. That’s what life has been like for most of God’s people in the wilderness. When God is driven out of life, it is empty. That emptiness is filled with terror, with fear. This is a judgment of God.

This severe dealing with them, even “killing” them, had the effect of causing them to return and earnestly seek God (verse 34). This is always the

purpose of any disciplinary action God brings upon His people. Discipline is an expression of His love and interest for them (Heb 12:5-11). He wanted to bless them, which could only happen if they lived in obedience to Him. When they deviated, He disciplined them so that they would return to Him and seek Him.

Through the discipline “they remembered that God was their rock” (verse 35; cf. Deu 32:4,15,31; Jdg 3:15; 4:3). They remembered that God was their only security and protection. They had forgotten that in following their own lusts. Through God’s discipline they were reminded of that again. It was not a vague reminder of God, but He was again great before their attention. He is the almighty “God”. He is “the Most High God”, the God Who is above all things and oversees all things. He was “their Redeemer”, Who had delivered them from Egypt.

Their confession, however, was no more than a lip confession (verse 36). Their return to God was hypocrisy (cf. Jn 6:26). Asaph is clear about this: they flattered God and lied to Him. With their mouth and their tongue they said all sorts of things they did not mean. They promised all kinds of things that they did not keep. They used flattery and lies to manipulate God. As if they could deceive God. All they cared about was being released from His discipline.

Their lip confession came from a heart that was “not steadfast toward Him” (verse 37). They were saying with their mouths something very different from what was in their heart. They had no desire to be with Him and do His will. They were also “not faithful in His covenant”. He had entered into a covenant relationship with them. That was about faithfulness. He was faithful, but they were unfaithful and had followed other gods in their heart.

In spite of what God’s people had done, all of this aversion and unfaithfulness is followed by a Divine “but” (verse 38). Instead of judging His reluctant people, “He, being compassionate, forgave [their] iniquity”. His compassion consisted in forgiving [literally: covered over, atoned for] their iniquity. God is merciful, but He is also holy. Therefore, He must have a righteous basis for sparing His people. He has found this in the work of His Son on the cross of Calvary. There He atoned the iniquity.

By virtue of compassion and atonement, God did not destroy His people, but “often He restrained His anger”. God did not turn away His anger just once and did spare them, but He did so repeatedly. The people repeatedly provoked Him to anger in the wilderness, and just as repeatedly God did not pour out His full anger on them, but was compassionate. This is also how He still deals with us today.

God was able to act in this way because He foresaw the work of His Son (Rom 3:25). He did not turn His anger away from His Son, but brought it upon Him. Against His people He “did not arouse all His wrath”. He did arouse His full wrath against His Son in the hours when He was made sin by Him.

A proof of His compassion is that “He remembered that they were but flesh” (verse 39; cf. Psa 103:14; Mt 26:41). This mercy did not alleviate the guilt of His people, but shows a God Who knew His people through and through. His people thought they were strong and did not need God. This high opinion of themselves proves how fragile they were. In their pride they were blind to the fact that they were no more than “a wind that passes and does not return” (cf. Isa 2:22).

Psa 78:40-51 | God’s Strength in Salvation

*40 How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness
And grieved Him in the desert!*
*41 Again and again they tempted God,
And pained the Holy One of Israel.*
*42 They did not remember His power,
The day when He redeemed them from the adversary,*
*43 When He performed His signs in Egypt
And His marvels in the field of Zoan,*
*44 And turned their rivers to blood,
And their streams, they could not drink.*
*45 He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them,
And frogs which destroyed them.*
*46 He gave also their crops to the grasshopper
And the product of their labor to the locust.*
47 He destroyed their vines with hailstones

*And their sycamore trees with frost.
 48 He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones
 And their herds to bolts of lightning.
 49 He sent upon them His burning anger,
 Fury and indignation and trouble,
 A band of destroying angels.
 50 He leveled a path for His anger;
 He did not spare their soul from death,
 But gave over their life to the plague,
 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt,
 The first [issue] of their virility in the tents of Ham.*

Asaph returns to the behavior of the people in the wilderness (verse 40). It is as if rebellion was the hallmark of the entire wilderness journey. They taunted Him by repeatedly criticizing and questioning His love and faithfulness. His compassion (verse 38) was not appreciated.

By their disobedience and rebellion they grieved Him. All the sins of men, and especially of His people, grieve God. His anger rests upon them, and He will let His anger run free if a person persists in his sins. God is not insensitive to sin. Sin strikes Him, the Holy One, deep within His heart and causes pain and sorrow.

They tempted God “again and again”. They never learned. Again and again they kept challenging God to show if He was able to satisfy their lusts. It is like asking the sun to shine, while you are blinded by the light of it.

With all their questioning – all arising from an unbelieving and rebellious heart – they “pained” – or “offended” or “provoked” – “the Holy One of Israel”. The limitation lay in the fact that, in spite of His proven redeeming power (verse 42), they considered Him incapable of satisfying their lusts. If they did consider Him capable, they would trust Him. He had abundantly proved that He could be trusted and was capable of everything. To force Him then to prove Himself demonstrated that to them God was a narrow, limited God Who was not capable to give them what they wanted.

It is a most audacious attitude, for they had to do with none other than “the Holy One of Israel”. He, the Holy One of Israel, Who was their King

(Psa 89:18) and worthy of praise (Psa 71:22). This Name of God is characteristic of the book of Isaiah. It is an indication of the fact that He is unique, comparable to no one.

The fact that they did not see this did not change the gravity of their rebellion. They stood up against Him Who is “the Holy One”. The LORD has sanctified Himself on behalf of His own, that is Israel, and so are we. In His holiness He had bound “Israel” to Himself. This meant that they were sanctified by His presence among them and that they also had to behave in a holy manner in order to experience the blessing of His presence among them. He said to His people then and says to His people now: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 20:7; 1Pet 1:16).

Men also limited the Lord Jesus in His power when He hung on the cross. In their audacity and unbelief they said to Him: ‘If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross and we will believe’ (Mt 27:39-44). The same challenging language is still used today. You hear it in remarks like: ‘If God is love, let Him do something about the misery in the world.’

All their wrong thoughts about God came from no longer remembering “His power” (verse 42). God so often proved His power in favor of them. Asaph takes the people back to “the day when He redeemed them from the adversary” (cf. Exo 13:3). How often we too forget the great grace and power of God through which we have been delivered from the power of sin. This forgetfulness leads us to become unfaithful to God when we get into difficulties. Then we begin to doubt His power. If we do not repent soon, we become rebellious and accuse Him of being powerless to help us.

Asaph then describes in detail the power that God displayed on the day of their redemption. He points to God performing “His signs in Egypt and His marvels in the field of Zoan” (verse 43; cf. verse 12). God performed His signs in order to point His people to the purpose of redemption. That purpose was that He wanted to dwell with them, to celebrate with them and have fellowship with them (Exo 5:1). God performed His wonders to encourage His people to entrust themselves to Him. His wonders show His power that He used in their favor against their oppressors. They denied and defied that power by their rebellious, unbelieving attitude against Him.

As the first of God's signs and wonders, Asaph recalls that God "turned their rivers to blood, and their streams, they could not drink" (verse 44; Exo 7:19-21). This is the first plague God brought upon Egypt. Water speaks of that which refreshes and gives life. Blood shed speaks of death. Life in the world of sin does not give life, but death. That was what God's people returned to by turning away from God.

The second sign and wonder mentioned by Asaph is the "swarms of flies which devoured them" (verse 45; Exo 8:24). This is the fourth plague that God brought upon Egypt, in which Goshen, and thus His people, were spared (Exo 8:22-23). The flies, possibly a mixture of all kinds of vermin, carried all kinds of diseases. As a result, the lives of the people were ruined.

As an application for our time we can think of all kinds of irritations, jealousy, bullying, bothering each other in all possible ways. These things spoil the atmosphere between people and can make life unbearable. Loud music at the neighbors, misbehavior in traffic, challenging behavior in the store and so many other things that can make you feel bad. We are reminded by Asaph that the flies will also do their work with us if we turn our backs on God. The flies are like "the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards" (Song 2:15).

The third sign and wonder are the "frogs which destroyed them" (Exo 8:5-6). This is the second plague that God brought upon Egypt. Frogs are a picture of unclean spirits, especially sexual uncleanness (Rev 16:13-15). This plague sweeps over the world and is also invading the homes of Christians. Sometimes unsolicited through advertising flyers through the mailbox, but unfortunately also because people search for it in their homes on the internet. Uncleanness gets into the bedrooms, into the beds. The warning in Hebrews 13 is important and significant in this context (Heb 13:4).

The frogs came in the kneading bowls, which indicates that it was mixed with the food. The effect of the taking in, 'eating', through the mass media of uncleanness will not fail. Gay marriages and their consecration in the church have become practice. Those who are not practicing themselves are justifying it. Love is from God, isn't it?

This uncleanness is the result of not acknowledging God. That is why He gives a plague like this. The application for our days is clear (Rom 1:24-28). Man who disregards God brings this plague upon himself. Man who does not acknowledge God dishonors himself. The lusts he seeks to satisfy spring from his abandonment of God. Return to Him is the only means that helps to drive out the plague.

The fourth sign and wonder are “the grasshopper” to which God gave “their crop”, and “the locust” to which God gave “the product of their labor” (verse 46; Exo 10:12-15). This is the eighth plague that God brought upon Egypt. Because of an east wind, an unprecedented amount of locusts were brought upon Egypt. It was the army of the LORD (Joel 2:11,25). Everything that had not already been destroyed by previous judgments was eaten off. In all of Egypt there was not a green leaf left. The forsaking of God put an end to all prosperity.

The fifth sign and wonder are “the hailstones” (verse 47; Exo 9:22-25). This is the seventh plague that God brought upon Egypt. God sent down from “the storehouse of the hail” the hail which He kept therein “for a day of war and battle” (Job 38:22-23). That day had arrived for Egypt.

The grape plants of the middle east, and even more so the wild fig trees, are sensitive to the cold. By hailstones “He destroyed their vines”. The wine is a picture of joy. God put an end to all earthly joy for those who sought joy without Him. By frost He destroyed “their sycamore trees”. The sycamore tree is a fig tree. The fig tree represent righteousness. The righteousness of the world does not last, but perishes through God’s judgments.

The hail struck not only the fruit of the land, but also the animals (verse 48). Their herds He gave over “to bolts of lightning” that accompanied the hail (Exo 9:24). The world will be ravaged by many judgments, including that of a great hail (Rev 16:21). The members of God’s people will escape these only if they take refuge with God (cf. Isa 32:2).

In all of these plagues, God “sent upon them His burning anger, fury and indignation and trouble” (verse 49). The combination of these words shows how filled with anger God had become by the rebellion and unruly nature of His people. He used “a band of destroying angels” to execute His

burning anger. They brought the disasters upon Egypt at His command (cf. Exo 12:23; Heb 11:28; Rev 9:13-16).

Asaph mentions a sixth sign and wonder: the pestilence on the livestock (verse 50; Exo 9:5-6). Asaph says of this sign that God thereby “leveled a path for His anger”. He no longer withheld His wrath, but gave it free rein. A sudden outbreak of pestilence was proof that God was at work. With it He struck the Egyptians in the means of their livelihood. “He did not spare their soul from death.”

The last sign and wonder mentioned by Asaph is the death of “all the first-born in Egypt, the first [issue] of their virility in the tents of Ham” (verse 51; Psa 136:10; Exo 4:22-23; 11:4-5; 12:29-30). This is the tenth and final plague in Egypt. Egypt is descended from Ham (Gen 10:6; Psa 105:23). The firstborn is a symbol of strength (Gen 49:3). The eldest son is the deepest pride of the Oriental. According to Eastern custom, the survival of the name, of the family, depends on the eldest son. He represents the strength of the whole family. The first-born son is more precious to him than his possessions and his health.

All the hope of the natural man is focused on the firstborn. Therefore God dashed all their hopes by smiting their firstborn. There was not a house in all of Egypt in which there was not a death. It was the final blow. God’s judgment was indiscriminate. It affected everyone from the highest to the lowest in society (Job 34:19-20).

Psa 78:52-55 | Guided in the Wilderness, Brought Into the Land

*52 But He led forth His own people like sheep
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;
53 He led them safely, so that they did not fear;
But the sea engulfed their enemies.
54 So He brought them to His holy land,
To this hill country which His right hand had gained.
55 He also drove out the nations before them
And apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement,
And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.*

After this final judgment, Pharaoh let God's people go. Asaph says here that *God* led forth His own people like sheep (verse 52). Pharaoh is forced by God to release the people. God has continually devoted Himself to His people. That He led them forth "like sheep" indicates their vulnerability, their defenselessness, and that they were completely dependent on God's protection and care.

They did not owe their deliverance to their own strength. Here God is the good Shepherd who led His sheep into freedom (cf. Jn 10:3). Further on, in verses 70-71, we see that He allowed David to act as shepherd for His people. In a prophetic sense, it speaks of God becoming Man in order to be the good Shepherd as the Son of David.

After they had moved away, He "guided them in the wilderness like a flock". He made sure they stayed together and were not scattered. The wilderness is an area through which a person cannot pass without knowing the way or without a good guide. For the people it was a completely unknown way. Therefore, they were totally dependent on the guidance of God.

Asaph testifies that God "led them safely, so that they did not fear" (verse 53). God provided safety in the midst of all the dangers of "the great and terrible wilderness" (Deu 8:15; cf. Jer 2:6). The enemy could no longer frighten them, for "the sea engulfed their enemies" (Exo 14:27-30). Slavery was behind them, as were the dead bodies of the slavers. During the wilderness journey, God provided as long as the journey lasted.

Thus He "brought them to His holy land, to this hill country which His right hand had gained" (verse 54). Moses and the Israelites already mentioned this in the song they sang immediately after the redemption (Exo 15:17). God brought His people "to His holy land". The land He had chosen for them (Eze 20:6), belongs to Him. It is holy because He is holy. What is His must correspond to Who and what He is.

By "this hill country" is meant the whole land (Exo 15:17a; Isa 57:13). "His right hand" has gained that country. The right hand represents power and honor. He demonstrated His power by driving out "the nations before them" (verse 55). Then He "apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement". Historically, we have arrived at the book of Joshua. All the

tribes were apportioned a territory of the land for an inheritance (Jos 13:7; 14:1-5; cf. Psa 16:6).

Finally, He “made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents”. After the slavery in Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness, the people had reached the rest. Now they could enjoy all the blessings God had prepared for them in this land.

Psa 78:56-58 | The Turning Back of the People

*56 Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God
And did not keep His testimonies,
57 But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers;
They turned aside like a treacherous bow.
58 For they provoked Him with their high places
And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.*

After the abundance of evidence of God’s faithfulness and care for His people, a human “yet” follows (verse 56). Instead of being thankful, “they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God” (cf. verse 41). This is a greater sin than in the wilderness. In the wilderness everything was dry and dead. In the land, however, they were surrounded by blessings. Here we see that both difficulties and blessings make man unfaithful to God if he does not see that God is there for him both in the difficulties and in the blessings. Historically, we have arrived in the book of Judges.

The blessings did not make them grateful, but ungrateful. They were not satisfied with what God had given them. Again and again they leave Him, as we see in the book of Judges. They defied Him with their sinful ways, for they “did not keep His testimonies”. What God had said did not interest them.

The next step away from Him was that they “turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers” (verse 57). “They turned aside like a treacherous bow”, that is, they did not live up to the expectation. God wanted them to be a witness for Him to the nations around them, but they did not live up to that. They denied their calling.

Instead of honoring God, they began to worship idols (verse 58). “They provoked Him with their high places”, that is, they made altars to offer

sacrifices to the idols (Jdg 2:11-13). This was a great affront to God, Who had led, nurtured and blessed them. Every right-minded person must understand that God was thereby aroused to anger. What person would consider such a great ingratitude for services rendered normal and accept it? They “aroused His jealousy with their graven images”. This is a perfectly justified jealousy. What right-thinking man is not aroused to jealousy when he finds his wife falling in love with another man and becoming unfaithful to him (Pro 6:32-34)? God is a jealous God (Exo 20:5; 34:14). He cannot sit back and do nothing when His people become unfaithful to Him and go after and follow other gods (Deu 32:16,21; cf. 2Cor 11:2-3).

Psa 78:59-64 | Delivered to Judgment

*59 When God heard, He was filled with wrath
And greatly abhorred Israel;
60 So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh,
The tent which He had pitched among men,
61 And gave up His strength to captivity
And His glory into the hand of the adversary.
62 He also delivered His people to the sword,
And was filled with wrath at His inheritance.
63 Fire devoured His young men,
And His virgins had no wedding songs.
64 His priests fell by the sword,
And His widows could not weep.*

God has heard, that is, noticed, all the turning back and faithlessness of His people (verse 59). It is here about their words, and also about their deeds and the mind of their heart. They had not become headlong averse and unfaithful, but had first deliberated what they would do. These were conscious, deliberate, and thoughtful actions of aversion and unfaithfulness. God had therefore justifiably become “filled with wrath” about that.

In fact, history repeats itself. History teaches us that man learns nothing from history. Even in the wilderness journey the people provoked the LORD so much that He was full of wrath against them (verse 21). On the part of the people it is a repetition of moves, it follows a certain pattern.

His mind toward them was radically changed by their constant aversion. He “greatly abhorred” them. Abhorrence is an emotion evoked by a course of action that causes disgust. It did not stop there. It led to an action that expressed that abhorrence, and that is rejection. What is abhorred is rejected. It was not a matter of committing a sinful act once, but of living a life of debauchery. This had become the situation with His people.

We see this in the days when the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD at the tabernacle in Shiloh (1Sam 1:3). Hophni and Phinehas trampled on God’s rights in the crudest way, causing the people to reject the LORD’s sacrifice (1Sam 2:12-17,22). Because priests and people despised God, God despised the people (1Sam 2:30). With that people, He could not continue to dwell.

The tabernacle at that time, since the days of Joshua, was in Shiloh (Jos 18:1,8; Jdg 18:31; 21:12,19; 1Sam 1:3,24; 2:14; 4:3-4). Shiloh was in the area of the tribe of Ephraim. “So”, i.e. because of the scandalous behavior of Eli’s two sons, God “abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh” (verse 60). The tabernacle was “the tent which He had pitched among men”. This seemed to be the end of God’s purpose that He had with the redemption. This purpose was to dwell with His people.

He had done so until this moment. However, because of the continuing turning back of the people, He could no longer do that. To live means to have rest. Shiloh means rest. That rest had disappeared because of the people’s continued sin. God was, as it were, driven out of His dwelling place. This was a painful moment for God, and also for the people, although the people as a whole did not perceive the extent of it.

The ark was the visible testimony of the presence and power of God. The ark was also called “the ark of Your strength” (Psa 132:8). When the sons of Eli wanted to use the ark as a mascot in the battle against the Philistines, God “gave up His strength to captivity”, that is, He gave the ark into the hand of the Philistines (verse 61; 1Sam 4:17).

He gave “His glory into the hand of the adversary”, which means that the glory departed from Israel and ended up in the land of the Philistines (1Sam 4:21-22). The fact that God maintained His glory and demonstrated

His power there as well is not the issue here. It is about the lessons the people must learn from the history of their faithlessness.

God also “delivered His people to the sword” of the Philistines (verse 62; 1Sam 4:2,10). “His inheritance”, that is, His land and His people, became the object of His anger. There was nothing attractive to Him in it anymore. So much had they by their deeds vexed and dishonored Him. Upon the land upon which His eye had first looked with favor, now rested His anger. We see that *God* did everything. *He* left His tabernacle, *He* gave up His strength and His glory, *He* delivered His people.

The “young men” were killed by the fire of judgment (verse 63). This happened in the battle against the Philistines. The consequence was that the “virgins had no wedding songs”. The meaning is that the young man could not sing a song for his young bride at their wedding. With the death of the young men, there were no more weddings possible. This meant the end of the nation.

The priests Hophni and Phinehas fell by the sword of the Philistines (verse 64; 1Sam 4:11). They, who were the link between the people and God, had been killed. Their widows had not wept for them (cf. Job 27:15), so great was the shock of the calamities that had come upon the people. Possibly they had wept because of the captured ark (1Sam 4:21). In any case, the death of the priests and the disappearance of the ark meant an interruption in the service to God.

Psa 78:65-72 | God Chose Judah, Zion and David

*65 Then the Lord awoke as [if from] sleep,
Like a warrior overcome by wine.
66 He drove His adversaries backward;
He put on them an everlasting reproach.
67 He also rejected the tent of Joseph,
And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion which He loved.
69 And He built His sanctuary like the heights,
Like the earth which He has founded forever.*

70 He also chose David His servant
 And took him from the sheepfolds;
 71 From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him
 To shepherd Jacob His people,
 And Israel His inheritance.
 72 So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart,
 And guided them with his skillful hands.

After all that God had to do with the people and the way He Himself went, He seemed the big Loser. However, this was only seemingly so. In the same way, it seems today that in the events of the world God is the great Absentee. That too is only an illusion. When the people had forfeited all their rights and there was no basis for restoration, “the Lord awoke as [if from] sleep” (verse 65; cf. *Psa 44:24; Isa 51:9*). Thus God will also intervene in the whole world event through the return of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord, Adonai, was going to act on behalf of His people. He alone was able to do so as the sovereign Ruler of all, Adonai. We see in the following verses all that “He” did. He was “like a warrior overcome by wine”. It is the battle cry of a hero who knows no fear. With people it is as if they let themselves go without restraint by the wine. With Him, it indicates that He with joy went to work for His people.

The first work was to judge His adversaries (verse 66). He had given His glory into the hand of the adversary. Now He struck this adversary and other adversaries “backward”. This was not an attack in the back, but defeating the adversaries while they were on the run. God smote the Philistines with tumors (*1Sam 5:6-12*). Later, these enemies were destroyed by David. Prophetically, the Lord Jesus will destroy the enemies of Israel by His appearing (*Isa 51:9*).

They did not expect that He would ever again stand up for His people. That was one of the grievous errors of unbelief. He caused an “everlasting reproach” with His adversaries. They had thought to reap eternal glory by attacking God’s people, but the Lord, Adonai, changed that into a reproach that is eternal.

To reject “the tent of Joseph” is to set it aside as the location of His sanctuary (verse 67). Joseph was “the one distinguished among his brothers”

(Gen 49:26), but God had chosen another tribe for His sanctuary. The same was true of Ephraim, the principal tribe of the ten tribes realm. He also “did not choose the tribe of Ephraim”, although there, in Shiloh, the tabernacle had stood.

The tribe of God’s choice for the building of His sanctuary was “the tribe of Judah” (verse 68). Here Jacob’s prophecy is fulfilled (Gen 49:8-10). God’s choice is always based on His will and not on anything in man. In the tribe of Judah He chose “Mount Zion which He loved”. His election of Zion is connected with His love. When He acts according to His love, He acts according to His nature, for “God is love” (1Jn 4:8,16), apart from anything attractive in the object of His love. He loves because He is love.

On Mount Zion, which He loved, “He built His sanctuary like the heights” (verse 69). Solomon actually built His sanctuary, but God provided him with wisdom, directions, materials, and people to do so. God’s sanctuary was built “like the heights”, that is, it is an exalted place (cf. Isa 2:2).

In addition to being an exalted place, it is also an unshakable place, “like the earth which He has founded forever”. The earth is often the symbol of stability. Thereby, God has founded His sanctuary, like the earth, for a purpose, namely, to meet there with His people. The people may come there with their sacrifices and He blesses them there.

Finally, after the election of the tribe of Judah and Mount Zion, comes the choice of “David His servant” to be king over His people (verse 70). David was chosen even though he had no natural claim to be king. Nor did he count in his family, he was forgotten by them (1Sam 16:11), but God “took him from the sheepfolds” (cf. 2Sam 7:8). God’s king is originally a shepherd. According to God’s thoughts, kingship can only be exercised well by a shepherd. We see this perfectly in the case of the Lord Jesus.

God allowed David to come “from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs” (verse 71). That place, behind the ewes with suckling lambs, shows that David cared for these sheep, sheep that give their lambs to drink. This is the quality that someone needs to pasture God’s people. David remained the same in his caring. The only change was that the sheep were now people, which at the same time implies that people are sheep in need of care (cf. Mt 9:36).

God entrusted David with the care “to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance”. David should always be well aware of the fact that the people he was pasturing and ruling over were not his people, but the people of God. That people is called “Jacob”. That reminds us of the weakness of the people. God made that people “Israel”, which is the people as God sees them according to His counsel for that people. That people was not the property of David, but God’s property.

It is reminiscent of the command the Lord Jesus gives to Peter: “Tend My lambs ... Shepherd My sheep ... Tend My sheep” (Jn 21:15-17). The Lord uses the word “My” every time. Every shepherd in the church of God must be constantly aware that the sheep are not his sheep, but the sheep of the Lord Jesus. Shepherds do not shepherd their own flock, but “the flock of God” (1Pet 5:1-3).

The psalm ends with the testimony about David that he has “shepherded” God’s people and inheritance “according to the integrity of his heart and guided them with his skillful hands” (verse 72). The key to pasturing the sheep is “integrity of heart”. An integrous heart is focused on God and then on the welfare of the sheep. In leading the sheep, it comes down to “skillful hands”. It takes great skill to lead the flock in the right way. David proved in his care of his father’s sheep that he had both an integrous heart and skillful hands.

Here David is clearly a picture of the Lord Jesus, the true Shepherd-King. The Lord Jesus is “the good Shepherd” Who gave His life for His sheep (Jn 10:11). He is “the great Shepherd” Who was brought back by God from the dead (Heb 13:20). He is also the “Chief Shepherd” Who is the example for all shepherds in the church (1Pet 5:4). In His care for us as His sheep, He pastures us with the best food and leads us in the path of righteousness for His Name’s sake (Psa 23:2-3).

We can say that the psalm ends with the rest of the realm of peace, where God’s earthly people will receive and enjoy all the promised blessings. This is not by virtue of any merit on their part, but by virtue of God’s purpose which He fulfills in grace. In the realm of peace, the true David reigns as King and is the one Shepherd Who pastures and leads His people (Eze 37:24a).

Psalm 79

Introduction

Beginning with this psalm, we find another series of psalms that prophetically determine us by the time when the LORD will use Assyria, which is in the future the king of the North, as a disciplinary rod (Isa 10:5) over Israel, which is in unbelief under the government of the antichrist. The king of the North will kill two-thirds of the people (Zec 13:8) and destroy Jerusalem and the third temple (Zec 14:2). These are labor pains necessary for the birth of the remnant or new Israel (Isa 66:8).

The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC is a foreshadowing of this. Also the attack in 168 BC by king Antiochus Epiphanes – a type of the king of the North – is a foreshadowing.

The Jews use this psalm along with the lamentations at the fast during the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD.

This psalm is about the invasion of Israel by the nations who destroy Jerusalem and the temple. The emphasis here is not so much on the judgment on God's people because of their sins, but on the means God uses. See further the Introduction to Psalm 74, a psalm that also deals with the destruction of the temple.

The structure of the psalm can be presented as follows:

1. Verses 1-7 contain a complaint about the destruction.
2. Verses 8-13 contain the prayer for restoration.
 1. The center of the first section is verse 4, where they say that they have become a reproach to their neighbors. That is the substance of their complaint.
 2. The center of the second section is verse 10b, where they ask God to make the shed blood of His servants known before their eyes among the nations. That is the essence of their plea.

Psa 79:1-4 | Jerusalem Laid in Ruins

1 *A Psalm of Asaph.*

O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance;

They have defiled Your holy temple;

They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

2 *They have given the dead bodies of Your servants for food to the birds of the heavens,*

The flesh of Your godly ones to the beasts of the earth.

3 *They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem;*

And there was no one to bury them.

4 *We have become a reproach to our neighbors,*

A scoffing and derision to those around us.

For “a Psalm of Asaph” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 50:1.

The God-fearing, or believing remnant in the end time, complains to God that “the nations” have invaded His inheritance (verse 1b). These nations do not care about God’s ownership of His land. They have boldly invaded the land. Then they have broken through to God’s “holy temple”. ‘Temple’ in Hebrew is literally ‘palace’, a reference to the temple as the dwelling place of God. The nations have “defiled” it by entering as heathen and causing havoc. Finally, “they have laid Jerusalem in ruins” (cf. 2Chr 36:17-18).

We can hardly imagine what all this must have meant for the God-fearing Jew. In his book of Lamentations, Jeremiah expresses the feelings that the faithful remnant will have about this in the future. Jerusalem is the city that God has chosen for His Name to dwell. In that city He has His dwelling place, where He dwells in the midst of His people and receives them. There He has His throne, from which He rules over His people to their blessing. All this has disappeared. It seems as if God has suffered defeat and His people are doomed to extinct.

Those who served God in Jerusalem were mercilessly killed (verse 2). “The dead bodies of Your servants” were not buried by the enemies, but given “for food to the birds of the heavens” (cf. Jer 34:20; Rev 11:7-9). The libel of defeat is greatly increased by the fact that the bodies are not buried. The invaders gave “the flesh of Your godly ones to the beasts of the earth”.

The remnant speaks of themselves as ‘Your servants’ and ‘Your godly ones’. “Godly ones” in Hebrew is *chasid*, which are those who are faithful to the covenant of God. They want to remind God, as it were, who they are to Him. After all, they have served Him, they are in His favor, and He loves them, right? How then can He, seemingly, stand idly by while they are slaughtered and given as food to the birds and the beasts?

After all, the prophecies speak of the peace of Jerusalem and the subjugation of the nations, as Isaiah does in Isaiah 2, for example (Isa 2:1-5). Certainly the prophets also spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem in case the people would not keep the covenant (Mic 3:12). Indeed the people as a whole did not keep the covenant. Therefore it is written of Jerusalem that in the end time it will be “mystically ... called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified” (Rev 11:8). The question comes from the faithful remnant, from those who do have the desire to serve the LORD.

The nations “have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem” (verse 3; cf. Rev 14:17-20). The slaughter was great, but “there was no one to bury them”. The enemies did not allow the bodies of those who are killed to be buried (cf. Rev 11:7-9). They viewed their victims as inferior beings not worthy of burial (Jer 14:16).

Added to all the reproach is the reproach of the neighboring peoples (verse 4). They watched with gloating the destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter of its people (cf. Oba 1:12-14). We can think of the Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines and Edomites, peoples who will not only be spectators, but will also attack Israel together with the king of the North (Psa 83:4-8). Their attitude toward Israel is an additional reason for judging them in the end time. Those judgments are described, for example, in Ezekiel 25 and 36.

Because of everything that has happened to God’s people, they are “a scoffing and derision to those around” them. This mockery and derision is deeply felt by the believing remnant. This is also what the Lord Jesus experienced in abundance (Psa 69:8,11,20-21), not only from the nations, but also from the unbelieving mass of God’s people.

Psa 79:5-8 | How Long?

5 How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever?

Will Your jealousy burn like fire?

*6 Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You,
And upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name.*

*7 For they have devoured Jacob
And laid waste his habitation.*

*8 Do not remember the iniquities of [our] forefathers against us;
Let Your compassion come quickly to meet us,
For we are brought very low.*

The exclamation “how long, O LORD?” is an exclamation of faith made in despair (verse 5). It is not the language of impatience, but of fear. It is not a complaint, but amazement. They ask the LORD: “Will You be angry forever?” The psalmist here uses the covenant name of God: LORD, Yahweh. In doing so, he is appealing to the faithfulness of God to His covenant.

The question of “how long” is an expression of their faith that the anger of God is coming to an end. What the enemies have done, they rightly see as an expression of God’s anger on their sins. Therefore, they do not ask ‘why’. They know that they have aroused His “jealousy” by their idolatry, which is unfaithfulness to Him. His jealousy burns like fire, but how long will it still last?

The God-fearing then ask God to pour out His “wrath upon the nations which do not know You and upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name” (verse 6; cf. 2Thes 1:8; Jer 10:25). The nations do not cry to God, but to their self-made idols. The request for God to pour out His wrath is not an expression of vindictiveness, but the request for the exercise of justice. The righteous one does not do it himself, but leaves it to God (cf. 2Tim 4:14).

Justice must be done, because the nations ignore God and act according to their own will. The fact that God uses them as a disciplinary rod for His people (cf. Isa 10:5) does not mean that He approves of the conduct of those nations. God can use man’s sinful actions to fulfill His plans.

They deserve God’s judgment, “for they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation”, that is God’s habitation in their midst (verse 7). Ja-

cob is the name for the people as the object of God's discipline. In that people is also the "habitation" of Jacob. God's own land He has given Jacob to dwell in. In the dwellings of Jacob He dwells among them (cf. Num 24:5; Psa 83:12).

The God-fearing acknowledges that the destruction of the city and temple are the result of the sins of the people (verse 8). They ask God not to remember "the iniquities of [our] forefathers against us". Those iniquities are there, they realize. Their asking God not to remember them is a humble request for forgiveness, by which God removes these iniquity from His remembrance.

Past iniquities – that is, the transgressions against the covenant – means the iniquities done by their ancestors. These iniquities are the cause of the judgment of God on them. In fact, the psalmist acknowledges that God's judgment on them was righteous. This is the first step to restoration.

Now they appeal to God to hurry and come to their aid with His compassion. This appeal they make because they are "brought very low". There is no strength left in them. They are exhausted. Their appeal to God's compassion is the only appropriate appeal they can make. A person needs compassion when he is in miserable circumstances, as is the case with them.

Psa 79:9-12 | Call for Salvation and Retribution

*9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name;
And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.*

10 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"

*Let there be known among the nations in our sight,
Vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has been shed.*

11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You;

According to the greatness of Your power preserve those who are doomed to die.

12 And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom

The reproach with which they have reproached You, O Lord.

Their prayer for help is addressed to the "God of our salvation" (verse 9). They see in God their Savior, their Deliverer. As a ground for their request for help they point – not to the fact that they are His people, but – to "the

glory of Your name” (cf. Rom 2:24; Mt 6:9b; Eze 36:20-23). They think first and foremost of God’s glory. God has been dishonored. The glory of His Name is connected to His promise to be faithful to His covenant with them and to the promises He has made, even though man is unfaithful.

They have forfeited the right to His promises by not being faithful to His covenant. They are aware of that. They have broken the covenant by their sins. Therefore they need redemption through forgiveness of their sins. The only way to do this is for Him to forgive their sins or atone for their sins. Atonement for sins means the covering of sins by the blood of the Lamb. As the basis for this request, they refer – not to their need, but – to “Your name’s sake” (cf. Num 14:13-19).

Now that their question regarding their sins is settled, the remnant returns in their prayer to the nations (verse 10). The nations keep saying: “Where is their God?” (cf. Joel 2:17). The righteous ask God to answer that question once and for all by revealing Himself in vengeance to those nations.

God must be known in the execution of “vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has been shed” (cf. Lk 11:51; Rev 17:6; 18:24). This must happen “among the nations in our sight”. When they see God’s vengeance, they will know that He is for them and not against them. All the mocking claims of the enemies will be belied by this.

Their demand for vengeance is not born of hatred or bitterness. They ask for it because they are in need and want to be released from their distress. That deliverance lies in the judgment on their enemies, who deserve it because they have violated God’s servants.

God must let “the groaning of the prisoner” come before Him (verse 11; cf. Exo 2:24; 6:4-5; Zec 14:2). The God-fearing ask God to take personally to heart the suffering of those who have been taken away as prisoners. These prisoners “are doomed to die”. If God intervenes “according to the greatness of” His “power [literally: arm]”, they will “preserve” their lives. Moses also uses the phrase “the greatness of Your arm” (Exo 15:16). God’s arm represents His power. That power is fully manifested in the Lord Jesus (Isa 53:1; 1Cor 1:24).

The prayer for retribution is because of what the neighboring peoples have done to the “Lord” (verse 12). They mocked God for not being able to pro-

tect His inheritance. He could not save His own city and sanctuary from destruction. After all, He did not prevent or punish it, did He?

God can remove this reproach by repaying the enemies “sevenfold”, or completely – seven is the number of completion – “in their bosom”, for the evil they have committed against Him. What someone has in his bosom, no one sees. It is a place where you hide things. It refers to man’s inner self, where people can hide their transgressions (cf. Job 31:33). God knows the inner life of every human being through and through. Therefore He is also able to repay the inner evil.

Psa 79:13 | Vow to Praise God

*13 So we Your people and the sheep of Your pasture
Will give thanks to You forever;
To all generations we will tell of Your praise.*

The faithful remnant makes a vow to God. They do so as “Your people and the sheep of Your pasture”. With this the psalmist returns to the conclusion of Psalm 78 (Psa 78:71). God is King of His people and Shepherd of the sheep that pasture in His land. He does not yet make Himself known in this way, but this will happen (Eze 37:22,24). This is how they see themselves, although they have now been taken away from their land by force. They are now ‘Lo-Ammi’, which is ‘not God’s people’ (Hos 1:9) and are outside God’s ‘pasture’.

When God takes vengeance and brings retribution on the enemies, they “will give thanks to” Him “forever”. They emphasize that they, “we”, will do that. “To all generations” they “will tell of” His “praise”. They want to pass on the glory of God, that is to say His faithfulness and compassion that they experienced in their redemption. This happened by recording it in the Scriptures and will happen in the future by giving thanks to the LORD for all His deeds. To all generation they will tell of the praise of God.

Psalm 80

Introduction

While the remnant – and expressly including the ten tribes – waits for deliverance from the LORD, they persevere in prayer. Three times we find the prayer “restore us and cause Your face to shine [upon us], and we will be saved” (verses 3,7,19). This prayer is addressed

in verse 3 to “God”,

in verse 7 to the “God [of] hosts” and

in verse 19 to the “LORD God of hosts”.

The naming of God indicates increase in the revelation of His power. This has to do with the increase in intensity of the prayer of the remnant. The prayer of the remnant can be summed up with the words “cause Your face to shine” (verse 3). The answer to this prayer is found in Psalm 81.

We can divide the psalm as follows:

1. In their prayer, the remnant compares themselves to powerless sheep who need the shepherd to be delivered (verses 1b-2).
2. They see themselves as a people whose prayer does not come to God because of His anger (verses 4-6).
3. They also see themselves as a vineyard trampled by a boar (the king of the North) from the forest and which is burned by fire (verses 8-16).
4. Therefore, their only hope is in the Man of God’s right hand, which speaks of His power (verses 17-18). He, Who said “all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt 28:18), alone is able to deliver (cf. Rev 5:1-10).

Psa 80:1-3 | Prayer for Salvation

*1 For the choir director; [set to] El Shoshannim; Eduth. A Psalm of Asaph.
Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel,
You who lead Joseph like a flock;*

*You who are enthroned [above] the cherubim, shine forth!
2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your power
And come to save us!
3 O God, restore us
And cause Your face to shine [upon us], and we will be saved.*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “[set to] El Shoshannim” see at Psalm 45:1 and Psalm 60:1. In Psalm 60 “Shushan”, “lily”, is in the singular (Psa 60:1).

“Eduth” means “a testimony” in the sense of a revelation that someone gives or what someone passes on about what he has experienced. It is a different word than the word “Eduth”, “testimony”, found in the heading of Psalm 60.

For “a Psalm of Asaph” see at Psalm 50:1.

In Asaph, the faithful remnant addresses the “Shepherd of Israel” (verse 1b). In the past, the LORD as Shepherd led His people out of Egypt through Moses and Aaron (Psa 77:20). Israel is the flock that has been pastured by God Himself (Psa 79:13). Prophetically this will be fulfilled when the LORD Himself will be Shepherd over Israel to pasture them (Eze 34:23). Israel here stands for both the two tribes realm and the ten tribes realm (Eze 37:15-28).

The name “Shepherd” as a name of God first appears in Jacob’s blessing of Joseph (Gen 49:24). Joseph, representing the ten tribes realm, is strongly emphasized. The two tribes realm and the ten tribes realm are now united (cf. Eze 37:15-16; Rev 7:4-8). The remnant comes from the two tribes and from the ten tribes. This one remnant in the end time is all Israel that is saved (Rom 11:26).

They ask God to “give ear” to their distress, for they have the impression that He has turned His ear away from them. They say to Him in the second line of verse 1b that He “leads Joseph like a flock”. Joseph, the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, here represents the whole people. This is evident from the parallel with the first line of verse 1b where it speaks of Israel. The remnant from both the two and the ten tribes realm see themselves as sheep who were led by Him out of Egypt at that time. But they are in need

and lack the protection of the Shepherd. An appeal to God as Shepherd can only be made by a sheep of His flock.

He is “enthroned [above, or between] the cherubim”. In the past, the meeting place with God was between the two cherubim on the mercy seat (Exo 25:22). He had to leave that place because of the unfaithfulness of His people (Eze 9:3; 10:4,18,19; 11:23). The remnant understands this. The LORD, however, still thrones on the cherubim *in heaven*.

The remnant, through the psalmist, now asks the LORD to return to the earth (cf. Eze 43:1-5). His appearance means at the same time the redemption for His people (verses 2-3).

The remnant asks Him to “shine forth”, that is, to appear openly as Ruler in the now reigning darkness. His appearance dispels the darkness. The cry “shine forth!” concerns the appearance of the LORD on earth to judge and redeem (cf. Psa 50:2; 94:1).

He Who rules the world dwells in the midst of His people between the cherubim on the ark (Exo 25:22; 1Chr 28:18; Eze 10:1), which in verse 2 is called “Your power”. The remnant calls upon God to stir up His power (cf. Num 10:35-36; Psa 35:23), that is, to rise up and act against the enemies to deliver them from their grasp.

Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh are in the camp in the wilderness under the same standard, the standard of Ephraim, on the west side of the tabernacle (Num 2:17-24). They are the tribes that set out during the journey through the wilderness and set up their camp immediately after the setting out and setting up of the ark (Num 10:21-24). They, along with the Kohathites, live with the ark, or God’s power, directly before their eyes.

In them we also see the whole people represented: Ephraim represents the northern kingdom, Benjamin the southern kingdom. Part of Manasseh lives at the other side of the Jordan. He represents the two and a half tribes. The three names are the names of Rachel’s descendants who are restored to the land (cf. Jer 31:15).

Their request, that is from the ten tribes, to God is to restore them by bringing them back to their land (verse 3). They are now outside the land as a result of their unfaithfulness. With their question they acknowledge that

there is no right and no power in them to return to the land with its blessings. At the same time their question implies that God in His grace can do it and also has the power to do it. It expresses confidence in the grace and power of God.

With the question “cause Your face to shine” they ask if God wants to be present in their midst again. If He is with them, then they “will be saved”. They connect in faith His presence in their midst with the deliverance of their enemies. If He is present, the enemies will flee or be defeated.

The Hebrew expression “cause Your face to shine” means that the kind, gracious face smiles, in contrast to the face that is dark, gloomy, or angry. No doubt the psalmist was thinking of the priestly blessing from Numbers 6 (Num 6:24-26; cf. Psa 31:16; 67:1b).

We know from John 1 that God can only give His grace because grace and truth have been realized through Jesus Christ. Out of His fullness we, both Christians and the remnant of Israel in the future, receive grace upon grace (Jn 1:16-17).

Psa 80:4-7 | How long?

4 O LORD God [of] hosts,
How long will You be angry with the prayer of Your people?
5 You have fed them with the bread of tears,
And You have made them to drink tears in large measure.
6 You make us an object of contention to our neighbors,
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 O God [of] hosts, restore us
And cause Your face to shine [upon us], and we will be saved.

The remnant turns to the “LORD God [of] hosts” (verse 4). He is the LORD, that is the God of the covenant. That is their relationship with Him, though they do not experience that relationship now. He is also the “God of hosts”, the God Who is above all heavenly and earthly powers, good and bad.

They ask Him the question that torments them: “How long will You be angry with the prayer of Your people?” They acknowledge that their distress is the result of the anger of God and that the anger of God is the result of

their sins. This situation is consistent with the covenant. But the question that torments them is “how long?” Wouldn’t God stop His anger at some point? Surely He is the Shepherd of His people, isn’t He? Then they may expect Him to pasture them (Psa 79:13), which means He will give them food and refreshing water (Psa 23:1-2).

However, he has “fed them with the bread of tears” and has “made them to drink tears in large measure” (verse 5). This is ‘a meal’ that is particularly hard on their minds. Drinking one’s own tears is a bitter thing. It is the consequence of going one’s own way. We can also remember that the suffering of the people as a result of their sins and the rejection of Christ was so great that the Lord Himself shed tears over it (Lk 19:41-44).

At the same time, it is also a wholesome ‘meal’, for it arises from repentance for their sins. That they should drink “in large measure” means that God determines the measure of it. The Hebrew for “large measure” is literally ‘a third part of a measure’, that is, a third of an ephah (about thirty-six liters), which is twelve liters. To give twelve liters of tears to drink is quite a lot.

Added to that is what their neighbors, the neighboring peoples, say about them (verse 6). They argue about which of them can profit most from their misery. At the same time they make fun of the misery that has come over them. They mock about it among themselves.

But surely God is the “God [of] hosts” (verse 7), the God Who is above all earthly and heavenly hosts, whether good or bad, isn’t He? Again (cf. verse 4) the psalmist appeals to the LORD, the God of the covenant, now emphasizing His power to act on behalf of His people. Let Him then restore them by bringing them back to their land and blessing. When He causes His face to shine, that is, when He accepts them and comes to them, they will be redeemed. Of this they are sure.

The question is not whether God can do it, but whether He is willing to do it (cf. Mt 8:2-3). That God can do it is not a matter of doubt for them. After all, they call Him the God of hosts. But will God also be gracious to them? That is what they ask of Him. For us as believers in the New Testament there is no doubt. We are assured of the riches of His grace, which we have

received: “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” (Jn 1:16).

Psa 80:8-13 | The Vine of Israel

*8 You removed a vine from Egypt;
You drove out the nations and planted it.
9 You cleared [the ground] before it,
And it took deep root and filled the land.
10 The mountains were covered with its shadow,
And the cedars of God with its boughs.
11 It was sending out its branches to the sea
And its shoots to the River.
12 Why have You broken down its hedges,
So that all who pass [that] way pick its [fruit]?
13 A boar from the forest eats it away
And whatever moves in the field feeds on it.*

Asaph reminds God of His gracious action in delivering His people from Egypt. God has removed Israel from Egypt like “a vine” (verse 8; cf. Hos 10:1a; Eze 19:10). The fruit of a vine, wine, represents joy. In Egypt, the people could not be a joy to Him. That they could only be in the land that He chose as His own. Therefore He “drove out the nations and planted it” (cf. Deu 7:1; Exo 23:28). Isaiah, singing a song about God’s people as a vineyard, puts it this way: He “removed its stones” (Isa 5:1-2).

We find here, summarized in a few verses, the long history of Israel presented in a parable. In it it is emphasized that Israel’s history is due to the actions of the LORD. *He* has removed. We find that in the book of Exodus. *He* drove out the nations. We find that in the book of Joshua.

God did not plant the vine, His people, just anywhere, but on ground “cleared before it” (verse 9; Jer 2:21). He prepared a place for it. God always does that. Before He placed man in paradise, He prepared that place for him (Gen 2:8). He prepared everything well. Because the Lord Jesus wants to bring us to the Father’s house, He went first to prepare a place for us there (Jn 14:2-3).

God made every effort to plant the vine so that it would bear rich fruit (cf. Isa 5:2a; 57:14). The vine “took deep root”. As a result, it “filled the land”. Everything speaks of His care for His vine, so that He might have the full enjoyment of it. He planted Israel in a place that He prepared. He blessed Israel, causing the people to take root and fill the land. He extended its branches. This brings us to the period of the governments of David and Solomon.

The growth of the vine has been His work. That growth, that is the growth of population, has been abundant. “The mountains” in the south “were covered with its shadow” (verse 10). That indicates a numerous population. It has also become a mighty people, like “the cedars of God with its boughs” of the Lebanon in the north (cf. Num 24:6; Psa 104:16).

The growth is also visible from west to east. “It was sending out its branches to the sea” (verse 11), that is the Mediterranean Sea in the west and the Red Sea in the east. The same is true of “its shoots to the River”, by which is meant the Euphrates. These are the boundaries of the territory Israel will possess in the realm of peace, according to the promise God made to the fathers (Gen 15:18; Deu 1:7-8; 11:24). This population growth and territory expansion were present for a short time in the days of Solomon (1Kgs 4:20,24).

After God has done all this for His people, the question arises among the remnant as to why He has broken down its hedges, why He has broken down the wall He has built around His vineyard (verse 12; cf. Isa 5:5). We find the reason in the previous psalm (Psa 79:8; cf. Isa 5:1-7). A hedge, a wall serves to protect. God breaks down that protection. He does so by means of the Babylonians who destroy Jerusalem. The city lies broken up. “All who pass [that] way” can plunder as much as they want.

“A boar” is an unclean animal (Lev 11:3-4,7) and represents the nations (verse 13). The nations have come “from the forest”, which is their own habitation, to tear Jerusalem loose from its foundation. The wild nations have come to take possession of anything they deem of any value. Thus Jerusalem has been “eaten” and there is nothing edible, nothing of value left.

Many nations have trampled on Jerusalem. Assyria is the foreshadowing of what will happen in the future. From Nebuchadnezzar on, we find in

the times of the Gentiles (Lk 21:24) that many nations have ruled over Jerusalem and trampled on the city. Prophetically in the future, the prophetic Assyrian, the king of the North, will do this.

Psa 80:14-16 | Look Down and See This Vine

*14 O God [of] hosts, turn again now, we beseech You;
Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine,
15 Even the shoot which Your right hand has planted,
And on the son whom You have strengthened for Yourself.
16 It is burned with fire, it is cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.*

The remnant now pleads with God as the “God [of] hosts” to turn again to His land (verse 14). To turn again – literally “repent” in Hebrew – means that the LORD is going to restore the covenant (Jer 31:31-33). We know from the New Testament that this is going to happen on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross (Heb 8:1-13). And by grace the people will also return to the LORD (verse 18; Hos 3:5).

They cry out to God as the “God [of] hosts” because heathen hosts have destroyed Jerusalem. God is above all the hosts, not only those of Israel, but also those of the nations, as well as above all the good and bad heavenly hosts.

The remnant asks God to look down “from heaven”, where He lives, and see what is happening on earth. Let Him look down on “this vine”, that is, look with compassion on His people. For it is “the shoot which Your right hand has planted” (verse 15; Exo 15:6,17). It is a reminder of His original dealings with His people. In planting it He used His right hand, the hand of strength. Surely that hand is still just as strong?

“The son whom You have strengthened for Yourself” is Israel. Israel is called “son” several times (Exo 4:22; Hos 11:1). This reflects the deeper relationship of God with His people. Israel as a vine is meant to be a joy to God. He desires to find that joy in the people as His son. He wants the people to be a ‘son of His well-pleasure’.

God made Israel strong. Made strong means ‘brought up’. The psalmist appeals to God on the basis of what God has done in the past. After all, He

has planted Israel as a vine; He is the owner of Israel. After all, He brought up Israel as a son. He is the Father of Israel. Is that not a reason to restore the covenant? Let Him then look down from heaven and look at Israel, His vine and His son.

This son, however, caused no joy to God. Therefore, in addition to being burned (cf. Eze 15:1-5; Jn 15:6), the vine was cut down (verse 16). The remnant realizes that this situation has come about “at the rebuke of Your countenance”. God had to chastise them because of their turning back from Him and their rebellion. His presence among them required this action, for He cannot go along with their sins. This is true both of the sins of the people here and of the sins of the people’s enemy (Psa 75:8).

Israel failed as a son. The Lord Jesus has taken Israel’s place as Son (cf. Hos 11:1; Mt 2:11). He is also the true vine (Jn 15:1), that is, instead of the vine Israel, and gives the Father the joy which He sought in vain from Israel. When the relationship between the Lord Jesus and Israel is restored through the conversion of the people, God will find His joy in that people.

Psa 80:17-19 | The Son of Man

*17 Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.
18 Then we shall not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.
19 O LORD God of hosts, restore us;
Cause Your face to shine [upon us], and we will be saved.*

The remnant asks God: “Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand”, which is the Lord Jesus (verse 17). The right hand symbolizes both power and honor. The Lord Jesus is the power of God and now has the place of honor in heaven at the right hand of God (Psa 110:1). The right hand of God is upon Him. He is the Messiah. In Him God is going to accomplish His work of redemption.

On her way to Bethlehem, Rachel gave birth to a baby boy. While she was dying she named him Ben-oni or ‘son of suffering’. Jacob, however, changed his name to Benjamin or ‘son of the right hand’ (Gen 35:16-20). We find here a beautiful painting of the Lord Jesus Who came to suffer and

die as ‘Son of suffering’ and to give His life as a ransom for many. Thereafter He was raised from the dead, went into heaven, and became the Man of God’s right hand (cf. Psa 110:1).

To Him, the “son of Man”, God has given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). God has made Him strong for Himself. He often calls Himself “Son of Man” in the Gospels. It is the name of His humiliation, but also of His exaltation (Mt 26:64). He derives that Name from this psalm and from Daniel 7, where it also occurs once (Dan 7:13).

What the remnant is asking for in verse 17 will happen in the future. Then God’s hand will publicly be on ‘the Man of His right hand’, Christ. When Christ comes and reigns as the Son of Man, they will be His sheep. They will no longer turn back from Him, for they are firmly attached to Him (verse 18; Jer 31:33; 32:40). They will be preserved in life and will call upon His Name, that is, worship Him.

In the last verse they address the “LORD”, the name of God in His relationship with His people (verse 19). In faith the remnant calls Him that. The relationship between God and His people is not yet restored, but they look to Him Who has joined Himself to them. He must bring them back into that relationship. That will happen when He is among them again, when His face will shine upon them. Then they will be redeemed and receive the promised blessings.

After praying for restoration to God in verse 3 and to the God of the hosts in verse 7, here, in verse 19, they pray for restoration to the LORD God of the hosts. That they now pray to “the LORD” means that they are appealing to the covenant relationship between God and His people. We know that that relationship is restored by the blood of the new covenant shed by the Mediator, the Man of God’s right hand, the Son of Man.

Psalm 81

Introduction

In this psalm, the remnant expects God to restore them. To that end, God will begin blowing the trumpet during the new moon. The only feast of the seven feasts in Leviticus 23 that coincides with the new moon is the Feast of the blowing of the Trumpets, which is at the same time Israel's (civil) New Year celebration. The new moon represents the beginning of Israel's restoration. As they wait for the LORD to intervene, the LORD makes it clear to them in verses 6-16 that in the past, when the LORD had redeemed them, they still rebelled afterwards. It holds the warning to not fall into the same mistake.

Psa 81:1-5 | A Celebration Song

*1 For the choir director; on the Gittith. [A Psalm] of Asaph.
Sing for joy to God our strength;
Shout joyfully to the God of Jacob.
2 Raise a song, strike the timbrel,
The sweet sounding lyre with the harp.
3 Blow the trumpet at the new moon,
At the full moon, on our feast day.
4 For it is a statute for Israel,
An ordinance of the God of Jacob.
5 He established it for a testimony in Joseph
When he went throughout the land of Egypt.
I heard a language that I did not know:*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “on the Gittith” see at Psalm 8:1.

For “[a Psalm] of Asaph” see at Psalm 50:1.

Asaph calls to “sing for joy to God” (verse 1b). Singing is the giving thanks par excellence for Israel (cf. Hos 14:2; Heb 13:15). The LORD is the Holy One Who is enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3). Asaph calls

God “our strength”. God is the strength of His people. The singing for joy is about the strength of God that He has shown in the redemption of His people. Asaph also calls to “shout joyfully to the God of Jacob”. Shout joyfully is a loud expression of joy, as opposed to loud lamentation.

To “the God of Jacob” is appealed for deliverance in a day of trouble (Psa 20:1b). Asaph here calls for singing and rejoicing before the God of Jacob in the confidence that He will intervene and deliver. King Jehoshaphat showed that he trusted the LORD so much that he had his choir of singers going out before the armed soldiers (2Chr 20:21).

The name “Jacob” recalls the weakness or inability of God’s people to trust in God to deliver them from bondage and give them His blessing. Through the power of God the people were delivered and received the blessing. Jacob himself calls God “the Mighty One of Jacob” (Gen 49:24). The God of Jacob also recalls God’s election of Jacob over Esau (Rom 9:10-12). All this makes it clear that there is no glory for man. Only God is worthy of all praise.

It is a reason for an exuberant celebration. The psalm should be raised (verse 2). The joy is to be accompanied with musical instruments. Music supports the singing and creates harmony in the singing. The people are to “strike the timbrel”. This assumes that the people are singing while dancing. Striking the timbrel is often done by women (Exo 15:20-21; Jdg 11:34; 1Sam 18:6). Also “the sweet sounding lyre with the harp” accompany the expressions of joy. The lyre is called “sweet sounding” because of its pleasant sound.

Above this sounds “the trumpet”, the shofar, a ram’s-horn trumpet (verse 3; cf. Jos 6:5). The shofar calls for the singing of praise to begin, and also calls for humbling. It announces that the darkest part of the night has been reached. It is “new moon”. The announcement also implies that from now on the people will face the light of the “full moon”. The new moon is the symbol of the beginning of Israel’s public restoration in the light of the sun. This restoration begins with humbling themselves. Israel is not accepted until the day of atonement. After that, Israel’s restoration will be celebrated, because then God has accepted the people as His people again. This will happen after the church is caught up.

On the first day of the seventh month God attached to the “new moon” a feast, the Feast of the blowing of the Trumpets (Lev 23:23-24; Num 29:1). Also “at the full moon” in the seventh month a feast was instituted by God. Full moon is on the fifteenth day. On that day the Feast of Booths begins (Lev 23:33-34). The Feast of Booths recalls the journey through the wilderness while living in the land and thanking God for all the blessings of the land (Lev 23:42-43).

It is called “our feast day” here, although it is one of the LORD’s feast days (Lev 23:1-2). Literally it says “at our feast”, that is, the feast Israel may celebrate in honor of the LORD (Exo 5:1).

These feasts are not a fabrication of the Israelites’ imagination, but are “a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob” (verse 4). It is not that the people can celebrate the feast whenever they feel like it. It is “a statute” that they must obey. It is a statute “for Israel”, that is, for the land inhabited by a people called “Israel”, which means ‘prince of God’. They may celebrate the feast in faith – they are still praying for restoration – but they are already celebrating the feast, in trust and obedience to the LORD.

It is “an ordinance” of God. God has ordained that this should happen. He is God and they are His people. They must listen to Him. He is “the God of Jacob”. The name Jacob recalls practice and failure. The name Israel recalls position and privilege. Both aspects have a place in the praise of God.

God established these feasts “for a testimony in Joseph” (verse 5). Here is a third name for the people. By Joseph is also meant the whole people (cf. Psa 77:15; 80:1b). Here we have the transition to the connection between God’s people and Egypt. It was through Joseph that the people came to Egypt. There he has been God’s means of their blessing and life. After Joseph died, the people were enslaved. From this they were delivered by God.

Deliverance began with God going “throughout the land of Egypt”. This refers to the judgments God brought on the land of Egypt. It specifically refers to His going out through the midst of Egypt to kill all the firstborn in the land (Exo 11:4-5). This action of God is “a language” – the language of God’s redemption – which Israel did not understand. They did not un-

derstand what God meant by their deliverance. The proof of this is their disobedience.

Psa 81:6-7 | God's Care in the Past

6 *"I relieved his shoulder of the burden,
His hands were freed from the basket.
7 "You called in trouble and I rescued you;
I answered you in the hiding place of thunder;
I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.*

"The burden" of slavery in Egypt, where the people had to lug stones, was taken from "his shoulder" by God (verse 6; Exo 1:1-14; 5:6-18; cf. Deu 26:7). "His hands were freed from the basket" means that God freed them from the baskets in which they had to put the raw materials for building. They no longer had to use them. God had delivered them from their forced labor.

They were in trouble because of their forced labor, and in trouble they called to God, and God rescued them and led them out of Egypt (verse 7; Exo 2:23-24; 6:4-5). God speaks of Israel in verse 6 still in the third person singular – "his shoulder", "his hands" – that is, there is still a distance. Here in verse 7 Israel calls to the LORD, and now He addresses Israel in second person singular – four times "you" – meaning that Israel has come closer.

He answered them at Sinai "in the hiding place of thunder" (Exo 19:18-19; 20:18; Psa 77:18). They said there that they would do all that the LORD would command. Then His answer came and He entered into a covenant with them. This covenant He established in the law, which He gave to Moses, who took the law from the mountain to the people.

He proved them "at the waters of Meribah" (Exo 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13; cf. Deu 33:8). It is a reminder of their disobedience without explicitly mentioning it, which is done in other places (Psa 95:8; 106:32). The reminder should make them ashamed and also willing to trust God now. The word "prove" is to test for genuineness, that is, the genuineness of faith. At Meribah the test was whether Israel really listen and obey.

Psa 81:8-12 | Hear and Not listen

8 *"Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you;*

O Israel, if you would listen to Me!

9 *"Let there be no strange god among you;*

Nor shall you worship any foreign god.

10 *"I, the LORD, am your God,*

Who brought you up from the land of Egypt;

Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.

11 *"But My people did not listen to My voice,*

And Israel did not obey Me.

12 *"So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart,*

To walk in their own devices.

After God redeemed His people, He made clear to them His purpose for their redemption. He addresses them as "My people" (verse 8). He tells them to hear. It is an appeal to the heart, whether it is willing to listen. You can hear something with your ears, but the point is whether there is in the heart the willingness to do what the ear has heard.

God's people must hear, for God "will admonish" them (cf. Psa 50:7). That is to say, God is presenting His will to them. He wants them to acknowledge Him, obey Him, and serve Him. If they accept His testimony among them, they will be able to receive what He has for them in His heart.

First, God wants the people He calls "My people" to obey the commandment that there shall be "no strange god" among them (verse 9). This is covered in detail in Isaiah 40-48. It is the second great sin of the people of Israel – besides the rejection of Christ – that the apostate people accept the antichrist as king and god (2Thes 2:3-4).

There is only one God; the others are not real gods. These are gods of other nations, gods of strangers (Deu 32:12). This is the reminder of the first commandment of the law (Exo 20:3-4). The people whom God calls My people shall not worship any foreign god (cf. Exo 20:5). They broke this commandment even before Moses came down with the two tablets of the law (Exo 32:2-8).

In Exodus 20 this commandment of verse 9 follows the introduction of the ten commandments, that the LORD is their God, Who delivered them

from Egypt. That he reverses the order and first mentions the commandment that God's people should have no other gods and should not bow down to them, is to underline the importance of this commandment.

God alone is "the LORD ... your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt" (verse 10). He delivered them to be His people. This is the reminder of the introduction to the ten commandments (Exo 20:2). The basis of His right to their undivided dedication is their deliverance by Him from the bondage of Egypt. This is already a great privilege.

But it goes much further. God says to His people: "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." This is a great invitation. The people may open their mouths wide, as young birds do to receive their mother's food. God can supply all their needs if they open their mouths to Him. It means that they expect everything from Him. He appreciates and rewards that attitude.

He is the Almighty God, Who says He will give what they ask. What He gives, other gods cannot give. It is primarily about their needs to live on earth, but He wants to give them much more. He wants to give from the fullness of His heart all His treasures that He has prepared for them. What applies here for the Israelite, applies to every member of God's people in all times. What do we ask of Him?

Alas, how often we too are like Israel. God must say: "But My people did not listen to My voice" (verse 11). Once again God calls the people "My people" (cf. verse 8). He has made them His own people through redemption. Out of gratitude for their redemption in the past and His promises for the future, the people should be faithful to Him. But the people have persisted in their rebellion against Him. It has not listened to His voice.

Listening or obedience is the theme of this psalm; the verb *sama* or listen, occurs five times in this psalm. His people have not taken up God's unlimited invitation in their hearts. God must say: "And Israel did not obey Me."

Because their hearts were not set on Him and His invitation, but showed unwillingness, "so" God "gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart" (verse 12). It is like what God did to Pharaoh (Exo 10:27). They chose not to respond to God's invitation, but to hold fast to their own devices. They want to go their own way to success and happiness. Therefore, God

causes them to continue in their own way, so that they will taste the bitter fruit of it (cf. Acts 14:16; Rom 1:24).

Psa 81:13-16 | God's Desire to Bless

13 *"Oh that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways!*

14 *"I would quickly subdue their enemies
And turn My hand against their adversaries.*

15 *"Those who hate the LORD would pretend obedience to Him,
And their time [of punishment] would be forever.*

16 *"But I would feed you with the finest of the wheat,
And with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."*

God utters, as it were, a sigh, "Oh", that His people would yet listen to Him and that Israel would walk in His ways (verse 13; cf. Lk 19:42; Deu 5:29; 32:29-30; Isa 48:18). They failed to do so, forfeiting all the blessings listed below.

Between the lines, however, we hear an invitation to still listen to Him in order to receive the forfeited blessings. God does not reject His people forever. The lesson came from the history of Israel, but the lesson is meant for the believing remnant of Israel. They will read this in the future. Today the lesson is for us as we reflect on this psalm.

Their enemies now have the upper hand, but if they listen to Him, He will intervene directly on their behalf and subdue their enemies (verse 14). With this, God opens the possibility of a new deliverance, similar to the deliverance from Egypt. They only have to cry out to Him in their trouble, turn to Him and live in faith according to His will, and He will turn His hand against their adversaries. Now it is not so. Now His hand is turned against them and He has to surrender them into the hand of their enemies.

The situation will then be completely reversed. Their enemies, "those who hate the LORD", will "pretend obedience to Him" (verse 15). In contrast to the time of blessing the believing remnant will enjoy in the realm of peace, "their time", that is, the time of the LORD's haters, will be "forever" in subjection and punishment.

The blessing consists of “the finest of the wheat” and “honey from the rock” (verse 16). These are two of the seven blessings that speak of the abundant blessings of the land (Deu 32:13-14; cf. Deu 8:7-8). They would have been fed on these blessings and satisfied with them if they had taken God’s statutes to heart. The reason why God holds these blessings before them is to induce them to become obedient to Him. Obedience to Him leads to life and blessing in abundance (Isa 48:17-19).

Spiritually speaking, “the finest of the wheat” speaks of Christ. He is the grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died and brought forth much fruit (Jn 12:24). The rock is also a picture of Christ (1Cor 10:4). Honey is sweet. Honey from the (struck) rock speaks of the sweet relationships of believers among themselves that have come as the fruit of Christ’s suffering.

Because every believer is connected to Christ, there is also close fellowship among them. This fellowship will be enjoyed perfectly in heaven. It is called honey in connection with the Word of God (Psa 19:10b). The interconnectedness is already enjoyed on earth as believers feed on God’s Word and are led by God’s Spirit.

Psalm 82

Introduction

This psalm is the answer to the prayers of the believing remnant in Psalm 81. This answer is the appearance of Christ to judge. As a rule, God begins judgment in His own house (Eze 9:6b; 1Pet 4:17). The LORD begins the judgment by cleansing Israel from the false rulers, who were followers of the false king of Israel, namely the antichrist. These rulers, judges, will be judged first (verse 7). In John 10 the Lord refers to these false leaders (Jn 10:34). Only He does not judge them at that time because He had not come to judge.

Everything will be different at His return. Psalm 82 speaks of the judgment on the house of Israel at the time the Lord Jesus appears to deliver His own. When the judgment on Israel has taken place, the remnant asks the LORD to judge the hostile nations as well (verse 8).

Psalm 82 continues the theme from Psalm 50, Asaph's only psalm in the second book of Psalms (Psalms 42-72). Psalm 82 begins with God (verse 1b) and ends with a prayer to God (verse 8). Psalm 83 begins with "O God" twice (Psa 83:1a) and ends with "LORD" and "the Most High" (Psa 83:18).

Psa 82:1-4 | Unrighteous Judges

1 A Psalm of Asaph.

God takes His stand in His own congregation;

He judges in the midst of the rulers.

2 How long will you judge unjustly

And show partiality to the wicked? Selah.

3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless;

Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.

4 Rescue the weak and needy;

Deliver [them] out of the hand of the wicked.

For "a Psalm of Asaph" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 50:1.

Without any introduction, Asaph presents God directly in His exalted position as Judge (verse 1b). He “takes His stand in His own congregation”. It is *His* congregation. Nor does God sit as some kind of ‘chairman’ in a circle where He is ‘the first among His equals’. No, He “takes His stand” in full majesty and “He judges in the midst of the rulers [literally: gods]”. He is the supreme judicial authority, the sole and absolutely just Judge of all and everything.

He calls together the gods, which are the judges (cf. verse 6; Psa 58:1b; Exo 21:6; 22:8-9). These gods are not heavenly beings. Nor are they the judges we know in our time, who only pronounce justice. They are more like the judges we find in the book of Judges, that is, they are rulers. As rulers, as government, though evil and sinful, they are appointed by God (Rom 13:1), they are God’s servants.

In Ezekiel 34, these judges are called the (false) shepherds of Israel and judged by the Chief Shepherd (Eze 34:1-16). Prophetically, this is about the false leaders of Israel during the time of the reign of the antichrist. The antichrist has fled, and now these leaders are being judged (cf. Isa 3:13-15).

The judges here are called ‘gods’ (cf. Jn 10:34) because they judge or rule on behalf of God. Therefore, they are to be acknowledged as “gods” in their judgments (cf. Exo 7:1). In the judges, the members of God’s people have to do with God. The judges are all accountable to Him. In His administration of justice, He is inviolable from all injustice on the part of anyone in the world and judges without regard to any person. All judges and judicial bodies are subject to Him (Isa 3:13; Rom 13:1-2,6).

Justice is characterized by judges who “judge unjustly” (verse 2). Because of the performance of these unrighteous leaders of Israel, the faithful remnant of Israel will hunger and thirst for righteousness (Mt 5:6). The righteous or the believing remnant in the end time asks “how long” this hunger and thirst should last.

The injustice of the judgments is manifested in favoring the wicked and squeezing the poor. The judges are corruptible. Criminals bribe the judges with their money obtained by crime and are acquitted. The poor innocent, on the other hand, are condemned and the little they have is taken away from them.

In verses 3-4, four words in the imperative are used to make clear to the judges what God, Who is above them, expects of them: 'vindicate', 'do justice', 'rescue' and 'deliver'. These are actions which characterize God Himself. This is how the judges should do it, but this is not how they act.

What God holds out to them here, therefore, implies an accusation of what they are not doing. Therefore, they are imperatively called upon to adjust their course of action to what God wants. The way in which they judge is a serious offence. Those who represent God as Judge trample God's honor by their conduct.

The first thing God speaks to them about, is to "vindicate the weak and fatherless" and "do justice to the afflicted and destitute" (verse 3). In Isaiah 1, this is a sin that is a hindrance to being saved (Isa 1:17). Only when they dispense with this practice does the invitation come in the next verse in Isaiah 1 to receive forgiveness of sins (Isa 1:18).

Verses 3-4 are favorites of modern theologians who advocate the social gospel. However, the point is not that they should make excuses for the weak and fatherless, the afflicted and destitute because they are weak, fatherless, afflicted and destitute. If that were the case, they would be doing what they are accused of, namely acting with regard to the person. The point is that these are vulnerable groups who have no natural protectors to stand up for them, so they are easily exploited by the powerful and wealthy. Prophetically, this is a group that is especially vulnerable: the faithful remnant of Israel (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).

If they vindicate and do justice, the result will be that "the weak and needy" will be delivered from the power of their oppressors (verse 4). That power is great. Through righteous justice, the judge will snatch the vulnerable "out of the hand of the wicked". The word "deliver" indicates that great power is required because the resistance to do justice is great.

Psa 82:5-7 | God Judges Unjust Judges

*5 They do not know nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are shaken.
6 I said, "You are gods,*

And all of you are sons of the Most High.

7 "Nevertheless you will die like men

And fall like [any] one of the princes."

The judges are fools who neither know nor understand the will of God (verse 5). This is not because of God, but because of their rejection of Him and His righteous government. "They walk about in darkness", that is not the darkness of the night as opposed to the light of the day, but the darkness within them. It is a darkness resulting from their ignorance of the law and the facts of a case. They have no understanding or insight into what is right and wrong in God's eyes, but on the contrary, turn the matter around (cf. Mic 3:2).

Because there is no longer righteous justice because of spiritual darkness, "all the foundations of the earth are shaken" (cf. Psa 11:2-3). Law and order are undermined. God has given the family and family life as the most important foundation for life on earth. Spiritual darkness overthrows this foundation, causing everything to waver and soon to collapse (Mt 10:21). The entire social and civic life is disrupted.

God has given judges a high position. "I" has emphasis. "I", 'none other than I', "said, "You are gods"" (verse 6). God has said this because their authority is derived from Him. As to their function, He calls all of them "sons of the Most High". They represent Him in His jurisdiction and position of authority on earth. This creates a special responsibility to act according to His example of absolute righteousness.

Because the gods, the judges, do not reckon with God, they "will die like men" (verse 7). God 'dethrones' them. He will judge them for their abuse of authority and unjust judgments. They have a position as princes, but will die as ordinary people despite their high position, just as it happens to every other prince (cf. Isa 14:10,12; Eze 31:12-14; Psa 49:12.)

The Lord Jesus quotes verse 6 in one of His disputes with the Jews, in which they accuse Him of blasphemy (Jn 10:33-36). He makes it clear that the "gods" are men of some responsibility, yet ordinary mortal men. They are not Divine persons, but they have received Divine authority.

He, the Lord Jesus, is no ordinary mortal man. He knows the Father and, as the Son, fulfills the Father's commission. He is the One "whom the Fa-

ther sanctified and sent into the world” (Jn 10:36). His authority as the Son of God is eternal and thus surpasses the authority of the judges who are called gods, sons of the Most High, in this psalm.

He comes with Divine authority and in a known relation to His Father. He came into the world as a Man, while His relationship with the Father as the Son of the Father is unchanging. How could He cease to be the Son of the Father? How can they reasonably accuse Him of blasphemy when He only points to the fact that He is God’s Son?

Psa 82:8 | God Judges the Earth

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth!

For it is You who possesses all the nations.

The psalm ends with a prayer. Now that the judgment on the house of God, that is Israel, has taken place, the remnant asks if the LORD will judge the hostile nations. This is what we find in Psalm 83. The righteous, in the face of so much injustice, cry out to God to arise and judge the earth. It is the Old Testament counterpart of the closing words of the New Testament: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

The reason given is that He “possesses all the nations”. He is the Owner of the earth and therefore fully entitled to judge injustice. After the judgment, He will rule over all and everything.

Psalm 83

Introduction

This psalm is God's answer to the prayer of the remnant in the last verse of the previous psalm (Psa 82:8). We see this answer particularly in the last verse of this psalm (Psa 83:18).

Psalm 83 is the twelfth and final psalm of Asaph (Psalms 50; 73-83). It deals with the enemies of God. These enemies are neighboring nations of Israel who want to attack the land to wipe it off the face of the earth and live there themselves. In Jeremiah 12, God calls them: "My wicked neighbors who strike at the inheritance with which I have endowed My people Israel" (Jer 12:14).

These neighboring nations are ten nations that form an alliance (verses 2-8). In Israel's history, these ten nations have never been an alliance against Israel. For example, in 2 Chronicles 20 it is the Moabites, the Ammonites, and part of the Meunites, which are enemies from only three countries (2Chr 20:1). It is clear that this alliance of ten nations is future. This is especially true of Assyria with nine allies, who is represented in Daniel as the king of the North, and in Isaiah as Assyria, the disciplining rod of God.

God declares Himself one with His people and will intervene on their behalf (Rev 19:11-21). Asaph asks for this intervention. He again interprets the voice of the faithful remnant in the great tribulation. He reminds God of His judgment on some past enemies and refers to two victories of Israel in the days of the judges Barak and Gideon (verses 9-12). These victories foreshadow God's judgment on Israel's enemies in the future. God's actions in the past are an encouragement in view of the future.

Psa 83:1-8 | Prayer Because of the Enemy

1 *A Song, a Psalm of Asaph.*

O God, do not remain quiet;

Do not be silent and, O God, do not be still.

2 *For behold, Your enemies make an uproar,*

*And those who hate You have exalted themselves.
 3 They make shrewd plans against Your people,
 And conspire together against Your treasured ones.
 4 They have said, "Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation,
 That the name of Israel be remembered no more."
 5 For they have conspired together with one mind;
 Against You they make a covenant:
 6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,
 Moab and the Hagrites;
 7 Gebal and Ammon and Amalek,
 Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
 8 Assyria also has joined with them;
 They have become a help to the children of Lot. Selah.*

For "a Song, a Psalm" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 48:1.

For "of Asaph" see at Psalm 50:1.

The psalm begins with a twofold cry to God – O God, ... O God (verse 1b) – and ends with the testimony about the one true God, the God of Israel, the "LORD", Who turns out to be the "Most High" (verse 18). "Most High" is the title of the LORD in the realm of peace. Already in Psalm 9 we see that the LORD is the same as *El Elyon*, God the Most High (Psa 9:2).

The remnant is in great distress because of a hostile alliance that wants to destroy Israel. In their distress they cry out to God (verse 1b). With a passionate "O God" they beg Him not to be silent, not to remain a silent Spectator, but to make Himself heard. Now it seems that He does not hear them, for He keeps Himself deaf. Let Him break His silence and command the destruction of the enemies.

Until now the LORD has deliberately kept silent (Isa 18:4). God's silence puts the people in great distress. If He is going to intervene in the future, it will be enough to speak one word, which is the sword from His mouth (Rev 19:15), and then all enemies will be defeated (Psa 2:5; Isa 11:4b).

The hostile gathered nations may be bent on their destruction, they are their enemies, but the remnant speaks to God of "Your enemies" (verse 2). They are essentially *God's* enemies. They "make an uproar" against God's people, as they prepare to attack them (cf. Isa 17:12; Jer 6:23).

They are people who do not hate them in the first place, but “You”, God. For example, we hear Hezekiah say to the LORD that Sennacherib’s words are meant to “reproach the living God” (Isa 37:4). David says the same thing to Goliath as he approaches the giant: “I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted” (1Sam 17:45). Thus God’s people always make their cause God’s cause. That the enemies hated God can be seen by exalting themselves. It is the gesture of defying God with the presumption that their plans will succeed and that God can do nothing against them.

The remnant says to God that the “shrewd plans” the enemies are craftily conspiring are directed “against Your people” (verse 3). The deliberations they hold are directed against “Your treasured ones”. This indicates that they are taking refuge behind the LORD. The remnant here appeals to their connection to God. They are God’s people. This also means that they are His protectors, who may count on His protection from this enemy alliance.

Then they tell God what the alliance, especially Assyria, is up to: they are up to another *shoah*, a total destruction of God’s people, to “wipe them out as a nation” (verse 4). An example in the Bible of someone who has sought to exterminate God’s people is Haman (Est 3:2-6). In recent history, Hitler has been someone who wanted to do this.

The words with which the enemies introduce their plan, “come, and let us”, prove the spirit of rebellion against God. They are the words by which mankind in their pride set in motion the building of the tower of Babel to make a name for themselves on earth (Gen 11:4). This pride is expressed more intensely in our days. Man flaunts sovereignty and freedom as if he were God. God and His people are insufferable to him.

The conspirators are not satisfied with Israel being exterminated. Even “the name of Israel” must “be remembered no more” (cf. Jer 11:19). The land must disappear not only from the map, but also from the history books, as if it had never been there. The language uttered by the enemies is regularly heard in the news today from the mouths of islamic leaders. The prophetic Assyrian may be an alliance of ten islamic nations.

This supreme folly is diametrically opposed to God’s plan for His people and will therefore fail completely (cf. Pro 21:30). Not only will the nonsen-

sical plan fail, but they themselves will be wiped off the face of the earth by the Messiah and their name will not be remembered for all eternity.

What the hostile alliance has conspired together with one mind (verse 5) has been made clear in the previous verses. And again the remnant says to God that the enemies not so much make a covenant against them, but “against You they make a covenant” (cf. verses 3-4). They believe that they are strong because of their joint consultation and solidarity. Everything in them is directed against God and His Anointed, which is the Messiah (Psa 2:2).

Ten nations have united in a covenant against Israel (verses 6-8). It is the counterpart of the ten-state alliance of the European Union, or the restored Western Roman Empire (Rev 17:12; Dan 7:24), which makes a covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27a). The ten-state alliance that seeks to wipe out Israel consists primarily of neighboring nations, some of which are also related to Israel.

1. “Edom” is Esau (verse 6; Gen 36:1,8), the twin brother of Jacob (Gen 26:24-26). It is a brother people of Israel. Edom is the archenemy of Israel (Num 20:14-21; Psa 137:7; Oba 1:12-14). “The tents of Edom” refers to their dwelling places. The hatred of God’s people has a home with them; they harbor the hatred.

2. “The Ishmaelites” are the descendants of Ishmael, who was fathered by Abraham with Hagar, Sarah’s maid (Gen 16:15-16; 25:12-18). They have the same father as Isaac and are therefore also closely related to Israel.

3. “Moab” is a descendant of Lot (Gen 19:36-37). Lot is the son of Haran, the brother of Abraham (Gen 11:24) and thus a nephew of Abraham. Here the family connection with Israel is somewhat more distant than with Edom and Ishmael, but is still clearly present. They have also always been hostile to God’s people (Num 22:4-7; Jdg 3:12-14).

4. “The Hagrites” are a nomadic tribe, living on the east side of the Jordan (1Chr 5:10).

5. The origin of “Geba” (verse 7) is uncertain. From the only two Scriptures where Geba is mentioned, we can conclude that there is a close con-

nection with Tyre (1Kgs 5:18; Eze 27:9). We can tentatively conclude that Gebal is a city or a tribe that, like Tyre, is out for prosperity.

6. “Ammon”, like Moab, is a descendant of Lot (Gen 19:36,38). They, too, have always been hostile to God’s people (Jdg 10:9; 1Sam 11:1-2; 2Sam 10:6,8; Zep 2:8-10).

7. “Amalek” is a descendant of Esau (Gen 36:12,16). They went to meet Israel as the first enemy after Israel was delivered by God from slavery in Egypt and set out for the promised land (Exo 17:8-13). They are a vicious enemy who attacked the defenseless people at the rear, where all the weak are (Deu 25:17-18).

8. “Philistia” are the Philistines or Palestinians. These enemies live in the land of Israel and have been a constant plague on God’s people. David has finally defeated them and subdued them (2Sam 8:1; cf. 1Kgs 4:21). Here we see them asserting themselves again in the future.

9. “The inhabitants of Tyre” are characterized by their thirst for prosperity. When Jerusalem is destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, they rejoice over it. A competitor is gone, allowing them to trade more and increase their profit margin (Eze 26:2). This motive drives them to be part of the upcoming coalition.

10. “Assyria” closes the list as the tenth ally (verse 8). “Assyria also has joined them” because of an agenda of their own and will take charge of the alliance. They have “become a help to the children of Lot”, that are Moab and Ammon, to support them. This makes it plausible that Assyria has been asked to be part of the coalition. The former world power is a tremendous asset to the coalition. They will also set policy.

This has created a coalition of nations that encloses Israel from all sides and can attack from all sides, with the main attack coming from the north. This gives the enemies a good sense of their strategy. As for Israel, they have no option but to cry out to God. They see no way out, but are not without a way out (2Cor 4:8b).

Psa 83:9-16 | Prayer for Punishment of the Enemy

| 9 *Deal with them as with Midian,*

*As with Sisera [and] Jabin at the torrent of Kishon,
 10 Who were destroyed at En-dor,
 Who became as dung for the ground.
 11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb
 And all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
 12 Who said, "Let us possess for ourselves
 The pastures of God."
 13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
 Like chaff before the wind.
 14 Like fire that burns the forest
 And like a flame that sets the mountains on fire,
 15 So pursue them with Your tempest
 And terrify them with Your storm.
 16 Fill their faces with dishonor,
 That they may seek Your name, O LORD.*

The remnant asks God to do with the united enemies as He has done in the past with peoples who have held His people in bondage (verse 9). They point to His dealings with Midian, Sisera and Jabin. The events are recounted in the book of Judges. What they do not refer to is the fact that the nations were given authority over God's people because of their unfaithfulness to God.

Neither are the judges through whom God acted mentioned. It is about what God has done. He has acted in the judges. They first recount what God did to Sisera, the general of Jabin, the king of Canaan. Sisera met his inglorious end at the torrent of Kishon (Jdg 4:2,7,21-22), with the result that the power of Jabin was also broken (Jdg 4:23-24).

Sisera and Jabin "were destroyed at En-dor" (verse 10). En-dor is near Tanaanach and Megiddo, that is, in the region of the battle (Jos 17:11; Jdg 5:19-21). Because of the crushing defeat which God inflicted on these enemies, they "became as dung for the ground". The latter indicates that after their inglorious end, their dead bodies are also treated with the utmost contempt (cf. Jer 8:2; 9:22; 16:4; 25:33; Isa 66:24). This remains of those who offend God's people.

The remnant asks God for special treatment for the leaders of the enemy coalition (verse 11). They ask that He treat “their nobles” and “their princes” as He has done with the leaders of Midian. “Oreb and Zeeb” are two princes of Midian who were captured, killed and beheaded by Gideon’s army west of the Jordan (Jdg 7:25; cf. Isa 10:26a). “Zebah and Zalmunna” are the kings of Midian (Jdg 8:5). Gideon captured and killed them east of the Jordan (Jdg 8:12,21).

These nobles and princes in their audacity have said: “Let us possess for ourselves the pastures of God” (verse 12). This is also what the coalition of hostile nations wants. It shows that they hate Israel because God dwells with them. They want to wipe out Israel because they want to wipe out the memory of God. They want to do this by taking possession of the land so that they can have their idols dwell there, to whom they will attribute the honor of their victory.

What the remnant is asking for will happen in the end time. There is a clear similarity between the events described in Judges 4 and what is described in the book of Revelation. At Megiddo, the enemy armies are defeated and the LORD’s people are delivered.

At Har-Magedon – which means ‘mountain of Megiddo’ – something similar will take place (Rev 19:11-21). The armies of the then restored Roman Empire, that is, the united Western Europe that will in the future come to the aid of apostate Israel in its battle against the king of the North, will be annihilated by the coming of Christ. The God-fearing part of Israel will then be saved and is called “all Israel” in Romans 11 (Rom 11:26).

The coalition’s efforts to wipe out Israel brings the God-fearing Jew to a prayer in which he asks for God’s judgment on them (verses 13-17). He speaks to God as “my God”. What the enemy wants is directed against his God. Therefore, He asks God to “make them like the whirling dust, like chaff before the wind” (verse 13). A whirling dust and chaff have no power in themselves and are blown willy-nilly by the wind in all directions (cf. Deu 28:7; Isa 17:13).

They must not only be a prey to the wind, but also to the consuming fire (verse 14). Of a forest burned by fire, nothing is left but charred trees, in which life never comes again. Mountains scorched by the flame are black-

ened. Nothing grows on those mountains that can serve as food. The judgment on Assyria in Isaiah 10 is also described as forest fire (Isa 10:16-19).

As fire and flame do their consuming work, so God must pursue them with *His* tempest (verse 15). This will rob them of all their strength to be able to do anything against God or His people. He must terrify them with His storm, so that they will forever lose the courage to do something against Him and His people.

God's action will "fill their faces", i.e. the faces of the enemies "with dishonor" (verse 16). The nations have said snidely that the name of Israel will be remembered no more when they have carried out their plans (verse 4). Now the remnant says that as a result of the disgrace that will be the portion of the nations, there will be those who will seek the Name of the LORD. The prayerful person realizes that God is a merciful God, Who keeps the door of salvation open also for persons of the nations.

Psa 83:17-18 | End Result

*17 Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever,
And let them be humiliated and perish,
18 That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD,
Are the Most High over all the earth.*

God stretches out His hand in grace to the individual for the last time in the judgments on the nations (cf. Rev 22:17b). If he does not accept this, but continues in his enmity, no salvation is possible. The remnant asks God for the hostile nations that He "let them be ashamed and dismayed forever" (verse 17). There remains no other option but for Him to "let them be humiliated and perish".

All who stubbornly refuse to bow before God's judgments will know "that You alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth" (verse 18). He, Who stands in a special relationship to His people Israel, indicated by His Name "LORD", stands as "the Most High over all the earth". All is His and He rules over all, not just Israel. The name "Most High" is the name of God that has a special connection with the realm of peace.

The time will come when everyone will acknowledge Him in this way. That will happen at the beginning of the realm of peace (Isa 45:23). It is the pre-fulfillment of what will be so in eternity, “that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11).

Psalm 84

Introduction

This psalm is of the sons of Korah (verse 1a). Prophetically this psalm is about the faithful remnant. Father Korah is a type of the unbelieving part of Israel under the antichrist and his followers. His sons, on the other hand, are a type of the believing remnant (Num 26:10,11).

After the false leaders of Israel (Psalm 82) and the king of the North and his allies (Psalm 83) are eliminated, we find in Psalm 84 prophetically the spiritual exercises of the ten tribes realm still in dispersion. We read in this psalm of their desire to return to the land of Israel, the *aliyah* – means ‘going up’, that is returning to the promised land, in this case the return of the ten tribes –, and in particular their desire to meet God’s anointed, the Messiah, Christ Jesus (verse 9).

This psalm is a pilgrim’s psalm. The believer is on his way to Jerusalem and specifically to the temple. The wish of every Jew outside of Israel is: see you next year in Jerusalem. It is the same with this believing Israelite. We also see this after the redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Then the people go on a journey to the land and the house of God (Exo 15:13-17; Deu 12:1-7). While in the land, they march three times a year to Jerusalem and the temple (Deu 16:16). Also on the way to the land, in the wilderness, they have a sanctuary: the tabernacle.

As an application to us, we can remember that we are on a journey to the place where the Lord Jesus is in the midst (Mt 18:20). Each time we may gather as a church around Him. That is what our life is all about. For us, the temple is not a building, but the assembled believers are the temple. It is a spiritual temple that consists of living stones (1Pet 2:5a). When believers come together, they bring spiritual sacrifices, which are the songs of praise that ascend to God (1Pet 2:5b).

We can also remember that we are on a journey to heaven, the Father’s house. There we are allowed to dwell forever. Even now, on our journey to

that place, we may boldly enter into God's presence and continually offer Him sacrifices of praise (Heb 10:19; 13:15).

In Psalm 81 we have the Feast of the blowing of the Trumpets, which is the call to humility. Now that, prophetically, according to Psalm 83, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, has appeared, we see in Psalm 84 the Feast of Booths, (see at verse 6) which speaks symbolically of the realm of peace.

Psa 84:1-4 | Longing For the Sanctuary

1 For the choir director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

How lovely are Your dwelling places,

O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD;

My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

3 The bird also has found a house,

And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,

Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,

My King and my God.

4 How blessed are those who dwell in Your house!

They are ever praising You. Selah.

For "for the choir director" see at Psalm 4:1.

"On the Gittith" also occurs in the heading of Psalm 8 and Psalm 81 (Psa 8:1; 81:1). This links these three psalms together. Psalm 8 speaks of the reign of the Lord Jesus in the realm of peace. Psalm 81 speaks of the Feast of the blowing of the Trumpets, which is the feast of the restoration of Israel to its relationship with the Messiah in the realm of peace. Psalm 84 connects to this with the desire to be in the presence of the LORD. See further at Psalm 8:1.

This is the first "psalm of the sons of Korah" of the four that appear in the third book of Psalms (Psalms 84-85; 87-88). They form an appendix to the eight psalms that are of them at the beginning of the second book of Psalms (Psalms 42-49). Psalm 84 has similarities with Psalm 42. Both psalms are about longing for the sanctuary of God, from which they are now far away. See further at Psalm 42:1.

There is this difference that in Psalm 42 it is the desire of the remnant of the Jews, the two tribes, and in Psalm 84 it is the desire of the remaining ten tribes of Israel. That the two tribes and the ten tribes will again be united is seen, for example, in Ezekiel 37 (Eze 37:21-22). The following psalms of the sons of Korah also elaborate on the restoration of these ten tribes. These believers are the elect of the ten tribes, whom the angels will gather together "from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Mt 24:31).

The passionate love of the remnant for God's dwellings contrasts sharply with the destruction by the enemies of those dwelling places (verse 1b; Psa 83:12). To the remnant, "Your dwelling places" are "lovely". That is because He, Who is so dear to them, dwells there. He is the Anointed (verse 9), Who is also their King and their God (verse 3). There is nothing else on earth that their heart desires so much.

Opposite the enemies gathered to take possession of God's dwellings, the remnant speaks to the "LORD of hosts". All powers, including the God-hating ones, are under His supreme authority. He controls, rules, governs and orders everything. This title occurs three more times in this short psalm: in verses 3,8,12.

The "soul" of the sons of Korah, and of every one who knows God, like the remnant, has a great longing "for the courts of the LORD" (verse 2). The soul is the inner being, the thinking, all that is in him. "My soul" is the same as 'I', but with emphasis and poetic, and then continues with "my heart" and "my flesh".

This longing is so great that his soul "even yearned". Everything in him yearns for God. He is consumed by it. There is a fierce thirst for God (cf. Psa 42:1b-2; 63:1b). If only he will be in "the courts of the LORD", then his longing will be satisfied. Then he will be in the direct presence of the living God.

The New Testament believer is also permitted to know this longing, a longing that is stilled when he consciously enters God's sanctuary. The way to this has been opened for him by the Lord Jesus. He has free access to God, Who is Father to him (Heb 10:19-22; Rom 5:1-2; Eph 2:18). When the Lord Jesus has taken the church to Himself in the Father's house, there will be an undisturbed, full, eternal fulfillment of this longing.

The remnant longs with their whole being, “my heart and my flesh”, to be in the presence of God. They “sing for joy to the living God” that He will satisfy their longing (cf. *Psa 42:3; Hos 1:10*). He is the living God in contrast to the dead idols of the enemies, who could not prevent their destruction (cf. *Isa 46:1-2,5-7*). It is useless to cry out to dead idols. The living God listens when people call to Him (cf. *1 Kgs 18:25-29,36-39*).

They know that God cares for the insignificant “bird”, or “sparrow” (*Lk 12:6*) by providing this little animal with “a home” (verse 3). He also gives the restless “swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young”. These two little birds, who are a picture of man, who does not mean anything and goes his way restlessly (cf. *Pro 26:2*), have found a place of rest, not only for themselves, but also for their young.

These little birds have their nests in the buildings of the temple. It is the privileged place close to the altar. Thus – in picture – the insignificant, but to God valuable remnant finds a resting place in the presence of God. That is what the psalmist wishes for himself. How happy, how blessed (verse 4) is one who dwells in the presence of God. When this desire of the psalmist is fulfilled, he will have a home, fellowship and company with God.

The place of rest is at “Your altars”. There are two altars in God’s house: the bronze burnt offering altar and the golden altar of incense. The burnt offering altar stands in the court and speaks of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Here man finds rest for his conscience. The altar of incense speaks of worship. It stands in the sanctuary, in the presence of God, where the believer enjoys fellowship with Him.

The remnant here speaks directly to God. They again call Him “LORD of hosts”. He is above all the heavenly and earthly hosts. They now add their personal relationship with Him. Each member of the remnant also has his own personal relationship with Him. Therefore, each one personally says it to God: “My King and my God.”

The sons of Korah – as the voice of the remnant, the ten tribes in exile – who are far from the sanctuary, praise them “blessed ... who dwell in Your house!” (verse 4). ‘Blessed’ means ‘happy’ or ‘full of happiness’. In *Psalm 1*, “blessed” is for those who delight in the law of the LORD (*Psa 1:1-3*). The Word of God brings us into the presence of God. *Psalm 1* also suggests

the two paths to choose. Here, in Psalm 84, the remnant makes the right choice. That is why the word ‘blessed’ is added here. That ‘blessed’ sounds here for those who dwell in the house of God.

“Christ also died for sins once for all, [the] just for [the] unjust, so that He might bring us to God” (1Pet 3:18). His suffering was for the purpose of bringing us into the presence of God. When you are there, you cannot be silent. Therefore, being “blessed” here is connected to “ever praising” the LORD. To dwell in God’s house means to be at home there, to have rest there in the fellowship with God (cf. *Psa 23:6*). Those who dwell there are full of God’s glory and are “ever praising” Him (*Heb 13:15*). In God’s house is taking place what will also take place without interruption in eternity: singing praises to God. There is every reason to do so. After all, He has redeemed His own and brought them into His presence (*Col 1:12-15*).

Psa 84:5-8 | From Strength to Strength

*5 How blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
In whose heart are the highways [to Zion]!
6 Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring;
The early rain also covers it with blessings.
7 They go from strength to strength,
[Every one of them] appears before God in Zion.
8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah.*

In this new section, which is separated from the previous by a “selah” (verse 4), it appears that the blessing of dwelling in God’s house results from having fellowship with God. This is experienced by “the man whose strength is in” God, and “in whose heart are the highways” (verse 5). It begins with the restatement in this psalm of a ‘blessed’. In verse 12, a ‘blessed’ sounds for the third and last time in this psalm. There it indicates by what the blessing of ‘blessed’ is obtained, namely ‘the trust in the LORD of hosts’!

Verses 1b-4 are about dwelling in God’s house. Verses 5-8 are about the pilgrim’s way to come there. Those who dwell in God’s house are “blessed” (verse 4), but the pilgrim is also “blessed” (verse 5), even though he is not

yet in God's house. He is "blessed" because his heart is in God's house and he is on his way there. Those who are in God's house are blessed. Those who are on their way there are also blessed, as the following verses show.

In principle, every believer is "blessed" because his transgressions are forgiven (Psa 32:1). Here, however, it goes a step further. The sons of Korah say that this applies to the man "whose strength is in You". Such people do not look to their own abilities. They see themselves as powerless to go the way to the sanctuary, but they know that God is powerful to bring them there. Therefore, they seek their strength in Him (cf. 2Tim 2:1; Eph 6:10).

The consequence of this is that in their "heart are the highways". In Jeremiah 31 we also find this expression: "Direct your mind to the highway" (Jer 31:21; cf. Isa 33:8). This means that they are walking on the pilgrim way to Jerusalem with the confidence that the LORD will bring them there safely.

There is an undivided, a united, heart in them (Psa 86:11). They do not hesitate between two opinions (1Kgs 18:21). Their heart is completely set on God (2Chr 16:9). The highway is the way that leads to God's house, to God, to heaven. The highway is free from all obstacles (cf. Isa 40:3-4; Lk 3:2-9). He who has the highways in his heart is upright and departs from evil (Pro 16:17). He has judged sin and thus cleared the way for the power of God's Spirit to work in him.

When the heart is undivided and completely focused on God, pilgrims can overcome the difficulties they encounter along the way (verse 6). Not only do they overcome them, but the difficulties become blessings. "The valley of Baca" can be translated as "the valley of the balsam trees" or "the valley of weeping". Balsam trees grow in an arid landscape.

It is an arid valley, while in many cases the soil of a valley is more humid, so that trees can still grow in the depths. The myrtle, a symbol of the remnant, also grows in the depth, namely in the bottom of a valley (Zec 1:8). When a branch of balsam trees breaks off, a milky juice drips from it, as if tears were flowing.

The translation "valley of tears" comes from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It reminds the pilgrim that the way through life is not a painless one. It is arid and dry, and therefore hard for a pilgrim who needs water (cf. Gen 21:14-19). Then the transition to a place

of springs and early rain is special. Often life is difficult and tears appear. The tears of the pilgrim who has his strength in God become pearls in the light of God. He can sing psalms in the night (Acts 16:25; Job 35:10).

Difficulties and sorrows drive out to God. Thereby the way through the valley of tears becomes a source of blessing. God's presence is experienced in a way that is not possible during times of prosperity. The tears give way to "the early rain" that will "cover it with blessings". Countless believers have testified that the need has driven them out to God and that they have found a comfort in Him that they would not want to miss for the world.

The rain here is "the early rain". The early rain falls in September/October. This is pointing to the fact that this is prophetically about the Feast of Booths, because that is also celebrated in September/October.

Thus the pilgrims "go from strength to strength" (verse 7). Each new trial, each new suffering, is an occasion to experience the strength of God (cf. Isa 40:31; Pro 4:18). We strengthen ourselves in grace when we are aware that we need it. Grace is the strength by which "[every one of them] appears before God in Zion". The pilgrims know this. The assurance of their safe arrival at God's house gives strength to persevere. For us, Christians, the same applies, but with regard to the heavenly Zion to which we are on our way (Heb 12:22).

At the same time, there is once again the awareness that in our own strength we will not succeed in reaching the final goal. Certainty of arrival does not blind one to the circumstances or to one's own weakness. Therefore the pilgrim prays to the "LORD God of hosts" (verse 8) and asks Him to listen to his prayer.

At the same time he also calls God the "God of Jacob". The God who stands above all powers is the God of the weak Jacob. With an appeal to that Name the pilgrim asks Him to hear his prayer. They know the God of Jacob as the God Who has shown his grace to him countless times in his life. They recognize themselves in Jacob. Therefore, by appealing to God in this way they appeal to that grace.

Psa 84:9-12 | A Sun and Shield

| 9 Behold our shield, O God,

And look upon the face of Your anointed.

10 For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand [outside].

I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God

Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield;

The LORD gives grace and glory;

No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts,

How blessed is the man who trusts in You!

Those who know God as the God of Jacob because they know themselves, see in God their shield, their protection (verse 9). God being their shield (verse 9a) is parallel to God beholding the face of His anointed (verse 9b). It means that His protection (shield) is based on seeing His anointed. It is similar to the Passover, where God says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exo 12:13).

Their protection, which consists in being able to call the LORD their King and their God, is not based on their faithfulness or their merit. It is based on God looking upon the face of His Anointed, His Messiah. Therefore, the LORD God has become a sun and shield for them (verse 11). The blessings and salvation in the psalms hereafter are based on the same fact.

What has just been said is evident from the question, “look upon the face of Your anointed”. This means that they are asking God to look not at them, but at His Messiah. “Anointed” is the translation of the Hebrew word ‘Messiah’ and the Greek word ‘Christ’. The remnant knows that they are not in themselves pleasing to God and that God does not listen to them because of who they are. They are pleasing to God only because of their connection to the Messiah.

A beautiful illustration is found in Paul’s letter to Philemon, where he tells Philemon to accept Onesimus as if Onesimus were Paul (Phlm 1:17). Thus the remnant, and thus we too, are accepted by God because God sees them, and us, in Christ.

To the New Testament believer this applies to a higher, heavenly level. He is “in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6). God can only answer any prayer on the basis

of Who His Son is to Him and on the basis of the work He accomplished on Calvary's cross.

The believer, in whatever age he lives, knows to discern what "is better" (verse 10). It is better, he confesses, to experience one day of fellowship with God than countless days of enjoying all the goods the world has to offer. "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand [outside]."

The comparison of one day to a thousand days makes it clear that one day in the courts of God dwarfs everything else. There is nothing that outweighs being in the courts of God. With the Lord one day is as a thousand years (2Pet 3:8). One day of fellowship with the Lord is far preferable to a thousand years in the dwelling (tent) or palace of the wicked (the antichrist and followers).

The sons of Korah add another comparison. They prefer a place "at the threshold of the house of my God" above dwelling "in the tents of wickedness". They made the right choice from the two choices presented in Psalm 1. They have been obedient to Moses' call to depart from the tents of the wicked men when their father rebelled. As a result, they did not perish with their father (Num 16:23-27,31-32; 26:9-11). Their choice for the LORD is a choice against wickedness.

To "stand at the threshold of the house of my God" means to perform a service in the temple in the presence of God. This is in contrast to their ancestor Korah who was not satisfied with what he considered a minor service (Num 16:1-3). In 1 Chronicles 26 we read that some of the sons of Korah worked as gatekeepers of the temple, guardians of the entrance (1Chr 26:1-19; 9:19).

The sons of Korah explain why they choose the presence of the LORD. The consideration is not difficult, "for the LORD God is a sun and shield" (verse 11). The remnant here is in darkness and cold. God is "a sun" to them in those circumstances, giving light and warmth. The "sun" is the description of what God is to the believers in the realm of peace (Isa 60:19-20; Rev 21:23; Mal 4:2). He is also their "shield", that is, their protection.

Having said what God is, the sons of Korah say what He will give. He "gives grace and glory". Grace is needed to make the journey to God's house (Jn 1:16). Glory will be given to the pilgrims when they get there.

God will honor them for their perseverance. Grace has its origin in Him. The same is true of glory. What He honors the pilgrim for is the result of His work in the pilgrim. Honor or glory is the consequence when we behold the Lord Jesus in faith. We are then changed in His “image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2Cor 3:18).

Yet He imputes to the pilgrim the perseverance for which He has given the strength. The homage He pays is therefore an expression of His grace. No one will congratulate and praise himself for what he has done. Nor will anyone want to do that, for God has given all that has been necessary for the way that has been traveled.

God withholds no good thing “from those who walk uprightly” (cf. *Psa* 15:1-2). That God does not withhold good thing means that God gives what is needed (cf. *Phil* 4:19). It is a stronger expression than saying that God gives. With giving, the act, the giving, is more prominent. With not withholding, the emphasis is on the person using the opportunity to give.

By this mode of expression, the Spirit meets our tendency to accuse God of withholding something from us when He does not give us something we ask for or think we need. The devil was successful with Eve because he was able to convince her that God had withheld something from her.

“Those who walk uprightly” are those who go their way with God. They are not sinless or faultless, but they are pure in heart, though they “stumble in many [ways]” (*Jam* 3:2). The upright person is honest and transparent in his motives. He is focused on God and desires to live before His face, that is, in His presence, in the awareness of His presence.

This God is the “LORD of hosts” (verse 12). The sons of Korah use this title for the fourth time in this psalm (verses 1b,3,8,12). That shows how impressed they are by His exaltation above all heavenly and earthly hosts. The confidence that everything is in His hand, gives rest to continue the way to God’s house.

This almighty God, Who surpasses everything and everyone, is completely worthy of man’s trust. He who does so is truly “blessed”. This is the third time that this word, this ‘beatitude’, occurs. The first time it is in connection with dwelling in the house of God (verse 4). The second time it is

in connection with the heart of those who seek their strength in God (verse 5). The third time, here, it is connected with trusting God.

Psalm 85

Introduction

Now that the remnant of the ten tribes has returned from exile we have an outward restoration. In Psalm 85 we find the spiritual exercise of the remnant leading to inner restoration. We first have

a retrospective (verses 1b-3), then

a look ahead (verses 4-7) with finally

teaching from the LORD to comfort the remnant (verses 8-13).

Psa 85:1-3 | God Shows Favor to His Land

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

O LORD, You showed favor to Your land;

You restored the captivity of Jacob.

2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people;

You covered all their sin. Selah.

3 You withdrew all Your fury;

You turned away from Your burning anger.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

The first part of the psalm (verses 1b-3) gives a retrospective. The psalm begins with the grateful acknowledgment that the LORD has shown “favor to” His “land” (verse 1b) – Israel is His land (Lev 25:23). It is about the time when God has “restored the captivity of Jacob” (Lev 26:44-45). This is what the remnant will say when the great tribulation is over and the people, Jacob, that is the twelve tribes, have been brought back by God to His land. The land is God’s, He owns the land, and dwells in it in His own who dwell in it.

The blessing is the result of the removal of the iniquity and sin of the people (verse 2). It concerns the believers of the ten tribes. They have received forgiveness for their sins; the anger no longer rests on them. Their iniquity

and sins have been the reason for God to drive His people out of His land. These sins can be summarized in two things: not accepting the Son, the Messiah, and accepting, serving and following the antichrist (Jn 5:43). In other words: murder and (spiritual) adultery, or the breaking of the commandments of both of the two stone tablets of the law.

But He “forgave the iniquity” of His people. The word “forgave” or “carried away” is reminiscent of the day of atonement where the goat that is sent away carried away all the iniquities of the people to a solitary land in the east (Lev 16:22). The iniquity of His people is that they rejected Him in His Son. He has taken it away by making the rejection the basis for their blessing. He has done this by laying the iniquity of the people upon His Son and judging Him for it.

Iniquity was manifested in their countless sins. The rejection of the Son is the culmination and irrefutable evidence of a life full of sin. But He has “covered all their sin”. The covering for sin is likewise found in the work of His Son. The blood of Christ covers all the sins, without exception, of every one who confesses his sins and believes in Him (1Jn 1:7).

The remnant can say to God “You withdrew all Your fury” because the Son of God has already suffered the wrath of God over sin (verse 3; cf. Psa 42:8b). Because God has let His burning wrath pass over His Son by making Him sin (2Cor 5:21), God has “turned away” from His “burning anger” over His people.

Psa 85:4-7 | Restore Us

*4 Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your indignation toward us to cease.
5 Will You be angry with us forever?
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?
6 Will You not Yourself revive us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?
7 Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD,
And grant us Your salvation.*

The glorious situation of the previous verses has not yet arrived. The ten tribes have received the forgiveness, but they don't yet understand the

reality and scope of it properly. We see this in picture in the difficulty the brothers of Joseph had in understanding and accepting the depth and genuineness of Joseph's forgiveness.

The remnant is still far from God's land. Therefore, they make an urgent appeal to the "God of our salvation" to restore them i.e. to bring them back into the land (verse 4). They are in the great tribulation, in which they acknowledge God's indignation toward them because of their iniquity and sins. The question to God, "cause Your indignation toward us to cease", involves the acknowledgment of its righteousness. It is a demand for grace.

The LORD has forgiven them (verses 2-3), but they ask for forgiveness again. We see this in pictures in Genesis 50 with the brothers of Joseph (Gen 50:17). Years after Joseph has forgiven them, they ask again for forgiveness. In the same way, there are many Christians who are not sure of the forgiveness of their sins. They have accepted the Lord Jesus and received forgiveness, but in their lives they are often uncertain because time and again they return to the law and time and again they look to themselves instead of to the Lord's accomplished work.

Surely it cannot be, they continue to ask, that "You will be angry with us forever?" (verse 5). Surely God cannot prolong His anger "to all generations", can He? They bow in despair under God's indignation, experiencing it as endless.

Yet in their despair there is also a trace of hope. They speak emphatically to God, saying: You, God, "will You not Yourself revive us again?" (verse 6). They acknowledge that only God is able to do that. When He does, the result is that His people rejoice in Him. A people who have been made spiritually alive is a people who rejoice in God.

They have doubts about their relationship with God. They are asking for God to revive them again. This means that they feel 'dead', which means that they do not experience a relationship with God. We hear this in what the father says of the prodigal son (Lk 15:24a) and in what is written of the condition of unbelievers (Eph 2:1). To live means to have a relationship. "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life" (1Jn 5:11-12a).

They passionately appeal to the LORD to show them His “lovingkindness” (verse 7). Lovingkindness is the translation of the Hebrew word *Adonai*, which means covenant faithfulness, which means that the blessings, the lovingkindness, are based on the covenant. They make everything dependent on Him. From themselves they expect nothing. The salvation of the realm of peace, for which they so long, must come from Him. He must give it. That is what they beg Him for.

Psa 85:8-13 | Blessing For the Land

*8 I will hear what God the LORD will say;
For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones;
But let them not turn back to folly.
9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.
10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.
11 Truth springs from the earth,
And righteousness looks down from heaven.
12 Indeed, the LORD will give what is good,
And our land will yield its produce.
13 Righteousness will go before Him
And will make His footsteps into a way.*

The doubt of the remnant (verse 7) gives the LORD the opportunity to teach the remnant about the scope of God’s salvation. After the supplication in the previous verses, the righteous waits for the answer God will give (verse 8). This expectant attitude after supplication is wonderful and an example for us (cf. Hab 2:1). The righteous knows what God is going to say. He knows this because he knows God’s love for His people.

His people are “His godly ones”. “Godly ones” in Hebrew is *chasidim*, the plural of *chasid*, which is derived from *Adonai*, which is the lovingkindness or ‘covenant faithfulness’. The remnant was in doubt about this and asked the LORD in verse 7 to show His covenant faithfulness.

In verses 2-3 they have testified of forgiveness on the basis of the blood of the covenant. In verse 8 the LORD speaks of peace, He speaks to their

hearts – as Joseph once did to his brothers. Then they should not return to the folly of doubting His love. The LORD speaks of peace only to His godly ones, that is, to those who are faithful to His covenant.

God will “speak peace” to those who are still so distressed. Thus God always speaks peace to those who have made peace with Him on the basis of repentance and confession of their sins. In doing so, they must be determined not to “turn back to folly” (cf. Pro 28:13b). To return to folly means to return to a state of unbelief, of trusting in idols and of excluding God (Psa 14:1).

In the light of the New Testament with the application to us, this is not about the peace *with* God that someone receives at his conversion (Rom 5:1) It is about the peace *of* God that a believer may experience as he walks in trust and fellowship with God (Phil 4:7).

The remnant knows for sure, “surely”, that “His salvation is near to those who fear Him” (verse 9). Salvation is not the portion of everyone, but only of the God-fearing. For them it is “near”, it is imminent and will soon be there. They must hang on a little longer, and then they will fully enjoy salvation in the realm of peace. Associated with this is the fact “that glory may dwell in our land”. If God is feared, that is, if people live in awe of Him – and this will be the case in the realm of peace – this will bring glory to the entire land (cf. Psa 72:19).

That glory is the blessing and prosperity that will come upon the land. Fundamentally, that glory consists in the Messiah dwelling in the midst of His people. He is their glory (Isa 60:1-2; Zec 2:5). That glory came to them at Christ’s first coming to earth in Him (Jn 1:14), but was rejected by them (Isa 53:2-3). When He comes to them the second time, His people will confess their sin and He will allow them to share in His earthly glory (Zec 12:2; 13:1,9).

This is all the result of Christ’s work on the cross. There “lovingkindness and truth” met and “righteousness and peace” kissed each other (verse 10). These features are now personified, they are presented as persons, that is, they are present in a strong, emphatic way.

What by sin have become irreconcilable opposites, God has reconciled in Christ on the cross. Lovingkindness always precedes faithfulness or

truth (Psa 25:10; 89:14; Pro 16:6; 20:28; cf. Jn 1:17b). The cause is that on the ground of the truth the people forfeited every right to blessing. They therefore need lovingkindness or grace to still receive the blessing. But it is grace on the basis of truth.

As a result of Christ's work of reconciliation, "truth springs from the earth" (verse 11). Since the Fall, the earth has produced thorns and thistles, the symbols of sin (Gen 3:18). In the regeneration or rebirth of the earth (Mt 19:28), which is the realm of peace, thorns and thistles disappear (Isa 55:13). Through Christ and His death on the cross, everything has been changed. He has become the grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died. Because of this, there is already a spiritual harvest of all who are fruits of His work through faith in Him (Jn 12:24).

Truth in the realm of peace does not spring from the earth because of man's righteousness. The righteousness that can connect with faithfulness from the earth comes from heaven. It also means that heaven is now in harmony with earth, as the Lord Jesus puts it in the prayer He taught His disciples to pray: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:9-10).

This also means that this righteousness is not that of man, but that of God (Rom 3:21), which means that it must be revealed by God. We see this in the realm of peace. The truth that springs from the earth is the truth or faithfulness of God to all His promises, the fulfillment of which is seen in the fullness of blessing on earth. All the earth, yes, all creation, "will be set free from its slavery to corruption" (Rom 8:21).

The blessings of the New Testament believer go far beyond that. The blessings of those who belong to the church are not earthly and material, but heavenly and spiritual. They are blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ" (Eph 1:3). But both earthly and heavenly blessings flow from the righteousness of God in Christ in heaven. Heaven is the source of all blessing.

At that time, when righteousness of God in heaven and truth of God on earth are joined together, "the LORD gives what is good" (verse 12). "What is good" consists of all the good things that God will give to His people. This includes both earthly good things and spiritual good things.

One of the good things of the realm of peace is that the “land will yield its produce”.

The Messiah will go through the land. In doing so, “righteousness will go before Him” like a herald goes out before a king (verse 13). That righteousness will be seen therein that He makes “His footsteps into a way”. The remnant may follow Him. All they have to do is put their footsteps in those of the Messiah. The way the remnant goes is the way the Messiah first went in righteousness.

Righteousness is the hallmark of the realm of peace par excellence. The LORD will then be the true Melchizedek, the King of righteousness. The LORD will then be Yahweh *Tzidkenu* or “the LORD our righteousness” (Jer 23:6d). When He rules on earth, righteousness will rule all the earth (Isa 32:1a).

When the Messiah reigns, justice will no longer turn back and truth will no longer stumble in the streets, as it does today (Isa 59:14). Justice has returned to earth in Christ and reigning happens in truth. “And the work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever” (Isa 32:17).

Psalm 86

Introduction

The remnant of the ten tribes is back in Israel (Psalm 84). Inner restoration has taken place (Psalm 85). Psalm 86 shows us what takes place in their hearts during this tribulation, just as with Hezekiah in Isaiah 38.

The psalm begins in verses 1-7 and ends in verses 14-17 with the distress of this remnant. In between is the desire of the remnant to know better the ways of the LORD (verse 11) and their thanksgiving (verse 12). That is, in fact, the focal point of this psalm.

Their distress is caused by Assyria which is used as a disciplinary rod (Isa 10:5) to test Israel. It has to answer the question of Psalm 121: "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come?" (Psa 121:1).

Psa 86:1-7 | Prayer in Trouble

1 A Prayer of David.

Incline Your ear, O LORD, [and] answer me;

For I am afflicted and needy.

2 Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man;

O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You.

3 Be gracious to me, O Lord,

For to You I cry all day long.

4 Make glad the soul of Your servant,

For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

5 For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,

And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;

And give heed to the voice of my supplications!

7 In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You,

For You will answer me.

For "a Prayer of David" (verse 1a) see at Psalm 17:1.

This psalm is the only psalm of David in the third book of Psalms. David, the man after God's heart, is a type of the remnant of Israel which is now being tested. David has sinned and is disciplined for it, but he repents and is restored.

Psalm 85 is about the inner restoration of the people as a whole; in Psalm 86 we find an individual testing resulting in personal restoration. Indeed, the confidence of faith must be present in each believer personally. He or she must be able to say: the LORD is *my* Shepherd (Psa 23:1; cf. Gal 2:20).

David is in great distress, he is "afflicted and needy" (verse 1b; cf. Isa 38:14). "Afflicted and needy" is an expression that refers both to the condition of the Lord Jesus on earth and to the condition of the remnant in the end time, with whom the Lord identifies Himself (cf. Psa 69:29; 109:22; Zep 3:12). The Lord Jesus speaks at length about this condition in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

David is physically afflicted and lacks spiritual strength. In such a situation a person can do no better than turn to God. That is what David does. In his prayer, he turns to the "LORD", Yahweh. With this he appeals to the faithfulness of God to His covenant with him.

He asks Him to incline His ear. That is an appeal to His benevolence to listen to him. He also asks Him to hear him. That is an appeal to His saving, redeeming power to deliver him from his distress. His prayer is marked by great insistence, but not by compulsion. He is a supplicant, not a claimant. This is the proper mind for drawing near to God.

He asks for the preservation of his soul, that is of his life. His pleading ground is who he is before God: His "godly man" (verse 2a). "Godly man" in Hebrew is *chasicid*, which means one who is faithful to the covenant, which is the new covenant. It is one who takes refuge in the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Christ, and on that basis trusts in the LORD (verse 2b). That is the pleading ground of the psalmist. This is how David approaches God and asks for His protection. It is not about merit, but about what is the basis of the relationship.

The awareness of God's favor does not make him haughty, but humble and little. He knows that the almighty God is his God and that he is His "servant" (cf. 2Sam 7:5). He does not serve God by force, but willingly.

Those who realize that they are in God's favor will want to serve Him out of gratitude. In his service for God, David trusts in the LORD. To Him David asks that He redeems or saves him. This is the meaning of the name Jesus: "the LORD saves".

The remnant of Israel here takes the title "servant" of the LORD (verses 2,4,16). To understand this, it is necessary to see that this title is used in three ways in the book of Isaiah.

Firstly, in Isaiah 40-48 we find Israel as the failing servant of the LORD.

Secondly, in Isaiah 42 and Isaiah 49-61 we find Christ as the perfect Servant of the LORD.

Finally, in Isaiah 62-66 we find the remnant as the servants of the LORD, connected with the perfect Servant.

Here in Psalm 86 we find the remnant as the servants of the LORD, putting their trust in the Lord, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler. Then in Psalm 87 we hear what the LORD says about the remnant.

David asks the "Lord", Adonai, to be "gracious" to him (verse 3). He addresses God seven times in his prayer with Adonai (verses 3,4,5,8,9,12,15). This word is contrasted with "servant". A servant serves his master and commander (Adonai), while also being able to count on the protection of his master. The Lord, Adonai, is good to His servants. God, *Elohim*, is good toward His creatures. The LORD, Yahweh, the God of the covenant and faithfulness to it, is good toward His godly ones.

The name Adonai emphasizes the incomparable greatness of God. David is deeply aware that only that great Ruler can deliver him from his distress. He is also aware that God is not obligated to do so. Therefore he asks God to be gracious to him. He does not stop asking Him, he cries out to Him "all day long". This also shows the trust that he has in God's response.

When that Lord, Adonai, delivers him, He will thereby make glad his soul (verse 4). Once more David calls himself "Your servant". He serves God with joy. At the same time he indicates how much he knows himself to be dependent on Him. God is the Lord and he is His servant. That is why he lifts up his soul to Him. Only He can help and make him happy.

David knows the sovereign Ruler – whom he again addresses as such (Adonai) – as One Who is “good” (verse 5). It is useless to call upon a God who is not ‘good’. God is not an impassive ruler who stands far above worldly events and certainly above puny human beings. No, He is “good”. That is His Being toward His creation and people and especially toward His servants who call upon Him.

Up to this point the psalmist has prayed on the basis of his condition – afflicted and needy (verse 1b) – because he was a godly man (verse 2a), because he trusted in the LORD as a servant (verse 2b), because he calls out to the LORD all day long (verse 3). In verse 5 he gives a reason beyond himself: he prays on the basis of Who the LORD Himself is, namely that He is abundant in lovingkindness (Adonai = covenant faithfulness).

He is “ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon” Him (cf. Exo 34:6). These attributes of the sovereign Ruler cannot fail to evoke admiration in the heart of the believer. So much tenderness and overwhelming readiness to bless is expressed here. God is not a hard, demanding God, but a forgiving and giving God. And that He is “to all who call upon” Him. Whoever is in need and calls upon Him, will come to know Him in this way.

When David has said this, he renews his prayer, turning again to the “LORD”, Yahweh (verse 6). He asks him to “give ear” to his “prayer”. He does not whisper this prayer, but he lets hear “the voice of” his “supplications”. Surely God cannot keep His ears closed to these loud pleas? Surely He will pay attention to it?

“In the day of my trouble”, that is now, and every time there is such a day, he calls upon the LORD (verse 7). It is a habit. God is his only refuge. All that surrounds him and all that is in him is distress, oppression. He can only cry out to God, because no one else can help him.

Then suddenly his soul seems to come to rest. He says to God: “For You will answer me.” This assurance is the basis of his crying out. It is the confidence that God is listening to his prayer. Otherwise, what sense does it make to cry out to God (cf. Jam 1:6-7)? This confidence is based on the fact that the psalmist knows the LORD, he knows His abundant lovingkindness (verse 5). Therefore, he knows that God will most certainly answer his

prayer. It is also God's intention in our lives that days of trouble become days of prayer (cf. Psa 50:15).

Psa 86:8-10 | No One Is Like You

8 There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord,

Nor are there any works like Yours.

9 All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord,

And they shall glorify Your name.

10 For You are great and do wondrous deeds;

You alone are God.

Then David appeals again to the "Lord", Adonai, the sovereign Ruler (verse 8). But the distress is gone. Adonai is not to be compared with any god, by which may be meant both judges and idols (Psa 82:1,6; 1Cor 8:5-6; cf. Exo 15:11). Nor are His works to be compared with any other. By this David is saying that God can do whatever he asks of Him. He can only ask Him, for there is no one else. And He alone is also able to do it, for no one else can do it.

God is above everything, including every comparison. He not only made His people, but He made "all nations" (verse 9; cf. Acts 17:26a). He is truly the "Lord", Adonai, the sovereign Ruler. Therefore, not only His people, but all the nations will come and "worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name". This looks forward to the realm of peace, to the time of the reign of the Messiah, where this will be truth (Zec 14:16; Rev 15:4). All that He does is not only of Him and through Him, but also to Him, to His honor and glory (Rom 11:36).

Because He is the Creator, even of the nations, He has the right to be magnified by the nations, for He created everything and everyone to His glory (Isa 43:7). This is further elaborated in Psalm 87.

We see the greatness of God in the wondrous deeds He has done and is still doing (verse 10). Just look at creation (Psa 139:14). Each creation day is full of wondrous deeds that are seen to this day despite the Fall. And then His wondrous deeds in the lives of the patriarchs, the wondrous deeds of the deliverance of His people from Egypt and of the guidance and care of

His people in the wilderness. We see His wondrous deeds in the lives of countless people who come to repentance and faith. David experienced countless wondrous deeds of grace and salvation (Psa 9:2). Those who know this from their own experience say with David to God: “You alone are God.”

Psa 86:11-13 | Teach Me and I Will Give Thanks to You

11 Teach me Your way, O LORD;

I will walk in Your truth;

Unite my heart to fear Your name.

12 I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,

And will glorify Your name forever.

13 For Your lovingkindness toward me is great,

And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

The psalm begins and ends with distress. The emphasis is on the middle section. That part, verse 8 and verse 10, describes the greatness of God, with in between the emphasis on verse 9, namely that all nations will honor God. This is also the main theme of Psalm 86 (cf. Isa 45:23). It is not primarily about the psalmist’s need, but about God’s glory. The question is no longer *whether* God will deliver – that is certain, see verse 12 and verse 13 – but *how* God will deliver. Therefore the psalmist wants teaching from the LORD: “Teach me Your way, O LORD” (verse 11).

Now that peace has come in the heart, David longs to know the way of the LORD that will lead all nations to worship the LORD (verse 11; verse 9). This includes that the LORD will strike down David’s enemies. He also wants to learn the way the LORD is going with him. It is the LORD’s way with him, not the other way around, David’s way with the LORD. When he learns the LORD’s way for him, he will walk in God’s truth, which means he will go his way in faithfulness to the LORD.

Knowing the way of the LORD is not a matter of the intellect. David asks the question because he has a desire to walk His way in the light of the LORD. At the same time, he asks: “Unite my heart.” He asks for an undivided heart, a heart that is fully focused on God (cf. Jer 32:39; Eze 11:19-20).

He knows his own weakness and vulnerability. He knows how easily he is distracted by the temptations outside and inside. That's why he asks the LORD to make his heart strong. He asks the LORD for the strength to love Him with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength (Deu 6:5).

A united heart is the same as "one thing" that Mary and Paul chose (Lk 10:42; Phil 3:14). With them the Lord Jesus is central, He owns their heart, the center of their existence, from where He governs their lives. This is contrasted with what James calls in his letter 'wavering', which literally means 'double-minded' (Jam 1:8; 4:8). There is no double-mindedness (1Kgs 18:21), but full devotion to the Lord and His interests.

David asks for a united heart "to fear Your Name". Fearing the LORD is the evidence of a wise heart (Pro 1:7). When the fear or awe of the Name of God fills the whole heart, the whole life is focused on honoring God. Then things are sought and done that glorify God.

A heart completely filled with the fear of God says to Him what David does here: "I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart" (verse 12). Here we see that the fear of God is not anxiousness, but awe that is expressed in reverence. Nor is it a desire of a moment. David "will glorify" God's name "forever". It will never end.

The giving thanks to God is the great privilege of the redeemed of all ages. The church may do this in a special way on the first day of the week when it gathers around the Lord Jesus. There He starts the song of praise, in which the faithful then join (Heb 2:12).

The occasion for the eternal thanksgiving is God's "lovingkindness" which is "great" toward him (verse 13). David experienced that great lovingkindness. Here again, lovingkindness refers to the blessings that the LORD gives on the basis of His covenant. That covenant is the new covenant on the basis of the blood of Christ, which is the blood of the new covenant (Mt 26:28). That is the only reason God can show His lovingkindness.

For God has "delivered" his soul "from the depths of Sheol". Deliverance from death and the realm of the dead is a personal matter. One can only partake of it personally, not as a member of a nation or a group. Whoever has a share in it will never forget to give thanks for it. It is the greatest gift a person can receive: the deliverance from death. This is not about the

resurrection from the dead, but about the life that has been saved from the danger of death.

Psa 86:14-17 | Help and Comfort

*14 O God, arrogant men have risen up against me,
And a band of violent men have sought my life,
And they have not set You before them.*

*15 But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.*

16 Turn to me, and be gracious to me;

*Oh grant Your strength to Your servant,
And save the son of Your handmaid.*

17 Show me a sign for good,

That those who hate me may see [it] and be ashamed,

Because You, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

The “arrogant” are the proud people, the show-offs (verse 14). Prophetically we can think of the Assyrians (Isa 36:4-10). David is surrounded by such people. He points God to them. It is “a band of violent men” who want to kill him. It’s a whole mob, not just a few. These people, he tells God, “have not set You before them”. They have no regard for God, but pursue their own interests. People like David stand in their way. Therefore, he must be eliminated.

Opposite to these band of violent men David places the “Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler (verse 15). Compared to Him those boasters and evil doers are dwarfed. They do not keep Him in mind, but he knows the Lord as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth” (cf. verse 5). This is the name that the LORD revealed in grace to Moses in Exodus 34 (Exo 34:6-7).

He appeals to Him to turn to him, asking again to be “gracious” to him (verse 16). He asks not only for protection from the arrogant and violent of verse 14, but also for the strength of God to stand firm against them. He makes this appeal to God’s power again as “Your servant”.

David also points to his mother as a pleading ground for his redemption when he asks God: “Save the son of Your servant.” The name of his father,

Jesse, is mentioned several times. The reference to his mother is one of two references we have to her in Scripture (verse 16; Psa 116:16). That David calls her “Your handmaid” means that she was a God-fearing woman, who served God and taught him in the things of God.

David had a God-fearing mother (Psa 22:9) and from his mother’s womb he was brought up God-fearing (cf. 2Tim 1:5). Possibly he is also thinking back to his birth and that God set him apart from his mother’s womb for Himself and His people and watched over him (cf. Jer 1:5; Gal 1:15).

That he mentions her in this prayer may be because he remembers how he used to seek and find comfort from her in his distress. In the last verse of the psalm, he speaks about the comfort he will receive from the LORD. Someone who gives comfort can sympathize, which gives relief from the pressure and pain that someone may experience.

At the end of his prayer, which, as we have seen, consists of several prayers, he asks God to show him “a sign for good” (verse 17). By this David asks for such a visible action of God in his favor that God’s hand must be recognized in it. It means an intervention of God through which David is saved and his enemies are defeated.

Nor is the sign intended for himself, but for his haters. When they see that sign, they will be ashamed, when He, the LORD, has “helped” and “comforted” him. David does not doubt the help and comfort of God. The help he will receive from God is a comfort to him after all the affliction and need in the day of his trouble.

Psalm 87

Introduction

Finally, all enemies have been eliminated. Now all attention can be turned to Zion, Jerusalem. The “city of God” (verse 3) is now the civil and religious capital of the world. This psalm describes the relationship between Zion and the nations, and is the further elaboration of what we have read in Psalm 86 (Psa 86:9). It is now about the time of the regeneration of the earth (Mt 19:28).

Psalm 87:1-3 | God’s Love for His City

1 *A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song.
His foundation is in the holy mountains.*
2 *The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the [other] dwelling places of Jacob.*
3 *Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God. Selah.*

This “psalm” is called “a song” (verse 1a). By “a song” is usually meant a song of praise. It is a song of the remnant, of both the two and the ten tribes. This is “all Israel” that has been saved (Rom 11:26).

For “of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

The psalm sings of the future glory of Zion as the mother city of all nations (cf. Isa 2:1-4), as a joy to the whole earth (Psa 48:2). It is so because God has chosen it and laid His foundation for it (verse 1b; cf. Heb 11:10). He has built His city upon “His foundation” (cf. Isa 14:32). That foundation is “in the holy mountains” (cf. Psa 3:5; 15:1; 99:9). Upon them “is” His foundation. It speaks of stability, of a stable and lasting peace.

The foundation and at the same time the stability of Zion lies in the fact that it was chosen by the love of God (verse 2; cf. Deu 12:5,14,18,21). Therefore, it is the “city of God”, which means both a great city – a superlative, as in Jonah 3 of Nineveh (Jona 3:3) – and the city where God Himself is present (Eze 48:35; Rev 14:1; cf. Isa 60:14).

The church of the living God, the new Jerusalem, is also built on a foundation that God has laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God (1Cor 3:10; Mt 16:18). This foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets in their teaching about the church (Eph 2:20).

The foundation and location of the city distinguish it from all other cities. They are *holy* mountains, because He has set those mountains apart from all other mountains for Himself and His city. They are holy *mountains*, because He has given it that exalted place above all other cities (cf. Jer 31:23). The plural 'mountains' may have something to do with the fact that Jerusalem was built on several hills.

God chose the city because He loves it (verse 2; Psa 78:68; cf. Deu 7:6-8). There is nothing in the city itself that would make it more attractive than other cities. Rather, it is originally repulsive (Eze 16:1-5), but He has taken care of it in love and made it attractive (Eze 16:6-8).

"The LORD loves the gates of Zion" because they allow access to the city to also partake of His blessing. The gates characterize the city as one that is accessible. People enter the city in crowds through the gates to worship the LORD. Gates are also the place where justice is spoken. They speak of the authority of God in the city. It is also the place of government of the city (Rth 4:1-10) from which law and power are exercised.

The city not only rises above other cities in a natural way, because of its location on the mountains. The city also rises above all the dwellings of Jacob in the love that God has for it. There are many beautiful dwellings or cities in Israel, but to none does His heart go out in the same way as to this city.

The "glorious things" are the things that God has worked in her (verse 3). They are spoken of by the prophets in their prophecies about the city. They are also things noticed by the nations and their kings and spoken of by them. There is much to note about her sins, but in Christ there are only glorious things to mention. The same is true of the church.

All these very glorious things concern the "city of God". Everything in the city reflects His glory. This can only refer to the future, for currently Jerusalem is not the city of God, God does not now dwell there. Israel is still Lo-Ammi, not My people (Hos 1:9). When He takes up His residence in the temple again, He will dwell there again (Eze 43:1-7; 48:35).

Psa 87:4-6 | This One Was Born There

*4 "I shall mention Rahab and Babylon among those who know Me;
Behold, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia:
'This one was born there.'"*

*5 But of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in her";
And the Most High Himself will establish her.*

*6 The LORD will count when He registers the peoples,
"This one was born there." Selah.*

After the Korahites sing of the glory of the city, they describe how children from various nations are counted to Zion (verse 4). They are counted as children born there. This presupposes a relationship with Him. Five nations are mentioned, from which people come to belong to the city because they acknowledge Him. They surrender their old citizenship and receive the citizenship of Zion. They are not incorporated into Israel, but into God's city.

First, two former superpowers are mentioned: Rahab and Babylon. Rahab is Egypt (Isa 30:7; 51:9; Psa 89:11). Both have been world powers that have ruled over Israel. Babylon is the power north of Israel and Egypt is the power south of it. Egypt, too, will know and serve the LORD in the realm of peace (cf. Isa 19:25). The second kingdom, Babylon, prophetically refers to the restored Roman Empire (Isaiah 40-48; Revelation 17-18). Despite the destruction of Europe in the end time, there will again be people in Europe who will serve the LORD. All those who have been taken from the world's powers by grace will be credited to Zion. They will turn to the God of Israel and come to know Him.

Rahab means pride and Babylon confusion. Both powers have been hostile to Israel in the past. Both powers will come to an end (Isa 2:11-17). The coming of the LORD is the end of all pride. The ruins of confusion caused by Babylon will also disappear through Christ, Who is more than Cyrus (Isa 44:26-28).

In addition to these world powers, there is "Philistia" who fought Israel so many times in the land to take possession of the land given to Israel by God. Further, there is "Tyre". It represents economic power, the world of rich and proud traders. It rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem because of the

commercial advantage he thought it would bring him (Eze 26:2). Finally, reference is made to "Ethiopia". It represents the more distant peoples.

Individual inhabitants of these areas lay down their enmity. If these people (from the nations) want to come to know the LORD, they must travel to Zion to receive instruction (Isa 2:3). There they will come to repentance and faith, there they will be born again (cf. Mt 19:28) and therefore they are considered to have been born in Zion.

God says of them that they are "born there", that is in Zion. They are all seen as citizens of the city of God, thereby sharing in the blessings God bestows upon the city. Paul, in relation to New Testament believers, speaks in such a way of "the Jerusalem above ...; she is our mother" (Gal 4:26).

The blessing in connection with Zion is not so much for nations as a whole. It is an individual blessing (verse 5). In the city, which at first was childless, the number of inhabitants is constantly increasing (cf. Isa 54:1-3). The city will not be divided by the increase of individuals, but will remain a unity. God will see to that, "the Most High Himself will establish her". His presence guarantees the continuity of peace. The LORD has laid her foundation (verse 1) and He will also confirm and maintain her. Then Jerusalem will truthfully be, according to the meaning of her name, 'the city of peace'.

The LORD keeps a careful record of who has the civil rights of His city (verse 6). He counts everyone who by new birth is in His city. No one is forgotten in this counting. The fact that He counts gives the assurance that someone belongs to the 'numbered' forever. For such a person the atonement money has been paid (Exo 30:11-16). All the numbered are counted among God's people (cf. Jer 33:13).

Of each one of them the LORD says as a mark of truth: "This one was born there." Such a person is counted and written down. This gives the numbered person the absolute assurance that he will never again be removed from the city of God. The seal of the ownership of God is upon him unbreakably. It is with it as with the sheep of the Lord Jesus, of whom He says that no one can snatch them out of His hand (Jn 10:28).

Psa 87:7 | All My Springs Are In You

*7 Then those who sing as well as those who play the flutes [shall say],
"All my springs [of joy] are in you."*

All the favors done to the nations bring about exuberant expressions of joy. Those who live in Zion are "those who sing". There are also those who dance and sing in rows and in turn to express their joy. One part of the inhabitants sings, another part dances. In a great praise, they all sing about Zion: "All my springs [of joy] are in you" (cf. Psa 46:5; Rev 22:1-2; Eze 47:1-12). They can say that because the LORD, Who is the spring of living water, is there (Isa 12:3; cf. Jer 2:13). Zion is the city of grace. All who are included in it are there by grace.

They sing of "all my springs" because the true source of Zion, the Messiah, the LORD, dwells there. He is the spring of all blessing and joy in the realm of peace. During His life on earth He wept over the city (Lk 19:41). Now He can rejoice with her over all that is in her, for all that originates in Him. He can give that joy and blessing on the basis of His suffering on the cross (Jn 7:37-39). That suffering is described impressively in the following psalm.

Psalm 88

Introduction

This psalm is the saddest psalm in the entire book of Psalms. Other psalms can be sad and gloomy, yet are mixed with faith confidence and ultimately hope and victory. Psalm 88, however, is somber from beginning to end. The last word of this psalm is “darkness” (verse 18). The only ray of hope in this psalm is the Person to Whom the psalmist addresses in this psalm: the “LORD, the God of my salvation” (verse 1b). Here we find a reference to the name Jesus, which means ‘the LORD is salvation’.

The psalm is the prayer of a man who suffers incessantly. He complains about the terrible, harsh oppression that brings him to the brink of death. Yet day and night he called upon the LORD. In the application of this psalm to Christ, we see the suffering He underwent because of the curse of the law. In the application to the believers, both of Israel and the church, we see the suffering that is necessary to be purified and come to glory.

The suffering of the psalm is applicable to the suffering of the remnant in the end time, just before the coming of the Lord Jesus. The remnant will suffer so greatly during the great tribulation that it will seem to them as if there is no end to their need, and that darkness will win out over light. The psalm also reminds us of the suffering of the Lord Jesus. Through His suffering He could become the source of living water. This is “a maskil” or “a teaching” from the *maskilim* (verse 1a).

By virtue of His suffering, the joy of the city of God can be there with all who are in it (Psa 87:7). All who are in it, Jew and heathen, and share in the blessing, have been delivered from the power of the devil and are counted as belonging to that city.

Psa 88:1-2 | Call For Hearing

1 A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. For the choir director; according to Mahalath Leannoth. A Maskil of Heman the Ezrahite.

O LORD, the God of my salvation,

I have cried out by day and in the night before You.

2 Let my prayer come before You;

Incline Your ear to my cry!

This psalm is called “a Song” (verse 1a). The song is not, however, as it usually is, a song of praise, but a song of lamentation, in which sadness and despair are sung. According to the meaning of “according to Mahalath Leannoth” – the meaning follows below – we may take it to mean that the song is sung by a downcast with weak, gloomy, melancholy voice, with a tone of minor.

For “a Psalm of the sons of Korah” see at Psalm 42:1.

For “for the choir director” see at Psalm 4:1.

The song is sung “according to Mahalath Leannoth”, showing that it is a lament. The word *mahalath* occurs only in Psalm 53 (Psa 53:1). “Mahalath” means ‘sickness’ or ‘suffering’. “Leannoth” means ‘humiliation’. It refers to ‘humiliation through suffering’ as the necessary way to glory and blessing – the spring of living water.

This points first of all to the humiliation of Christ through suffering on the cross of Calvary, as the basis for all the blessings of the remnant (Psa 87:7). The rock had to be struck if He were to become for us a source of living water (Lk 24:26).

Secondly, it points to the path of suffering that Israel had to go through, the purging of the remnant, through Assyria, the disciplining rod of God (Isa 10:5; cf. Deu 28:49-57; Joel 2:1-14) in order to arrive at the glorious redemption. Compare the way Joseph’s brothers had to go, the prison, in order to come to restoration. For us, too, it is true that we are first we suffer with Christ and then are glorified with Him (Rom 8:17).

This psalm is “a maskil”, “a teaching”. See further at Psalm 32:1.

The psalm is a maskil “of Heman the Ezrahite”. It is the only psalm of him in Psalms. Heman is a wise, a Levite, a Korahite, a singer, a son of Joel and a grandson of Samuel (1Kgs 4:31; 1Chr 15:17,19; 1Sam 8:1-2). He is included in the tribe of Judah. He is also called “the king’s seer to exalt him [literally: lift up the horn] according to the words of God” (1Chr 25:5).

The psalmist in his deep distress turns to the “LORD”, whom he calls “God of my salvation” (verse 1b; Psa 27:9b). The last straw, the only ray of hope in this otherwise gloomy psalm of suffering is that he knows God as the God of his salvation. Satisfied with perils of death, the psalmist seeks refuge in God. Surrounded by dangers and enemies, he looks upward. “I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come?”

Then he looks even higher to heaven and confesses: “My help [comes] from the LORD” (Psa 121:1-2a). Therefore he turns to Him. In the midst of distress, faith clings to the God Who has promised to deliver. At the same time, it makes his situation even darker, because the God Whom he knows does not answer. This is a dramatic perception.

He addresses God and cries out before Him “by day and in the night”. This “cried out” – literally “shouted” – indicates a penetrating and powerful prayer from a heart that is overcome by the gravity of the distress. Literally it says: “By day I cry out, and in the night [I come] to You.” The need is so great that he comes to God day and night, without ceasing, and cries out before Him. As soon as he wakes up in the morning, he resumes to pray and plead (verse 13; cf. Psa 50:15).

But God does not seem to pay attention to him. The Lord Jesus also “offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears” to God (Heb 5:7). That is in Gethsemane, in anticipation of the suffering for sin. He knows what it is to have a deeply burdened heart and can therefore sympathize with the remnant and all who feel this way. With Him, however, there is not the hopelessness that characterizes the prayer here. He cries out in the full knowledge that God hears Him.

Heman urges the God of his salvation to let his prayer come before Him, that is, in His presence (verse 2; cf. Psa 27:8). For it seems that the door to God is closed, that his prayer does not reach Him. God does not seem to be listening, but he does not give up and asks Him: “Incline Your ear to my cry.” Here he uses that strong word “cry” again. He knows that God is there, although He seems to have withdrawn from him.

Psa 88:3-9 | The Extend of the Affliction

| 3 *For my soul has had enough troubles,*

*And my life has drawn near to Sheol.
4 I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit;
I have become like a man without strength,
5 Forsaken among the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom You remember no more,
And they are cut off from Your hand.
6 You have put me in the lowest pit,
In dark places, in the depths.
7 Your wrath has rested upon me,
And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah.
8 You have removed my acquaintances far from me;
You have made me an object of loathing to them;
I am shut up and cannot go out.
9 My eye has wasted away because of affliction;
I have called upon You every day, O LORD;
I have spread out my hands to You.*

Heman goes on to tell God why he calls to Him, which we see by the word “for” (verse 3). He is not satisfied with the good that God has promised to those who serve Him, but with “troubles”. “Enough” means: nothing more can be added; he has reached the breaking point. To emphasize this we are given a list of synonyms in these verses to describe how the water has come to his lips. He is not connected to life, but to death. He is, as it were, living dead. Through all the affliction his “life has drawn near to Sheol”.

He is already “reckoned among those who go down to the pit” (verse 4). He sees himself as doomed. This is the perspective that he also has in mind according to those around him: not life, but the pit, the grave, death. His fate is like that of all people whose life is over. There is no strength in him to resist this descent. He has “become like a man without strength”. Affliction has robbed him of his strength and made him powerless, he is literally deadly tired.

That he says of himself that he is “forsaken among the dead” (verse 5) – literally free among the dead – means that he is free from the disciplining hand of God like all the other dead. This thought is confirmed by the

second sentence of this verse. He sees himself "like the slain who lie in the grave". 'Slain' brings to mind those who have died in war. By this he means a mass grave where he is not given a tomb and cannot be identified. He has become an anonymous victim, a number. The psalmist here means a senseless death, a dishonorable death.

He adds that God no longer thinks about them, that God no longer has any concern for them as the living. "They are cut off from Your hand." With a dead person God can no longer deal like He does with a living one. Of course He also has authority over the dead, but this is about His dealings with people living on earth. For the New Testament believer it is different. He knows that after his death he will praise the Lord in paradise.

He tells God that He has "put" him "in the lowest pit" (verse 6). Putting into a pit is done to a wicked person (Psa 94:13), for the greatest wicked person the deepest (lowest) pit is dug. The complaint of verses 3-4 now turns into an accusation against God. 'You have done this, You have rejected and forsaken me.' In doing so he acknowledges God's dealings with him. In the same way, further on in the psalm, he attributes everything to God's actions. He continually says what God does to him.

This action presses very hard on him. He describes the lowest pit as "dark places" and "depths". It is, as it were, a superlative of the realm of the dead, the deepest realm of the dead (cf. Psa 86:13b). We would say in ordinary language, not just dead, but 'stone dead'. All around him is darkness. He cannot look upward, to the light, because he is so deeply mired in afflicted.

He tells God that His wrath "has rested upon" him (verse 7). "Rested upon" is literally "rests on" in the sense of "crushing". The meaning is: 'Your wrath/grimness/poison crushes me'. It is as if God's wrath is put to rest by crushing him, that much he feels himself the target of that wrath.

He is "afflicted" with all God's waves. This reminds one of the Lord Jesus, but His suffering goes far beyond that. On the cross, in the three hours of darkness, He received all the waves of God's wrath upon Him because of the sins of His own that were laid upon Him. That is not the case with Heman. The waves of affliction come only upon him and only affect him. It is God's discipline or education to draw His own to Himself. Heman here

is a type of the remnant of Israel in the end time. This is the teaching that the *maskilim* will receive and pass on to others.

This distress also concerns his loneliness and rejection by his “acquaintances” (verse 8; verse 18). This is what Job also experienced (Job 19:13-14). He tells God that He has “removed” them far from him. And as if that weren’t bad enough, He has also made him “an object of loathing to them”. Not only has he been abandoned, but his acquaintances give him a wide berth. To them he is like a leper, someone with a contagious, stinking disease, from whom one must stay away (cf. Lev 13:46). We also see this with the Lord Jesus (Psa 102:6-7).

Thus the psalmist is “shut up” in his own situation. This is the condition of a leper (Lev 13:46). We would say today – we write April 2020, during the corona crisis – ‘he is quarantined’. In his affliction he is also isolated in solitude. Heman himself has no strength to get out of his affliction and suffering. Around him there is no one to look after him and give him any help or comfort. He feels like Job, who complains that God has blocked his way and therefore he cannot come to the light (Job 3:23).

His eye, which looks out to God for deliverance from his affliction, “has wasted away because of affliction” (verse 9). He finds himself in bitter misery. He cries “every day” to the “LORD”, the God of the covenant. Surely God will not forget that He made a covenant with His people, to which he belongs, to bless them, will He? Heman, as a picture of total helplessness, spreads out his hands to Him. To whom else can he spread out his hands? He knows that only God can help him. If only God will take his spread out hand, he will be set free.

Psa 88:10-12 | Questions

*10 Will You perform wonders for the dead?
Will the departed spirits rise [and] praise You? Selah.*

*11 Will Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave,
Your faithfulness in Abaddon?*

*12 Will Your wonders be made known in the darkness?
And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*

Heman goes on to ask the LORD a number of questions. These are questions that impose themselves on him while he stands on the brink of death. They are questions about the praise of God that is not done by the dead, but by the living (cf. Isa 38:18-19). They are not questions of unbelief, but questions that arise from a limited knowledge of God as a result of extreme affliction and despair, which obscures the view of Him and His actions. There is also faith in them.

His first question echoes the idea that God can “perform wonders for the dead” (verse 10). In his second question, he says it more specifically and asks if those who have died would rise to praise Him. Among Old Testament believers there is the idea that praise, – and the LORD is enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3) – is only possible through living people (Psa 6:5; cf. Psa 30:9; 115:17).

The condition of those who have died is hidden from them. They connect the praise of God and the speaking of His lovingkindness with life on earth (verse 11). That can be before their death and in the resurrection after their death. Of the situation “in the grave” and “in Abaddon”, which refers to the body, they have no understanding. [Note: The Lord Jesus did go to the grave, but His body did not see decay (Psa 16:10; Acts 2:24-27).]

Therefore Heman wishes that God would deliver him out of his affliction. How then will he tell of His lovingkindness and faithfulness! We know that the faithful who have fallen asleep in Christ are with Christ, are with Him in paradise, where they praise and glorify Him continually (Lk 23:43; Phil 1:23).

For the Old Testament believer, death is associated with “darkness” (verse 12). No light is present. Only in the light God’s wonders are known. For him, death is being “in the land of forgetfulness”. The land of oblivion is the land where the dead are no longer thought of. Righteousness is not made known there.

The New Testament believer lives in the light and in full remembrance of the righteousness of God which he has received through faith in Christ. He will daily praise God for it and make known its wonder in the darkness of the world in which he lives. If he has died and is with the Lord, it will be

by virtue of that righteousness. That will be the occasion for praising Him eternally.

Psa 88:13-18 | Rejected

*13 But I, O LORD, have cried out to You for help,
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.*

14 O LORD, why do You reject my soul?

[Why] do You hide Your face from me?

*15 I was afflicted and about to die from my youth on;
I suffer Your terrors; I am overcome.*

*16 Your burning anger has passed over me;
Your terrors have destroyed me.*

*17 They have surrounded me like water all day long;
They have encompassed me altogether.*

*18 You have removed lover and friend far from me;
My acquaintances are [in] darkness.*

With the word “but” (verse 13) Heman indicates the contrast with the hereafter. After his questions about the hereafter and his depiction of the situation there, he lets it be known by his calling that he is still in the land of the living. In the realm of the dead is silence, darkness and oblivion, but he is not silent. He cries out to the LORD, for he is still in affliction.

The psalmist’s prayer is now not about the question of salvation, but about why he is still in affliction. He does not understand the ways of God. His ways are so high, he cannot understand them. The psalmist and later, in the end time, the remnant and the *maskilim* wrestle with this question.

In the New Testament the believer, having come to know the love of God in the Lord Jesus, can say in faith: “We know that to those who love God all things work together for good” (Rom 8:28). He can say: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

He has already said that he calls to God “by day and in the night” (verse 1b) and that he calls to God “every day” (verse 9). Now he says that his prayer “in the morning” “comes before” God. This is a wonderful way for him to indicate that he wants to have an encounter with God in his prayer,

early in the morning, right after he wakes up. He continues to pray even though he gets no answer.

He feels rejected by the LORD (verse 14). But “why” does He reject him, he asks. He sees no reason why He has rejected him, yet He has done so. Heman continues to plead with the LORD, even though he feels rejected. Because he keeps pressing, but God doesn’t answer, he asks his second ‘why question’. That is why God hides His face from him. He doesn’t understand it all. He loves God and wants to be in His presence, but God does not let Himself be found.

This fills him with despair (verse 15). We see the same wrestling in Job. He is in such a miserable state. “From” his “youth on” he has had to deal with suffering as a committed believer (cf. Psa 129:1). He is familiar with it. From his youth he has put his trust in the LORD and has never been ashamed of it (cf. Psa 71:5), but now this trust does not seem to be working. He does not bear God’s favor, but His threats. Thereby he is “overcome”, or: embarrassed. He does not know what to do anymore. There is no question of rebellion, but he no longer understands. How can it be that God, whom he loves so much, behaves toward him as if He were his enemy (cf. Job 30:21).

The affliction in which Heman finds himself, he experiences as the “burning anger” of God passing over him (verse 16). They are God’s “terrors”, terrors that emanate from God. How will he be able to resist them? That is impossible. The only effect they have is that they “destroy” him. God’s terrors mean death for him.

They surround him without a moment’s pause “like water all day long” (verse 17). He cannot catch his breath and is in danger of drowning in it. “They have encompassed” him, “altogether”. They are like an army that God has set up against him and whose every soldier, without exception, has the arrow pointed at him. So did Job express himself about the terrors that had come upon him (Job 6:4; 27:20).

Heman concludes his maskil or teaching by pointing out once more the great loneliness into which God has brought him (verse 18; verse 8). God hides Himself from him and He has also “removed” his “lover and friend” far from him. He is all alone in his suffering. His “acquaintances” are not

in darkness [*in* does not belong to the original text, as shown by the square brackets], but they “are darkness” themselves.

The last word of Heman is ‘darkness’. With this, the psalm seems to have reached an absolute and hopeless low point. Many psalms go from darkness to light. That is not the case here. Yet the end does not speak of despair. Heman has turned to God. God will answer his cry. He will do so in His time. When it is new moon, when the moon no longer shows a single ray of light, when there is deep darkness, this is at the same time the start of the run to the full moon.

Thus it may be in the life of a believer that all hope of salvation is gone. However, this does not mean that all prayers have been in vain. Sometimes we have to reach such a low point to come to complete surrender and resignation. Then we see that God is going to work.

Ultimately, the psalmist will have to learn that Christ’s path to glory is through suffering. This is why the Lord announced His suffering three times (Lk 9:22-27,43b-45; 18:31-34) and taught the Emmaus disciples: “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” (Lk 24:26). A similar lesson must be learned by the remnant; a similar lesson must be learned by us today (Rom 8:17b).

Psalm 89

Introduction

Psalm 88 and Psalm 89 belong together. Together they form the closing part of the third book of Psalms. Both writers of these psalms, Heman (Psalm 88) and Ethan (Psalm 89) are Ezrahites (Psa 88:1; Psa 89:1). They both wrote only one psalm under their names. They also both wrote a maskil, a teaching, in view of the *maskilim*, that is, a teaching on the ways of God in the end time to gain insight into it.

The first psalm of the third book of Psalms, Psalm 73, indicates that the psalmist did not understand the ways of God (Psa 73:16) with the people. The solution is that only in the sanctuary we do learn the ways of God (Psa 73:17). Now the third book of Psalms is pre-eminently the book of the sanctuary, it is the 'Leviticus book' of Psalms.

In Psalms 74-87 we see prophetically the experiences and spiritual exercises of the faithful remnant, both of the two and of the ten tribes. They will undergo a terrible suffering, a suffering that will result in their purification.

Psalm 88 and Psalm 89 then summarize these ways of God together in two maskil-psalms.

The hallmark of Psalm 89 is trust in God on the basis of His promises. This trust speaks all the more because outward circumstances give no basis for the fulfillment of those promises. This means that their fulfillment is based on grace. That grace takes shape in Christ, in Whom all the promises of God are yes and amen (2Cor 1:20). He will fulfill them, yes, He is the fulfillment.

Psalm 89 consists of two parts:

1. Verses 1b-37 contain a description of the covenant.
2. Verses 38-51 describe the connection between the covenant and suffering.

The teaching of Psalm 89 is that suffering does not contradict God's faithfulness to His covenant. On the contrary, this psalm is a thanksgiving for the faithfulness of God right through suffering!

Verse 1a is the title and verse 52 the conclusion of the psalm and the conclusion of the third book of Psalms.

Psa 89:1-4 | God's Lovingkindness and Faithfulness

1 A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever;

To all generations I will make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.

2 For I have said, "Lovingkindness will be built up forever;

In the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness."

3 "I have made a covenant with My chosen;

I have sworn to David My servant,

4 I will establish your seed forever

And build up your throne to all generations." Selah.

For "a maskil" see at Psalm 32:1.

The psalm is "of Ethan the Ezrahite". It is the only psalm of him under this name in Psalms. Ethan is a wise, a Levite, and a singer (1Kgs 4:31; 1Chr 15:17,19). In 1 Chronicles 6 we find Heman, Asaph, and Ethan side by side (1Chr 6:34-47). All three are Levites: Heman of Kohath, Asaph of Gersom, and Ethan of Merari.

The psalmist, in whom we hear the spirit of the remnant speaking, is deeply impressed by "the lovingkindness of the LORD" (verse 1b). This refers, as verses 3-4 show, to the LORD's lovingkindness toward David in making him king over His people. Even greater expressions of lovingkindness are attached to the great Son of David, through Whom God's lovingkindness flows to the entire world. Of this lovingkindness, he says, he will sing "forever".

Inseparable from these expressions of lovingkindness is God's "faithfulness". God will faithfully fulfill all the promises He has made to David and the Son of David. He has recorded these in a covenant that He made with David. These covenant promises Ethan will "make known" "to all gener-

ations” with his “mouth”. He turns them into a psalm that can be sung to the glory of God throughout all generations.

This psalm is about the lovingkindness, Adonai, which is the covenant faithfulness of the LORD toward the faithful remnant. Psalm 88 is about the suffering of the remnant and the suffering of Christ. Psalm 89 makes it clear that God can only give His blessing through His covenant along the way of suffering. Christ had to suffer, the blood of the new covenant had to be poured out, to prove the lovingkindness of God.

Such are the ways of God. The foundation of God’s blessings is the suffering of Christ. Receiving these blessings is through the suffering of believers, in this case the remnant of Israel. For us too, it applies that “if indeed we suffer with [Him] so that we may also be glorified with [Him]” (Rom 8:17).

What matters is that the LORD is to be trusted or reliable concerning His covenant. He remembers the covenant He made with Abraham forever (Psa 105:8-9). It is noteworthy in this context that the name Ethan means: enduring, steadfast. God’s covenant is enduring. Not without reason does the LORD give the guarantee further on in the psalm: “Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness” (verse 33). The word ‘faithful’, which is ‘reliable’, occurs seven times in this psalm. This is unique and endorses the importance of this word as the theme of this psalm.

Ethan speaks with great assurance – “I have said” – of “lovingkindness” and “Your faithfulness”. They are unshakable attributes of God. He has said to God: “Your lovingkindness will be built up forever” (verse 2). His lovingkindness toward David is presented as a house that will be “built up forever”. The LORD Himself builds this house for David (2Sam 7:11). Therefore, it is a house with a permanence without end date, imperishable, eternal. His lovingkindness endures forever.

As for God’s faithfulness, the same applies, for “in the heavens You will establish Your faithfulness”. Just as the heavenly bodies are fixed and continuous in the sky, so His faithfulness is fixed. Nothing changes in His faithfulness, just as the sun, the moon, and the stars do not change their positions. Everything that happens on earth, where so many things change, cannot diminish His faithfulness in the least (Jer 33:20-21).

Then Ethan tells what God's lovingkindness and faithfulness refer to: to "a covenant" that God has made "with My chosen" (verse 3; cf. Psa 78:70-71). God gave to David unconditional and eternal covenant promises (2Sam 7:11-16; Isa 55:3). Those promises are firm and sure. God even ratified His covenant with the swearing of an oath.

It is a covenant of which God alone takes all obligations upon Himself. David is God's chosen one (1Chr 28:4). Regardless of any conditions, God has sworn to His servant David: "I will establish your seed forever" (verse 4; cf. 2Sam 7:12-13).

There is talk of the covenant of God with Abraham, with Israel, and with David. The covenant was also made with David, the man after God's heart. This is emphasized in this psalm. In 2 Samuel 7 we find the background to this psalm (2Sam 7:8-17). David is the anointed chosen by God (verses 3,20). Yet this anointed is rejected and despised by God Himself (verse 38).

In this he is a type of the One who is more than David, the Son of David Who is also the Lord of David. He is the Chosen, the Anointed, the Christ. But ... the Christ had to suffer this and so enter His glory (Lk 24:26). The difference is that David was rejected – by his son Absalom seizing power and driving him out – because of his own sins, while Christ was rejected because of the sins of others. His suffering is substitutional for the remnant (Isa 53:1-12).

God solemnly promises that a descendant of David will always sit on the throne. He will build his "throne to all generations" (cf. Lk 1:31-33). He will not fail in this, even if it sometimes appears so, as we read later in the psalm. God's promise is just as unchanging as His lovingkindness and His faithfulness. Who this God is Who can make such unconditional promises, is impressively presented in the following verses.

Psa 89:5-8 | Who Is Like God?

*5 The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
6 For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD,
7 A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones,*

And awesome above all those who are around Him?

8 O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD?

Your faithfulness also surrounds You.

God, Who assures David of an eternal throne, is Himself seated on the throne from which He governs the universe. He is the Object of the praise of heaven, which by the mouth of the inhabitants of heaven praises His wonders (verse 5; cf. Lk 2:13-14). His “faithfulness” is praised on earth “in the assembly of the holy ones”, whereby we can think of the assembly of God’s people, i.e. the remnant. In verse 1b the LORD is made great by the psalmist. From verse 5 we see the response of heaven, which also starts to praise the LORD.

The question “who in the skies is comparable to the LORD?” (verse 6), includes the answer. Of course there is no one who can measure up to Him, not in wisdom and understanding and not in strength. This also applies to the question of “who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD”, which are the angelic princes. Of course, no one is like Him.

The reality is that God is “greatly feared in the council of the holy ones” (verse 7). His power, His holiness, His righteousness, it fills everyone with great awe, even the angels, who far exceed man in strength. Angels stand and go at His command (cf. 1Kgs 22:19-22). He is “awesome above all those who are around Him”. He is surrounded by countless angels, but is not part of a circle of which He is said to be the principal. He is exalted far above the angels (Heb 1:5-13). He is the Creator and they are but creatures, the work of His hands, ministering spirits whom He may send forth (Heb 1:14).

Deeply impressed by God’s great exaltation, Ethan cries out: “O LORD God of hosts, who is like You?” (verse 8). He calls God the “God of hosts” because God is above all earthly and heavenly hosts. All the powers, whether good or bad, are subject to Him, and He commands them (cf. 1Kgs 22:20-23). No host can go its own way.

God is the “mighty LORD”. No one is equal to Him in power, no one can be compared to Him (Isa 40:25). He is the “LORD”, the God of the covenant with David. He is not a God of arbitrariness, but of faithfulness. His faithfulness “surrounds” Him; it belongs to His nature and becomes

visible in His actions. He is completely trustworthy in His promises. All His actions result from His faithfulness. He is mighty, He is faithful. This means that whatever He has promised in His covenant, He is also able to fulfil. His omnipotence and faithfulness are evident from the following passage.

Psa 89:9-14 | Proofs of God's Omnipotence

*9 You rule the swelling of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.
10 You Yourself crushed Rahab like one who is slain;
You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm.
11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all it contains, You have founded them.
12 The north and the south, You have created them;
Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name.
13 You have a strong arm;
Your hand is mighty, Your right hand is exalted.
14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;
Lovingkindness and truth go before You.*

God has proved in the past what He is capable of, whatever the circumstances. He “rules the swelling of the sea”, and “when its waves rise” He “stills them” (verse 9; Psa 107:29). There is scarcely anything from which God’s power and dominion over all things is more evident than in His authority over the sea and the waves. As powerless as man is in the face of a storm, a hurricane, or a tsunami, He rules over them with mastery and calm (Job 38:8-11). The Lord Jesus also has that authority, which proves that He is God (Mk 4:39).

The overconfident brimming sea is a picture of the God-hating nations over which He also rules (Isa 17:12-13). An example of His reign over the overconfidence of the sea is that He “crushed Rahab like one who is slain” (verse 10). He, emphatically, He and no one else, did that. Rahab stands for Egypt, but then presented in such a way as to reveal the evil power behind it (Isa 30:7; 51:9-10; cf. Rev 13:1-18). What He has done with Egypt, He has done with all His enemies. He scattered them with His strong arm.

“The heavens” are His and “the earth also” is His (verse 11). Firstly, this is so because He created the heavens and the earth; He has right to the heavens and the earth as its Creator (Psa 24:1-2). However, the created heavens are defiled by the presence of evil powers and the earth by the Fall. One day the heavens will be cleansed from the presence of these evil powers, and the earth will also be subject to God. Secondly, this can happen because the Creator has also become the Redeemer. He, as the Redeemer, will again take possession of creation (Rev 5:1-10; 10:2).

Heaven, of course, belongs to Him; there He dwells. Of the earth, this does not seem to be the case at the moment, given the sin that reigns there. Yet faith says affirmatively: “The earth is Yours.” “The world and all that it contains” is His because He has “founded them” (cf. Psa 24:1-2).

His dominion concerns “the north and the south”, for they were created by Him (verse 12). The north is what is hidden or dark, where it is cold. The south is what is in the light, where it is warm. Nothing is hidden from Him, for He has made everything. “He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him” (Dan 2:22). Where it is light, it is because of His presence.

The mountains “Tabor and Hermon” rise above the landscape. They are in their splendor and grandeur as it were the mouth of the earth that opens to sing joyfully to God’s Name. The Tabor is a mountain west of the Jordan, and the Hermon east of it. This means that God created all the earth, in four directions, and that by the conspicuous appearance of Tabor and Hermon, the creation, as it were, rejoices in the Name of the LORD.

All that He has created reveals His omnipotence, His supreme power. He has “a strong arm” (verse 13). His “hand is mighty”. With His hand He works what He wants. His “right hand is exalted”. What He does is beyond the thinking and the power of man. God works out His plans in situations where everything is hopeless for mankind.

The “foundation of Your throne”, the throne on which He sits and from which He governs all and reigns over all, are “righteousness and justice” (verse 14). He deals in perfect justice with everything and everyone and does justice to everything and everyone. Thereby “lovingkindness and truth” go before Him. They are, as it were, His heralds who proclaim that

He is coming with His blessing. They hold out the prospect of His revelation as love and light (1Jn 4:8,16; 1:5). The way He goes on earth and all His works bear the stamp of Who He is in lovingkindness and faithfulness.

In this world there is a saying: power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolute. This is why the French philosopher Montesquieu devised the ‘trias politica’. The trias politica – the theory of three powers or the separation of powers – is a theory of the constitution in which the state is divided into three bodies which monitor each other’s functioning. This is not how it is with God. He has absolute power, He is the Almighty (verse 13) and He combines that with absolute justice, lovingkindness and faithfulness (verse 14).

Psa 89:15-18 | The People of That God

15 How blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!

O LORD, they walk in the light of Your countenance.

16 In Your name they rejoice all the day,

And by Your righteousness they are exalted.

17 For You are the glory of their strength,

And by Your favor our horn is exalted.

18 For our shield belongs to the LORD,

And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

The description of God’s exaltation is followed by the happy praise of the people who know that God as their LORD (verse 15). This people know “the joyful sound” of the trumpet (cf. Num 23:21b). This is reminiscent of the Feast of the blowing of the Trumpets, which is celebrated when it is new moon (Lev 23:24; Num 29:1). This feast points to the restoration of the relationship between God and His people. Here the emphasis is on the blowing of the trumpet as the starting signal to sing praises to the LORD (verse 16) and to walk confidently in the light of His presence (verses 17-18).

In Israel the month always begins with new moon. On the fifteenth of the month, the beginning of the Feast of Booths, it is full moon. Then the moon, which receives its light from the sun, reflects the light of the sun. On the first day nothing of this can be seen. In picture this indicates that

the testimony of Israel has been obscured. At the same time, this is also the turning point toward the time when the moon will begin to shine again. In spiritual terms, Israel will have a full moon – that is, the beginning of the Feast of Booths – when the church is caught up. The light that Israel will once again receive comes from God. God will deliver His people from their enemies (Psa 81:4).

When they are delivered from their enemies, they will again “walk in the light of Your countenance”. They do not even have to wait until their enemies are defeated, for they can already rejoice in the LORD by faith. We too can already know that we are more than conquerors in Him Who loves us. This means that they live in His favor and in the awareness of His attention, that He looks after them again. God, Who had to hide His face from them for so long, has turned back to them in grace.

This walking in the light causes joy: “In Your name they rejoice all the day” (verse 16). A people who have such a King are filled with great joy. Their joy concerns Him; they are grateful to Him for the change He has wrought in their need. They find their happiness in Him, in Who He is, in His government and protection. This is so “all the day”. This refers to the period of the millennial realm of peace. God, their King, is always the same. Therefore their joy is always present. This joy can also be always present with us (Phil 4:4).

He has lifted them up from the dust. They are no longer the tail of the nations, but God has exalted them by His “righteousness” and made them the head of the nations (Pro 14:34). They certainly owe their exalted position to His grace. But it is grace based on righteousness, for the Lord Jesus did the necessary work for it on the cross of Calvary.

They glorify God for what He has done to and for them (verse 17). They attribute everything to Him. He is “the glory of their strength”. What they are, they are through Him. Of that strength nothing can be seen now, but they know and say in faith: “By Your favor our horn” – the horn is a picture of strength – “is exalted.” He will give them their exalted position of dominion as proof of His good pleasure in them. They have not deserved it, but He gives it by grace.

They realize that they are protected by their King, which is the Messiah (verse 18). He is their “shield” which “belongs to the LORD”, He has given Him to them as their shield. They call Him “our king” Whom they have received from “the Holy One of Israel”. This again refers above all to the Lord Jesus. He has been given by God to His people as King. He will reign on behalf of God, “the Holy One of Israel”, and then do so in perfect accordance with God’s holiness.

“The Holy One of Israel” is the title of God in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah uses that title 25 times for the God Who appeared to him as the three times Holy God (Isa 6:1). Israel has taunted and tested and limited Him each time (Psa 78:40-41). Yet this same God will protect them.

Psa 89:19-29 | The Covenant With David

*19 Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones,
And said, “I have given help to one who is mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
20 “I have found David My servant;
With My holy oil I have anointed him,
21 With whom My hand will be established;
My arm also will strengthen him.
22 “The enemy will not deceive him,
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
23 “But I shall crush his adversaries before him,
And strike those who hate him.
24 “My faithfulness and My lovingkindness will be with him,
And in My name his horn will be exalted.
25 “I shall also set his hand on the sea
And his right hand on the rivers.
26 “He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.’
27 “I also shall make him [My] firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
28 “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.
29 “So I will establish his descendants forever*

| *And his throne as the days of heaven.*

So far we have seen two things: firstly, that God, the Holy One of Israel, is King (verse 18), and secondly, that God made a covenant with David, His chosen one (verses 3-4). These two things are now further clarified.

Ethan reminds God of what He said about the covenant with David. The first announcement of this He made “in vision” (verse 19). Nothing else is known about this vision. It may have to do with what Samuel says to Saul, that he will no longer be king and God has chosen David as a man after His heart (1Sam 13:14). Samuel may be saying this to Saul because God somehow made this clear to him, perhaps in a vision. Or that when David had to be anointed, God made it clear to Samuel in a vision that David was the one to anoint (1Sam 16:6-13).

The psalmist speaks to God of David as “Your holy one” [Darby Translation], who is the “exalted one chosen from the people”. First the LORD called Himself “the Holy One of Israel” (verse 18), He Who sanctified Himself for the sake of Israel (cf. Jn 17:19). And now the LORD speaks through the psalmist of David as “Your holy one”, that is, He has set apart David, He has anointed him (verse 20), to be king (cf. Jn 17:17).

God calls David “one who is mighty”. He is not mighty by himself, but because God “strengthened him” (cf. Gen 49:24). God has given him help to be mighty. David’s strength is his care for the sheep, which he protected from the lion and the bear. He himself says of this: “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear” (1Sam 17:34-37).

This shepherd boy, who by God’s strength is mighty, is by God “one chosen from the people”. The election of David is entirely God’s business. David’s humble origins and simple profession make it all the more clear that God has exalted him and given him that high position (2Sam 7:8; Psa 78:70-72).

God has chosen David. At the same time, God has searched for someone to serve Him as a servant (verse 20; Acts 13:22). He found that man in David, whom He calls “My servant”. David is not only a servant when he becomes king, but he is already a servant when he is feeding and tending

sheep. In that work he has shown qualities that are of special value to God in ruling as His representative over His people.

We hear the joy in the voice of God when He says: "With My holy oil I have anointed him." Ethan called David "Your holy one" (verse 18) and God anointed David with "My holy oil". He did so by the hand of Samuel (1Sam 16:13). Everything at the calling of David bears the mark of holiness.

God finds great joy in David. David is called the anointed one and "My servant". In both he is a type of Christ, the Anointed Who is pre-eminently called the Servant of the LORD. The Servant of the LORD (Isa 52:13) is the Anointed of the LORD (Isa 61:1). Of the Lord Jesus it is written that God anointed Him – He is the Christ, meaning the Anointed – with the oil of joy above His fellows (Psa 45:6-7).

Anointing is done in view of a service to be performed. Anointing is the initiation of someone into that ministry. The anointing speaks for us of the Holy Spirit, with Whom every believer is anointed (1Jn 2:20). By the Spirit we can be a joy to God's heart. This is so, if we let ourselves be led by the Spirit. With the Lord Jesus this was always and perfectly the case on earth. That is why He has always been a joy to God's heart.

God promises that during his service to Him, He will establish David by His hand (verse 21). He guarantees the success of his service because He will protect and defend him. With His hand He is always with him. David will be able to perform his service because God's arm "will strengthen him". Here again God's "hand" and God's "arm" are mentioned (cf. verse 13).

God, Who is the Almighty God, empowers David. Thus all the attributes of God mentioned earlier in this psalm are now used in the service of David. God's hand and arm are as firmly attached to him as his own hand and arm are to his body. Everything happens through Him. He works out His covenant and fulfills it. Consequently, failure is out of the question.

David is the forerunner of Him Who is both the Son and Lord of David, the Christ of God, the Chosen One, the Servant of the LORD, Who had to go through suffering in order to be glorified afterwards (Phil 2:5-11).

Because the LORD is his shield, there is no hostile power that will be able to pressure David or overpower him (verse 22). In fact, going up against David is going up against the Almighty. And who will be able to go up against the Almighty with any chance of success? The very assumption shows great folly. Also, there is no “son of wickedness” who will “afflict him”. God will see to it that David does not fall into his hands.

The God Who crushed Rahab in the past (verse 10) will show His great power before the eyes of His chosen king by “crushing his adversaries before him” (verse 23). He need not fear any opponent, for God will take care of him. Even “those who hate him” God will “strike” with deadly plagues. No one will have a chance to do God’s anointed king any harm because God protects him with His power.

The protection of God consists of His “faithfulness” and His “lovingkindness” (verse 24). These attributes of God, which we have considered at length at verse 14b, are, so to speak, the protectors of His covenant. They will be with him, his chosen king. In His faithfulness He will keep David from harm and in His lovingkindness He will guide him. The horn, which symbolizes the power of the king, will be lifted up by David “in My name” (cf. verse 17). His power lies in the Name of God, which is all that God is and has said.

Everything in and about the king refers to God, the God Who rules over the swelling of the sea (verse 9). Therefore, a vast territory is subject to his rule. Because God rules his hand, he will “set his hand on the sea” and “his right hand on the rivers” (verse 25). This indicates his general rule, which will have its full fulfillment in the unlimited rule of the Messiah – that is, the Christ, Who is both Lord and Son of David.

God proves His preference for David not only by giving him a large territory to rule over it. Above all, He brought David into a personal relationship with Himself (verse 26). The relationship between David and God is that of a son to his father (cf. 2Sam 7:14). This is true in a perfect sense of the Lord Jesus (Heb 1:5).

That David will cry out to God “You are my Father” means that he acknowledges God as the origin of his kingship. In this sense God is also the Father of His people, He is their origin (Deu 32:6b). David could not say

“Abba, Father”, which the New Testament believer can say through the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:5-6). The Holy Spirit *works* in David, but does not *dwell* in him. The Holy Spirit did work on the earth in the Old Testament, but did not yet dwell on it. He came to dwell on earth only after the Lord Jesus returned to God after His work on the cross (Jn 7:37-39; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13-14).

David also calls God “my God, and the rock of my salvation”. In his personal relationship with God, “my God”, he knows Him as “the rock of my salvation”. David is secure in the cleft of the rock, the rock that is struck; the rock is Christ (1Cor 10:4). By this he expresses that his God is his only confidence and hope in all times. God is the unshakable rock that will bring him to the full salvation.

God’s grace goes even further. David is made by God His “firstborn” (verse 27) and thus heir. David is not the firstborn son of Jesse. He is the youngest son. ‘Firstborn’ therefore does not indicate the order of birth, but a place of honor above others. God makes him “the highest of the kings of the earth”. Both names again apply especially to the Lord Jesus, the King of kings (cf. Col 1:15,18; Rom 8:29; Rev 1:5).

Nothing can put an end to God’s lovingkindness as a result of His faithfulness to His covenant for David (verse 28). He will “keep” His lovingkindness for him “forever”. God made His covenant with David not on the basis of the law, but on the basis of the blood of the new covenant shed by the Mediator. That new covenant “shall be confirmed to him”. Nothing can make Him unfaithful to that covenant. He will, without fail, fulfill everything He has committed Himself to in that covenant.

God “will establish his descendants forever” (verse 29). Here we may think especially of the Lord Jesus, the Son of David. It is Him Whom God has in mind. The Messiah will sit on “his throne” in the realm of peace. His government will be “as the days of heaven”. In His government He will bring heaven to earth, making the days on earth like the days of heaven (cf. Deu 11:21; Isa 66:22).

Psa 89:30-37 | If ... Then ... But

| 30 *“If his sons forsake My law*

*And do not walk in My judgments,
 31 If they violate My statutes
 And do not keep My commandments,
 32 Then I will punish their transgression with the rod
 And their iniquity with stripes.
 33 "But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him,
 Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness.
 34 "My covenant I will not violate,
 Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.
 35 "Once I have sworn by My holiness;
 I will not lie to David.
 36 "His descendants shall endure forever
 And his throne as the sun before Me.
 37 "It shall be established forever like the moon,
 And the witness in the sky is faithful." Selah.*

The covenant with David, that is, the old covenant, means that his sons cannot "forsake" God's "law" with impunity (verse 30). The law is the expression of God's will for their entire social and religious life. If they forsake the law, they do not walk in God's "judgments" that He has given for certain aspects of their lives.

Nor can they "violate" [literally: profane] His "statutes", His rules for dealing with Him and with one another, without consequences (verse 31). If they violate or profane them, that is, see them as ordinary, human statutes that they can willfully ignore, they will be punished. Likewise, the failure to keep God's "commandments" will bring God's punishment upon them. His commandments are an explicit expression of His will.

If David's descendants do not heed all these different manifestations of God's will, He will "punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes" (verse 32; cf. Isa 10:5). God has done this by having the Assyrians and the Babylonians remove respectively the ten tribes and the two tribes from the land. He used these nations to punish and strike His people with the rod.

In spite of this, He did not "break off" His "lovingkindness from" David (verse 33). It is impossible that He will fail in His faithfulness to His cov-

enant. God has not made a final end to His disobedient people. He is not embarrassed by their unfaithfulness. God always keeps for the fulfillment of His covenant a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom 9:27-29; 11:5).

This grace is possible because Christ, as Mediator of the new covenant, took upon Himself the curse of the first or old covenant. God could not, of course, act contrary to the content of the covenant, that is, God had to punish the sin and failure of the people. Yet if God were to achieve His purpose, Christ had to undergo the people's punishment, or the covenant would be nullified.

In strong terms, God declares the firmness of His covenant (verse 34). He calls it "My covenant". He has made it and guaranteed its fulfillment. Therefore He will "not violate" [literally: not profane] it by not acting upon it. What has come from His lips are not thoughtless statements, as is often the case with us. He does not change what He has said, He does not alter the conditions, but keeps His original agreement.

What He has said, He has sworn (verse 35). It is the most powerful way of promising something, which with Him at the same time implies absolute fulfillment in the right time and manner. He has sworn "by My holiness". He does not profane His covenant, as He said in verse 34, because it is contrary to His holiness. He is perfectly holy, fully separated from evil and sin.

God says all this in this way in order to convince His weak, often doubting people that He is fulfilling His promises. As an additional confirmation, He says: "I will not lie to David" (cf. Heb 6:17-18). It is impossible for God to lie, for He cannot lie (Tit 1:2; Num 23:19). Lying is completely foreign to His nature.

He has said that David's descendants shall endure forever, therefore they will remain forever (verse 36). There will always be someone from his descendants sitting on his throne. This is none other than the Messiah, the Son of David and also the Son of God. His throne "as the sun before Me" means that God always sees that throne. Here is a government that perfectly and continuously answers to His holiness. Therefore, that throne is as fixed "as the sun" is fixed in the sky.

The reign of the Messiah “shall be established forever like the moon” (verse 37). The moon is connected to the sun; it derives its light from the sun. The sun stands firm, the moon endures forever. Both symbolize the reign of light in the realm of peace (Gen 1:14-16). Both the position and the duration of the reign are unchanging. The kingdom of the Messiah will endure forever (Dan 2:44).

The moon is “the witness in the sky”. This witness “is faithful”. The moon has changes in her appearance. She goes in a cycle from new moon to full moon and from full moon to new moon. Although there are changes, there is no surprise. It is a faithful image that returns every month. In this way God points to His faithfulness, which always remains, even though it is more noticeable to man at one moment than at another.

Psa 89:38-45 | Cast Off and Rejected

*38 But You have cast off and rejected,
You have been full of wrath against Your anointed.
39 You have spurned the covenant of Your servant;
You have profaned his crown in the dust.
40 You have broken down all his walls;
You have brought his strongholds to ruin.
41 All who pass along the way plunder him;
He has become a reproach to his neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries;
You have made all his enemies rejoice.
43 You also turn back the edge of his sword
And have not made him stand in battle.
44 You have made his splendor to cease
And cast his throne to the ground.
45 You have shortened the days of his youth;
You have covered him with shame. Selah.*

The current situation is at odds with the firmness and fulfillment of the covenant and is reminiscent of new moon. It is night, without the light of the moon. David, the chosen king, has been cast off and rejected by God (verse 38). David is rejected through his own fault. His descendants, the people of Israel, have also been cast off by their own sins. Christ, the Lord

and the Son of David, was also cast off and rejected. However, this is not because of His own fault, but because He has become the guilt offering (Isa 53:10). This made it possible for God to show lovingkindness to David and his descendants.

We are in the time immediately preceding the fulfillment of the promise, the time of the great tribulation. God has become wrathful toward His people and the descendants of His anointed king because they have become unfaithful to Him. In the opinion of the believing remnant, God has nullified the old covenant with His servant (verse 39). God has “profaned his crown in the dust”, his crown of royal dignity. There is nothing left of the former greatness and honor.

The city of God, the city of David, has become a ruin (verse 40). The city has become freely accessible through the breaches in the walls. The defenses are down, the fortifications are in ruins. Ethan attributes it to the actions of God.

With the removal of protection, the city of David has been plundered by those “who pass along the way” (verse 41). Nor is there any respect left for the city. To “his neighbors”, the neighboring peoples, “he has become a reproach”.

God has not only given the adversaries access to the city, but also “exalted the right hand of his adversaries” (verse 42). He has given them the strength for it and given them power over His people. Thereby He has “made all his enemies rejoice”, but in the sense of gloating.

In contrast, He has turned the sword of His people against themselves (verse 43). He has withheld His power from them and thereby has not made them stand in the battle. They are defeated, perished, scattered, carried away or fled.

He has made the splendor of the king to cease, there is nothing left of it (verse 44). All the splendor that marked his kingship is gone. Of his dominion nothing remains either, for He has “cast his throne to the ground”. There is nothing left to rule, because the people have been scattered over the surrounding countries or taken into exile.

The glorious reign of David and of his first successor, his son Solomon, lasted but a short time. Because of Solomon's unfaithfulness, God "shortened the days of his youth", that is, of the kingdom of Israel (verse 45). Things went from bad to worse. God was unable to prolong the days of prosperity and youthful beauty. He has had to give His throne to the nations and "covered" His people "with shame".

Psa 89:46-51 | How long?

46 How long, O LORD?

Will You hide Yourself forever?

Will Your wrath burn like fire?

47 Remember what my span of life is;

For what vanity You have created all the sons of men!

48 What man can live and not see death?

Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah.

49 Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord,

Which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?

50 Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants;

How I bear in my bosom [the reproach] of all the many peoples,

51 With which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD,

With which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed.

The remnant again asks "how long" that situation is to last (verse 46; Psa 13:1b-2). Now it is a question of desperation regarding the circumstances. They experience God hiding Himself from them. Will He do so "forever" (cf. Psa 77:7-9)? At the same time, the question "how long" is also a question in which the hope that the suffering will come to an end is resounding. But for how long will God's "wrath burn like fire?"

The question is how long God's faithfulness to His covenant, how long His lovingkindness, remains invisible. The psalmist puts his trust in the LORD, but the need is great. If the time is not shortened, none of the remnant will remain alive (cf. Mt 24:22). What then about the LORD's lovingkindness and faithfulness?

The first reason for the questions is the high need (verses 46-48). The second reason is that lovingkindness and faithfulness of the LORD are at

stake (verse 49), the covenant that He has spoken on oath. Finally, the third reason is the reproach that will come upon the remnant and with it upon the honor of the Name of God and of His Christ, His Anointed (verses 50-51). This is why the Lord Jesus teaches the remnant to pray: “Hallowed be Your name” (Mt 6:9b).

They ask God to remember what their “span of life is” (verse 47). If He still wants to fulfill something of His covenant, let Him do so quickly, or their lives will be over. “For what vanity You have created all the sons of men”, if He is going to let them live for such a short time and then also make it so difficult for them? Eventually, every human being dies (verse 48). Nobody escapes because nobody can “deliver his soul from the power of Sheol”.

Then comes the question to the “Lord”, Adonai, where His “former lovingkindnesses” are (verse 49). Where have they gone? Yet He “swore to David” in His “faithfulness”. But there is nothing of it now. Has God forgotten that He swore by His faithfulness?

Another aspect that brings the remnant before God is the reproach that His servants suffer (verse 50). Is the Lord thinking about that? “All the many peoples” reproach them. They do not shake off the reproach, but carry it around in their bosom, in their heart. All the reproach touches them deeply and remains as long as there is no outcome, no answer, no fulfillment of the covenant.

Finally, they point out to the LORD that the enemies are not *their* enemies, but *His*, “Your enemies” (verse 51). His enemies also do not primarily reproach their doings, but “the footsteps of Your anointed”. God’s anointed is David and above him the Messiah.

The enemies of Christ have reproach and mocked Him as ‘the King of the Jews’. They have reproached the way of God that He has gone with the Messiah. That God’s King was born as a Baby into a carpenter’s family and lived His life in humiliation is cause for unbelief to reproach Him. All mockers will see Him again to their dismay, then as Judge.

Psa 89:52 | Amen and Amen

| *52 Blessed be the LORD forever!*
| *Amen and Amen.*

Even though Ethan talks about God not showing Himself, he believes that God is there and will fulfill all His promises. That is why he says: "Blessed be the LORD forever." The LORD is enthroned on the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3). Victory is achieved when we begin to praise the LORD (2Chr 20:21-22), so too here in the third book of Psalms. Ethan underscores his praise with a confident "amen and amen". It is sure and certain.

The psalmist in Psalm 73, the first psalm of the third book of Psalms, goes into the sanctuary (Psa 73:17), where the LORD is praised forever. He does that also and especially in times of trial, in times of difficulty here in the last psalm of this third book. Faith that is purified answers with "Amen and Amen" and magnifies the Name of the LORD.

Thus faith triumphs over circumstances. Through the darkness, the believer sees the light of hope. This hope is the trust in Him Who will fulfill His covenant promises, even though everything seems to prevent its fulfillment.

Psalm 90

Introduction

Psalm 90 is the first psalm of the fourth book of Psalms which includes Psalms 90-106. We can compare Book 4 to the book of Numbers, the fourth book of the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. Numbers is about the journey of the people of God through the wilderness. This is also the subject of this fourth book of Psalms and is expressed in this psalm in a special way.

It is the only psalm that is mentioned as having been written by Moses. Consequently, it is also the oldest psalm. It is recognizably related to the song of Moses (Deu 32:1-40). Moses, the leader of Israel during the wilderness journey between Egypt and the promised land, is used here by the Holy Spirit as the first author of the series of psalms describing the wilderness journey in this fourth book of Psalms. In it he is also the voice of the faithful remnant in the end time. The wilderness journey is a picture of the purifying of the people (Psalm 90) resulting in the faithful remnant who will inherit the land (Psalm 91).

It is quite possible that Moses wrote this psalm toward the end of the wilderness journey. A whole generation had left Egypt, all of whom over the age of twenty – with the exception of Joshua and Caleb – had died. Miriam, who became a leper, also died, as did Aaron. Moses was the last one left, and he was denied entry into the promised land.

We can imagine Moses being deeply impressed both by the perishableness of man and by the greatness and eternal attributes of his God. About both he writes in this psalm. He has recorded in it this prayer which testifies of a profound insight in the relationship between a perishable, void man and the great God of eternity.

In Psalm 91 we see, in contrast to puny, perishable man, the dependent Man, Christ. This contrast is an instruction and an example for the faithful remnant in the end time, the characteristics of which we also find in Psalm 91. As an introduction to Book 4, these two psalms speak respectively of

darkness and death (Psalm 90) and light and life (Psalm 91). Psalm 90 is about the first man, Psalm 91 about the second Man, Christ, as Example for the faithful remnant of Israel.

As in Psalm 1, these two psalms are about the two paths that a person can take: the path of man without God in Psalm 90 and the path of the second Man, Christ, in Psalm 91. That they belong together is also seen at the beginning and end of both psalms. They both begin with “dwelling (place)” (Psa 90:1; Psa 91:1) and both end with “satisfy” (Psa 90:14; 91:16).

Division of the psalm

1. Introduction: Who God is (verses 1-2).
2. What God does (3x “You”: verses 3,5,8) (verses 3-10).
3. Teaching for mortal man (verses 11-12).
4. Prayer (verses 13-17).

Psa 90:1-2 | The Eternal God

1 A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were born

Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,

Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

This psalm is a prayer of Moses (verse 1a). It is a prayer because he addresses God throughout the psalm. It is the only psalm of his in Psalms and therefore the oldest psalm. He is called “the man of God” here (cf. Deu 33:1; Jos 14:6; 1Chr 23:14; 2Chr 30:16; Ezra 3:2). “Man of God” is an expression used in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles to designate a seer or prophet.

Moses here represents the voice of the whole people of God, which is evident from the use of the words “our” and “we”. Thereby we must remember that God’s people are the God-fearing part of them, the part that God acknowledges in His rights and wants to uphold these rights in the midst of an apostate people. This is what characterizes a man of God.

When Moses wrote the psalm is not known. When we read the psalm, we get the impression that he is speaking about the wilderness journey.

It is plausible that he wrote the psalm at the end of it. During the journey through the wilderness, an entire generation perished, though God remained the dwelling place or refuge for His people.

Verses 1b-2 form the introduction to the psalm. In these verses, we read the confession Who God is. It begins in verse 1b with "Lord, You have been ..." and ends in verse 2 with "... You are God". Moses in his prayer addresses the "Lord", Adonai, the sovereign Ruler of the universe. He acknowledges that the Lord has "been a dwelling place" to His people (verse 1b). The word for "refuge" or "shelter" [that is how the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word] is here translated as "dwelling place".

When we think of the word "dwelling place" we can think of safety and protection (Deu 33:27a). A dwelling place is a refuge. The verse from Deuteronomy 33 is among the last words of Moses, spoken just before his death. This underscores the close connection between the prayer of Psalm 90, the song of Deuteronomy 32, and the blessing of Deuteronomy 33.

The Lord has not only been a refuge for His people as a whole, but also "in all generation" (Deu 32:7). Each generation has its own difficulties, but the Lord, Adonai, has always been there for them. He is the same refuge for each generation, no matter how different the circumstances may be for a subsequent generation. One generation goes and another comes, but God does not change. Therefore, no generation is without Him as its refuge.

The God of the generations is the eternal God (verse 2). He has no beginning. Everything outside of Him has a beginning. That beginning was brought about by Him. "Apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (Jn 1:3). "Before the mountains were born", that is, had risen from the earth, He was there, for the mountains were made by Him. He was there because He "gave birth to the earth and the world" (cf. Pro 8:22-26). "The earth" is mentioned in distinction from the heavens and the sea. By "the world" is meant the part of creation where people live.

"Even from everlasting to everlasting" He is God. He was and is and will be eternally God. He is the Eternal, the eternally Being, the I AM. There is no period of time that can be imagined when He was not there. Nor is it possible to think of a period when He will not be there. He is always the Present One. This is beyond our human thinking.

The creation of the universe has not changed or limited Him in any way. Even if the old creation will perish by fire, that will not change or limit Him in any way. That there is an eternal, unchanging God gives man the only and at the same time all stability in a changing world and changing generations.

Psa 90:3-6 | Mortal Man Versus God

3 You turn man back into dust

And say, "Return, O children of men."

4 For a thousand years in Your sight

Are like yesterday when it passes by,

Or [as] a watch in the night.

5 You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep;

In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew.

6 In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew;

Toward evening it fades and withers away.

We see another particular construction of the psalm:

Verse 3 "You" ... verse 4 "for" ...

Verse 5 "You" ... verse 7 "for" ...

Verse 8 "You" ... verse 9 "for" ...

That is, verse 4 gives the reason for verse 3 and so on.

In great contrast to the everlasting, unchanging, unlimited God stands man with his limited life span. Because of man's sin, death has entered the world. The judgment of God is that He causes "man" to "turn ... into dust". Man has no "authority over the day of death" (Ecc 8:8). That control only God has. Man who recognizes that and accepts God's judgment, who acknowledges that he is dust, will live (Gen 18:27; Job 42:6).

The word "dust" here is not the same as in Genesis 3 (Gen 3:19). Here it means "grit", something that is pulverized. It says something not only about the matter, that it is dust, but also about the way it is nullified, pulverized, and that as a result of sin. It underscores the temporality and volatility of the life of a perishable human being.

God has pronounced the death sentence. He acts accordingly when He says: "Return, O children of men" (Gen 3:19; Ecc 3:20; 12:7; Psa 104:29). This command is heard at every death since the statement in paradise after the Fall: "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3:19). It applies without exception to all children of men. A person may have reached the highest position in the world, may be so proud of his achievements, or may have looked so beautiful, but the day is fast approaching when he will return to his origin: the dust from which he was made.

The command "return" means that man, created by God – not evolved – will one day have to return to his Maker to give account before Him. Hence this call. Adam left his dwelling with God (verse 1) and thus became a mortal man (verse 3). He sinned, and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23a). To restore this situation, God had to send His Son as the second Man. We see this in Psalm 91.

No one escapes that return. There is no doubt about that (Heb 9:27). That Enoch and Elijah escaped it is because God withdrew them from this judgment by taking them to Himself alive. In this we see an example of the taking up to heaven of the believers, that is, the taking up to heaven of the believers who are living on earth at that time. At the coming of the Lord for His church, they will be changed, while those who have fallen asleep in Christ will be raised (1Thes 4:14-18).

At creation God instituted units of time like years and days for man (verse 4). Man is bound to time. He Himself does not have this bondage or limitation. He is above time, He is not bound to it, we are. With Him one day is a thousand years and vice versa (2Pet 3:8). To Him, "a thousand years ... are like yesterday when it passes by". One day passes quickly. It is like "a watch in the night" – a watch is only four hours (cf. Jdg 7:19; Lam 2:19a). Those four hours of sleep are passed by in no time. God's doing is not determined by time, but He Himself determines the time of everything (cf. Ecc 3:1). He Himself is the eternal Unchangeable One of Israel (1Sam 15:29).

People's lives are swept away by God like flood, like they fall asleep (verse 5). When a man sleeps, he has no sense of time. When he wakes up, several hours have passed, without him noticing and without him accomplishing

anything. That is how fleeting, empty, void his life is. He can be so active outwardly, but his life is dragged along and swept away, leaving behind nothing substantial. It is all in vain, it dissolves into nothingness. Thus man's life passes like a vapor without him realizing its brevity.

Another picture is that of the grass sprouting anew. When people wake up in the morning, they are like the grass that sprouts anew. During the course of the day, the grass grows and blooms. When evening comes, "it fades and withers away" (verse 6). This picture is taken from the condition of the grass in the Middle East. When the *chamsin*, that is the hot wilderness wind, blows during the day, the grass dries up in no time. In this respect man is no different than grass: his life is short (Psa 103:15-16; Isa 40:6-8; 1Pet 1:24).

Psa 90:7-12 | Life Passes Quickly

7 For we have been consumed by Your anger
And by Your wrath we have been dismayed.
8 You have placed our iniquities before You,
Our secret [sins] in the light of Your presence.
9 For all our days have declined in Your fury;
We have finished our years like a sigh.
10 As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years,
Or if due to strength, eighty years,
Yet their pride is [but] labor and sorrow;
For soon it is gone and we fly away.
11 Who understands the power of Your anger
And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?
12 So teach us to number our days,
That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

Death is a natural process, but not as God intended during creation. It is God's judgment (verse 7) on sin (verse 8). Death came into the world through sin and is the reward God has attached to sin (Rom 5:12; 6:23; Gen 2:17). Moses, throughout the wilderness journey of forty years, saw all die who were twenty years and older at the exodus, except Joshua and Caleb. This included Miriam and Aaron. And also Moses himself was not allowed to enter the promised land because of his sin.

Because of God's anger over their unbelief, they have been consumed (verse 7; Num 14:28-29). It has been a long, terrible journey, with a number of deaths each day. Each death is a demonstration of God's wrath, that dismayed them. The issue is not how long a person lives, but that his end is the result of God's wrath. This is true for everyone (cf. Rom 3:23), but especially for the people during the wilderness journey.

Every death has reminded them of their "iniquities" (verse 8). They say of them that God puts them before His eyes as the reason for His death sentence. God cannot pretend that no sin has been committed. He constantly sees them and deals with them according to the requirement of His holiness. Even their hidden sins He puts in the light of His presence. Nothing is hidden from Him (Jer 16:17; Heb 4:13). His light reveals everything; nothing can hide from it. When the Lord Jesus returns to earth as Judge, "His eyes" will be like "a flame of fire" looking right through every person (Rev 1:14b).

Verse 7 and verse 9 run parallel. As a result, verses 7-9 form a pyramid, with verse 8 being the climax. This is a literary help to underscore and emphasize verse 8. The message is clear: our momentary life must awaken us so that we may become aware of our sinfulness, including sins done in secret, for nothing is hidden from God.

Thus all their days pass because of God's fury (verse 9). All their days, not a day excepted, they bear God's wrath because of their iniquities. They spend their years with the speed of "a sigh". This is the short-lived, miserable life of mortal man who is aware that he is human and that God alone is God. The word "sigh" means groan, it does not only mean 'momentary', it also means to grow weary, yes despondent. A sigh of despondency is given. It is as Jacob says to Pharaoh: "Few and unpleasant have been the years of my life" (Gen 47:9).

The concatenation of days continues for man for an average of "seventy years" (verse 10). Verse 10 is an underlining of verse 9. Both verses are about "days" and "years": "days" emphasize the brevity of life, "years" emphasize the prolonged travails of life. After seventy years, the curtain falls for man. "If due to strength", he may even live on for a few more days, so that he may live "eighty years".

Seventy years is not a long time and the extra ten years is not an eternity either. He is doing his best to enjoy the years he has been given. But in the end, what does it bring? The honest conclusion must be: even “their pride is [but] labor and sorrow”. The “pride” are the things from which he has still had some pleasure, whatever that may be, but from which he has never experienced real satisfaction.

Then suddenly it is over, finished, “soon it is gone”. “And we fly away” means that life has flown away as if it were chaff blown away by the wind. If you ask an elderly person what his or her life has been like, you will in general get the same answer: soon it is over.

The Preacher depicts life as a precious golden bowl suspended from heaven with a silver cord (Ecc 12:6). It is connected with above, with heaven. Life is connected with God. He has given man his breath of life. However, when the silver cord is removed, when it breaks, the golden bowl collapses to the earth and is shattered beyond repair. The light of life is completely extinguished. After the end of life comes the encounter with God. Man is called to prepare for it: “Prepare to meet your God” (Amos 4:12).

Before the psalmist continues with the final section, his prayer to God to confirm the work of his hands (verses 13-17), he first draws the lesson and conclusion from what he has seen from God in verses 11-12. This holds an important lesson for us, that before we can pray according to the will of God, we must first come to know Him.

Who “understands the power” of God’s “anger and ... fury” with which he ends people’s lives, whether they are strong or weak, lonely or numerous, poor or rich (verse 11)? No man understands it. The same answer applies to the question whether anyone understands “the fear that is due” God. No man understands. Or at least Someone does, namely the Lord Jesus. He has experienced the anger and fury from God as the judgment on the sins of all who believe in Him. He has been in the fire of God’s judgment, yet without being consumed by it.

The purpose of these questions is to cause man to think. He is to contemplate his futility and the emptiness of his life. As a result, he should come to the awareness that during his short and difficult life he lives under the judgment and anger of God on sin. He must come to see the connection

that exists between sin and mortality. This should drive him toward God, to seek Him and be ready to meet Him, his Creator.

It demonstrates the foolishness of man. Those who know the power of God's anger and fury will immediately repent of their sins to God. God's anger against sin is great. Those who realize this, will realize how much God is to be feared. And therein lies the beginning of wisdom (Pro 1:7; 9:10), a wisdom that bows to the righteous anger and fury of God over sin.

A fool says in his heart: There is no God (Psa 14:1a). This does not mean that he is an atheist; it does mean that in the practice of his life he does not take into account the living God. Moses is not a fool. He is wise; he has a wise heart. He fears God. He asks God to teach His people to number their days in such a way that they become aware of how fast their days are passing (verse 12).

God alone can give that teaching so that they can get the right view, His view, of life, which is so short. It accentuates the vast difference between the eternal God and finite man. Those who become aware of this gain "a heart of wisdom". A heart of wisdom focuses on God, Who is busy with His care for him every day (cf. Mt 28:20).

Psa 90:13-17 | Confirm the Work of Our Hands

13 Do return, O LORD; how long [will it be]?

And be sorry for Your servants.

*14 O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*

*15 Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us,
[And] the years we have seen evil.*

*16 Let Your work appear to Your servants
And Your majesty to their children.*

*17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;
And confirm for us the work of our hands;*

Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

Moses is the voice of the remnant who learned the lesson of life. Moses learned the lesson during the forty-year wilderness journey and became wise. The faithful remnant of Israel will learn that lesson during the great

tribulation by the antichrist and the disciplining of God through the prophetic Assyrian that follows.

Moses has become wise and so he boldly prays to the “LORD” and asks Him: “Do return” (verse 13). It is the call to the LORD for mercy. This is the opposite of what God said to the children of men in verse 3. True wisdom appeals to God to return in grace from His death judgment and to return in grace to His people. It is precisely the mortality of the people that makes it necessary for God to commit Himself to them. Otherwise there is no hope.

The remnant has repented, they have returned to God. Therefore, they can ask God if He will return to them now. This is consistent with the promise God gives in Zechariah 1: “The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts”” (Zec 1:2-3).

This hope of return is echoed in the question “how long [will it be]?” It has been so long that God has – rightly – withdrawn from His people. Moses, in great humility and at the same time with great urgency, asks if God will be sorry for the judgment He had to bring upon His servants. To be sorry here means that God will repent in regard to or will go back on His decision to exterminate the people (Exo 32:10). The pleading ground is what the LORD Himself said (Deu 32:36; cf. Psa 135:14). They are “Your servants”, aren’t they? That indicates how much they are dependent on Him and also that they have become willing to serve Him.

Next, Moses asks if the LORD will allow a new day in their history to dawn for the people (verse 14). That day is to begin with the “lovingkindness” of the LORD. Lovingkindness, *Adonai*, refers to the LORD’s faithfulness to His covenant, the blessings He gives by virtue of that covenant. He cannot give them on the basis of the old covenant, that is, on the basis of works of the law. He can only give them on the basis of the new covenant, that is, on the basis of the shed blood of Christ, the blood of the new covenant. That blood is so rich that its blessings flow not only to Israel but also to New Testament believers, the church of the living God (2Cor 3:6-18).

When the remnant is satisfied by Him with the blessings of the new covenant “in the morning” – that is, when a new day has dawned, the day of

the realm of peace – it will remain so throughout the day or throughout all the time of the realm of peace. It will be like the manna that the people also received every morning in the wilderness as food for the whole day and of which they were allowed to eat to satiety (Exo 16:21a).

As a result, they will “sing for joy and be glad” during “all our days”. This is contrasted with “all our days” declining because of the fury of God (verse 9). Every day of life will then be filled with rejoicing and gladness over all of God’s favors. As in verses 9-10, there is talk of “days” and “years” here. Days speak of quantity and years speak of quality.

Moses asks God to make them glad according to the days He has afflicted them (verse 15). The affliction under which they have groaned has been brought upon them by God. Moses knows and acknowledges that. God alone can change that. Therefore, he asks if God will offset the years of evil He has brought upon them with years of joy. The days and years of joy must come from God just as much as the days of tribulation have come from Him.

Moses here asks in humility. What God gives far exceeds what He asks. What He gives, let the days of tribulation and the years of evil be forgotten, no more will be thought of them (Isa 65:17). We see in Job, for example, that after his suffering he receives back double what he lost (Job 42:10,12; 1:3; cf. Isa 61:7; Zec 9:12). For us, everything is even richer. We may know that the “momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2Cor 4:17; Rom 8:18).

Moses’ final questions to God are about God’s work, “Your work”, and their work, “the work of our hands”. He begins with God’s work on His servants (verse 16). God is constantly forming His servants. His goal is that He recognizes Himself in them. Where God’s work is seen, His glory is seen. Moses asks if the “majesty” of the LORD will also be seen over “their children”, that is, the next generation.

For that to happen, everything must be removed from the lives of the servants and their children that prevents Him from being visible in their lives. He will confirm that work. The result will be visible to all when He sends the Lord Jesus and all His own with Him to the earth (Phil 1:6,10-11).

In asking that “the favor of the Lord our God” will be upon them, Moses is asking about the coming of the Messiah (verse 17). At His coming, not only does God’s work become visible, but “the favor of the Lord” comes upon His people. God’s favor is not only something to rejoice in, but is also a powerful motive to work for Him. God’s response is found in Psalm 91.

When we consider all that He has done for us, we will do everything He asks of us and involve Him in everything we do. We will ask Him for His blessing on our work as confirmation of His approval of it. At the same time, this involves the realization that what we do is good only if God confirms the work of our hands (Psa 127:1).

We will also realize that the works we may do are works He has “prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph 2:10). This awareness and desire for His confirmation is so great that the request for confirmation is repeated, the repetition being preceded by an emphatic “yes”.

Psalm 91

Introduction

The New Testament quotation of verses 11-12 shows that this psalm is about the Lord Jesus (Mt 4:5-6). The previous psalm, Psalm 90, describes the perishableness of the first man in contrast to the eternal God. This is depicted by the dying of the people of Israel in the wilderness. Psalm 91 describes the complete surrender to God of the Lord Jesus, the second Man. He is the true Joshua, Who brings the remnant into the promised land.

After the weak, mortal man of Psalm 90 on whom the anger of God rests, we see in this psalm the perfect Man at whom God looks with great joy. Christ is the fully dependent second Man in contrast to the perishable man. In this He is an example for the remnant who will be spared during the great tribulation and during the judgment and wrath of God.

In verses 1-13, the psalmist and the remnant are speaking alternately. This is evident from the alternation of the person forms first, second and third person:

Verse 1 The psalmist.

Verse 2 The Messiah as Example for the remnant.

Verses 3-8 The psalmist speaks to the Messiah.

Verse 9a The Messiah as Example for the remnant.

Verses 9b-13 The psalmist.

Verses 14-16 The LORD about the Messiah.

Psa 91:1 | Dwelling Place and Shadow

*1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.*

The psalm begins with a beautiful statement by the psalmist that sounds like a confession of faith. It is a truth that we see in the life of Christ and that also applies to the believing remnant who have Christ as their Exam-

ple and follow Him. This confession of faith also indicates the theme of this psalm. The remnant is safe and sealed, as it were, in the midst of the dangers of the great tribulation and the judgments of God.

God is represented here as “the Most High” and “the Almighty”. The name “Most High” is the name of God in the realm of peace. We have a picture of this in Melchizedek’s encounter with Abraham (Gen 14:18-22). What will then be seen by all is already true for the believer who is going through a time of severe trial. Therefore, he “dwells in the shelter of the Most High”.

God is also ‘the Almighty’, which means the guarantee that He will fulfill all His promises. With that name He made known Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom He made His promises (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; Exo 6:2). Not much seems to come of the fulfillment of the promises. However, those who abide “in the shadow of the Almighty” do not doubt for a moment that fulfillment will come.

The great assurance of this first verse applies to every believer without exception. Every believer who does this will experience it. It applies in fullness to the Lord Jesus as Man on earth. He dwelt “in the shelter of the Most High”. ‘Dwell’ denotes rest, feeling at home. He thereby spent the night, in which the world had sunk “in the shadow of the Almighty”.

The believing remnant will have this experience in the great tribulation. We New Testament believers, in whom the Spirit of Jesus dwells, may know God as Father. As Father, He is to us the Most High and Almighty. We may take refuge with the Father from danger and spend day and night in His shadow in the darkness in which the world is enveloped.

A “shelter” provides protection from a variety of dangers. Here the emphasis is on the hostile environment. The “shadow” brings close to the Person of Whom the shadow is. ‘Shadow’ is a Hebrew expression for ‘protection’ (cf. Lam 4:20). ‘The shadow’ we also see in the wing of a bird under which it hides and keeps warm its young (verses 3-4; cf. Psa 17:8; 36:7; 57:1b; 63:7). Here the thought of the Protector and His care for His own is more prominent. Those who abide in the shelter of the Most High may say to God: “My God” (verse 2).

The great encouragement of this verse is an introduction to the entire psalm. The psalm will illustrate this encouragement in more detail. It de-

scribes the circumstances that lead the believer to seek shelter with the Most High and experience the shadow of the Almighty.

Psa 91:2-8 | Protection in Danger

*2 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress,
My God, in whom I trust!"*

*3 For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper
And from the deadly pestilence.*

*4 He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may seek refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.*

*5 You will not be afraid of the terror by night,
Or of the arrow that flies by day;*

*6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.*

*7 A thousand may fall at your side
And ten thousand at your right hand,
[But] it shall not approach you.*

*8 You will only look on with your eyes
And see the recompense of the wicked.*

In verse 2 we hear a Person, namely Christ Himself, Who personally answers what the psalmist says in verse 1. Following Him, each individual believer of the remnant of Israel will so answer. Also, the writers and the reader of this commentary will each have to give this answer personally.

It begins with the utterance of an open confession, a statement spoken aloud. It is the expression of what is in the heart. The believer says "to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust!"" Those who can say this with all their heart will, as it were automatically, gain the experience of verse 1.

It is personal, first person singular, "my" and "I". This is perfectly true with Christ. He is an example in this both for the faithful remnant of Israel in the future and for us. The teaching of faith trust is never collective, but personal. We see it, for example, in the parable of the five wise and five

foolish virgins: you cannot give oil to another (Mt 25:1-11). Likewise, in terms of faith, you cannot rely on the faith of another.

Three times he uses the word “my”. This speaks of a personal relationship with “the LORD”, Yahweh, the God of the covenant with His people. He is, he says, “my refuge and my fortress”. A “refuge” is a temporary shelter from immediate danger for the time it lasts (cf. 1Sam 22:3-4). A “fortress” is a place of refuge because of constant danger. The Hebrew word *matsuda* refers to a safe place among rocks. This is not a particular structure that you can defend. It is a natural mountain fortress (cf. Psa 71:3). The two shelters reinforce each other. They represent the impenetrable protection and invincible strength against the attack of any enemy.

This is “my God, in Whom I trust”. What peace and safe security speaks from this confession. We may well speak of an open proclamation of God’s protective power in the face of all possible enemies and trials. There is no stronger protection, rest and safety imaginable than to be aware of a personal relationship with God in complete trust in Him. What could still confuse or despair someone living in this relationship?

Also verse 2, like verse 1, is perfectly true of the Lord Jesus during His entire life on earth. He came to earth to be accepted as Messiah by His people. But He was hated and rejected. His response to that is what this verse says. He says as a Man to the LORD, Yahweh, that He is His refuge and His fortress. He says to God “My God”, He lives in close fellowship with His God. He knows God as the One in Whom He can completely trust in all that He does.

We hear the Lord Jesus as Messiah of His earthly people speaking to the LORD as His God. We hear the faithful remnant speaking to the LORD in imitation of Him. We who are the New Testament people of God, the church, speak to the Father. We also do so in imitation of the Lord Jesus, for He is also the Son of the Father. He has brought us into that relationship through His work on the cross (Jn 20:17). Who God is as the LORD to His earthly people, God is as Father to His heavenly people.

Beginning in verse 3, we hear the answer to the trust the Messiah expressed in His God. The answer is an enumeration of protection from all kinds of evil. The LORD Himself – “He”, emphatically – will “deliver” Him “from

the snare of the trapper” (verse 3). This response also applies to the believer who has made this statement. In particular, this section is meant to encourage the remnant of Israel who will have to go through a very difficult period and severe persecution during the last year week spoken of by Daniel (Dan 9:27).

That this is specifically about the Messiah is evident from what is said in verses 11-12. How often, under the devil’s instigation, men have tried to catch Him like a bird in a snare (Mt 22:15; Mk 12:13; Lk 20:26). It all failed because He trusted in His God.

That He was finally captured and even killed has nothing to do with a failure of protection, but with the plan of God. That plan continues, precisely through the capture and killing of the Messiah. God’s purposes for His own can never be undone by any snare. It is a trap, a net using a lure (cf. Amos 3:5). It is treacherous, but the LORD gives deliverance even from this dangerous trap (Psa 124:7-8).

In the same way, He will save the believer from people who are out to eliminate him (cf. Psa 38:12). God ensures that the testimony concerning Him continues by protecting His own. Even if they are taken captive, they are not prey to the enemy. He can bind their hands, but not the Word of God (2Tim 2:9). God delivers from the snare of evil intentions. People can harm and even kill the body, but not destroy God’s plan. Against their will, they help to fulfill that.

God also saved Him “from the deadly pestilence”. The pestilence – a highly contagious, life-threatening disease – is given by God as a judgment to people who rebel against Him. This invisible judgment is at the same time a call from God to return to Him.

But God preserved the Messiah from the deadly pestilence because He trusted in Him. Likewise, God is always near the believer when the “deadly pestilence” threatens him. Again, although a person may be felled by a severe disease, this in no way thwarts God’s purposes.

The Lord Jesus healed the sick and thereby He took that sickness upon Himself. He was not sick, but He did identify Himself with the sick (Mt 25:36a,40). In doing so, He carried out God’s plan, for in that way He fulfilled one of the prophecies about Him (Mt 8:16-17). The source of it, sin,

He removed on the cross by being made sin. The consequences of sin, including sickness, He sometimes takes away or He helps us bear.

God's protection of His chosen Messiah and also of His chosen people is compared to a bird that shelters her young under her wings from imminent danger (verse 4). To that shelter the Messiah and His own take refuge. They take refuge under His protective wings (cf. Rth 2:12; Mt 23:37). His protection consists of "His faithfulness". He is faithful to His covenant. For the believing remnant, and for us, His faithfulness is based on the blood of the new covenant. God is faithful on the basis of the work of Christ (cf. 1Jn 1:9).

Every attack by the enemy is intended to lead the believer to question God's faithfulness, or trustworthiness, or truth. Since Paradise that has always been the enemy's tactic. He succeeded in doing so with Eve, and that is how sin came into the world.

However, whoever has taken refuge under God's wings will not doubt His faithfulness for a moment. God's soft wings under which he dwells secure, safe and warm, have against the attacks of the enemy the power of "a shield and bulwark". They are impervious to his infiltrations, whether cunning or violent. The shield is not a small shield, but a large shield behind which your body is safe. The bulwark is more of a surrounding shelter, a safe and secure area where you are communally safe.

Verses 5-6 deal with various parts of the day. It talks about the night, the day, darkness and noon. It covers a twenty-four hour period and means always. We don't have to be afraid of the unknown for a moment of the day or the night, of what awaits us, what may happen to us in terms of suffering and sorrow. In the night you have to deal with invisible dangers, during the day with visible dangers (verse 5). Pestilence is invisible, while destruction is visible through its ravages (verse 6).

The night makes everything unrecognizable and has something frightening. Those who have to go out in the night are afraid of the dangers hidden in the dark. Those who are under God's wings receive the assurance that they will not fear what is hidden in the future. Those who trust in God walk in the light, while in the world it is night.

It is not only the night that harbors suddenly emerging suffering. In application, we can think of slander spread about us behind our backs. Visible things can also happen during the day that damage us. For example, there is “the arrow that flies by day”. Here we can think of a sudden confrontation with someone who accuses us of something to which we have no part. Those who take refuge in God do not need to be afraid of this. God is there and therefore they do not get excited or upset. They surrender it to God with confidence. He hears and will deal with it justly in His time (1Pet 2:23b).

Then again “the pestilence” is mentioned (verse 6; verse 3), now as a disease “that goes around in the dark”. From this a threat emanates. It is present, but it is unknown when it will strike. There is also the threat of “destruction that lays waste at noon”. This is an overt, visible threat. These two threats will not frighten them because they trust in God.

What can also cause fear is mass deaths of people immediately around them (verse 7). As the next verse says, these are wicked people. This is about the disciplining hand of God over Israel when the antichrist is in power. When the wicked are punished by God with all kinds of plagues, there is the assurance that this calamity will not come to the sealed God-fearing ones. They remain unharmed (cf. Rev 7:3). This magnifies the wonder of God’s protection.

Only their eyes will partake of it, for they will see it (verse 8; cf. Isa 66:24). In the plagues that kill the wicked, they see God’s recompense to them (cf. Psa 37:34). God retaliates to the wicked for what they deserve because of their wicked behavior. It may seem so now, that the wicked can go about their business undisturbed and are not punished. Those who trust in God know that the moment of recompense will come when God will judge righteously (cf. Rev 6:10-11).

Psa 91:9-13 | Protection of the Messiah

*9 For You O LORD are my Refuge;
You have made the Most High your dwelling place
10 No evil will befall you,
Nor will any plague come near your tent.*

11 *For He will give His angels charge concerning you,*

To guard you in all your ways.

12 *They will bear you up in their hands,*

That you do not strike your foot against a stone.

13 *You will tread upon the lion and cobra,*

The young lion and the serpent you will trample down.

This section is particularly about the Messiah. First we hear the Messiah speak to the LORD (verse 9a). Then the psalmist speaks to the Messiah (verses 9b-13). This is evident from the fact, as mentioned in the introduction, that the devil quoted and applied these verses to Christ during the temptation in the wilderness. This section deals specifically with the Messiah, but it also applies to the faithful remnant of Israel and we can apply it to ourselves as well.

With the word “for” with which verse 9 begins, this verse connects to the previous section and transitions to the next section. Because the LORD is His refuge (verse 2), He is protected from all the dangers mentioned in the previous section. This new section also begins with the LORD being His refuge. It is a repetition of verse 2, and like that verse, it is an introduction to the section that follows. Because the LORD is His refuge, He is also protected from the dangers mentioned in this section. The LORD is always with Him for protection and safety. This is the secret to a life without fear and anxiety for every believer.

As mentioned above, in verse 9b the speaker changes. The Messiah is no longer speaking, but the psalmist who, through the Spirit of Christ, passes on to the Messiah promises of God. It is a repetition and summary of previous promises of verses 3-8. With “the Most High” is not only a refuge for the Messiah (verse 1), but He has made “the Most High” Himself His “dwelling place”. There He finds not only protection, but a home. It speaks of complete and undisturbed rest. That is what the Most High is for Him.

Therefore, the assurance can be expressed that “no evil” will befall Him and not “any plague” will come near His tent (verse 10). His “tent” speaks of His temporary stay on earth. He “dwelt” on earth in a body (Jn 1:14), which literally means “tabernacled”, that is, dwelt in a tent.

He is untouchable during His life as a Man on earth from any evil and any plague because He has full rest in God. We see an example in the storm on the lake. He can sleep peacefully during the storm (Mk 4:36-38a). He is not in the storm but in the Most High as His dwelling place, where no storm can come, where is perfect rest.

Verses 11-12 are quoted by the devil in one of his temptations of the Lord Jesus. This is when he takes the Lord to the pinnacle of the temple (Mt 4:5-6; Lk 4:9-12). As the Lord stands on the pinnacle of the temple, the devil tells Him to prove now that He is the Son of God by throwing Himself down from the pinnacle.

Verse 11 begins with the word “for”, then is told how the Messiah will be kept from evil and plague. For God will give His angels charge to guard Him in all His ways. Those ways are the ways that God wants Him to go. On those ways God assures Him of His protection through His angels. God gives them charge to bear Him up in their hands, so that He will not strike His foot against a stone (verse 12).

The word “strike” means “to be crushed” (cf. Psa 89:23). It is not just stubbing your toe against something and getting a bruise, but stumbling on a dangerous mountainside with the result that you are crushed by the fall. Therefore, we see the devil’s application of that verse to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. The pinnacle of the temple is the highest eave of the colonnade that lies over a deep abyss. From there the Lord should throw Himself down and thus demonstrate to the Jews that He is the promised Messiah. After all, “Jews ask for signs” (1Cor 1:22).

If He is truly God’s Son, the devil challenges Him, according to these verses from Psalm 91, God will give His angels charge to guard Him. Is He not the object of the angels’ worship? The Lord does not deny that these verses are about Him. He also knows that He can ask His Father for angels, as He says on another occasion (Mt 26:53).

But the Lord sees through the true meaning of this temptation. It is in reality a temptation to self-exaltation in the things that God has given. However, there is no seeking of Himself with the Lord Jesus. He knows the Word too, and perfectly, for He has given it. He dwells, as this same psalm says, in the shelter of the Most High (verse 1). That is the place He

occupies and therefore there is no thought in Him to tempt God. He trusts God completely. There is no need for Him to test God as to whether His words are true.

Added to this, as always, the devil is selective in his quoting of the Bible. The devil knows the Bible. He quotes from Psalm 91. However, we can be sure that when quoting from the Bible he always distorts verses or quotes only partially. Here he deliberately leaves out the words “in all your ways”. The devil does not speak of the ways of the Lord, for He goes His way in obedience to God.

The nature of this temptation is to make the Lord doubt the faithfulness of God. It is a test of whether God will do what He has said in His Word. In the answer the Lord gives – which, as with the other temptations, comes from Scripture (Deu 6:16) – His complete trust in God is evident. The Lord resists the temptation with the Scripture that warns against tempting the LORD, His God. It is an insult to God if we do not trust Him in His Word, no matter how perhaps the circumstances may seem to indicate that God could not be trusted.

The devil does not quote verse 13 of this psalm. This is because that verse is about him and his utter and humiliating elimination by the Messiah. The devil or satan is “the lion and cobra” and “the young lion and the serpent”. He is the roaring lion who wants to impress and devour by force and he is the cunning serpent who wants to cunningly deceive and kill (Jn 8:44; 1Pet 5:8; 2Cor 11:3,14; Rev 12:9).

The lion and the cobra are life-threatening animals that attack from their hiding place. Unexpectedly, they attack you. One will tear you apart and the other will poison you. One does it with violence and the other with depravity. These are the two characteristics of this world of old: “Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen 6:11).

The Messiah not only survives, He overcomes. This also applies to all who follow Him in His example to resist the devil. He who follows His example not only escapes the raw violence and deadly poison of the adversary, but subdues him. We see the end result when the Lord Jesus casts the devil without trial first into the abyss and then into hell (Rev 20:1-3,10). The

followers of the Lord Jesus are involved in the execution of this judgment. God will “soon crush satan under” their “feet” (Rom 16:20).

Psa 91:14-16 | What God Will Do

14 “Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him [securely] on high, because he has known My name.
15 “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
16 “With a long life I will satisfy him
And let him see My salvation.”

In this section, God speaks to the Messiah. He guarantees that He will reward the Messiah’s trust in a mighty way. He makes eight promises to Him for this purpose. This section also applies to all who are joined to Christ by faith.

“Has loved” and “known My Name” (verse 14) form the basis of the eight promises of God. “Has loved” is one word, *chasaq*, and means dedicated.

1. God will “deliver him” because the Messiah loves Him (verse 14a). The expression “has loved” implies the power of the love that Messiah has for His God and that He trusts in Him alone. In that expression, therefore, the thought of “adhering to, clinging to Him” is present. It indicates the great confidence that the Messiah has in His God, Whom He loves. Therefore God will deliver Him from every danger that threatens Him and fulfill His promises to Him.

2. God will “set him [securely] on high” and gives as the reason “because he has known My name” (verse 14b). After deliverance, He sets Him securely on high, making Him invulnerable to attack. This is primarily about the name Yahweh, the covenant name of God. That means an intimate relationship based on Who He is and what He has promised and done as expressed in the covenant. That the Messiah knows His Name means that He knows Who God is in the fullness of His attributes. It points to an intimate knowledge through fellowship with Him (Mt 11:27a).

3. God will “answer him”, for He “will call upon Me” (verse 15a; Psa 50:15). Because of that intimate fellowship, of knowing His Name, the Messiah

will call upon Him. He will call to no one else, for the One to Whom He calls will answer Him. We can apply this to the calling of Messiah in Gethsemane. And He was answered because of His piety (Heb 5:7).

4. God will “be with him in trouble” (verse 15b). This is a precious promise for the Messiah, and for all who are in trouble, but have their refuge in God. God does not leave Him, but is with Him, stands beside Him. He is not alone. That God is with Him ensures that trouble does not become suffocation. We can apply this to Gethsemane as well.

5. God will “rescue him” (verse 15c). God is not only with Him, but helps Him out of the trouble. Not only is His presence in the trouble a pledge, but God also pledges His help to rescue Him. We can apply this to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

6. God will “honor him” (verse 15d). This is what God has done after Christ has risen. He has taken Him up in glory and crowned Him with glory and honor (Jn 13:31-32; Heb 2:9).

7. “With a long life” God “will satisfy him” (verse 16a). The Lord Jesus has risen into an indestructible life (Heb 7:16). He has conquered death and will never see it again. On the contrary, God gives Him as a reward “a long life”, that is, a life to which there is no end.

8. God says He will “let him see My salvation” (verse 16b). This refers to the end result of God’s ways with the Messiah on earth in the realm of peace. Then God’s salvation on earth will be a fact. This salvation will be seen by the Messiah and distributed to all who partake of it through faith in Him.

This is how Psalm 91 ends in response to the problem in Psalm 90. In Psalm 90 we see the volatility of life and the trouble and suffering under the anger of God during the wilderness journey and the great tribulation. In Psalm 91, the volatility of life changes to being satisfied with a long life, and the trouble and suffering change to seeing the salvation of the LORD.

We can also see in these eight promises the course of the life of the Lord Jesus, from His coming on earth to His glorification in heaven and His reign in the realm of peace. At the same time, this is the path that every believer walks because of his connection with Him. He first went that way so that

every believer can go that way too. The secret of the blessing of that way we see in Him: complete trust in God (cf. Isa 7:9b) with Whom He lived as Man on earth in an intimate relationship.

Psalm 92

Introduction

Those who have seen the perishableness of man (Psalm 90) and have been given an eye for the Messiah (Psalm 91), for that man the Sabbath rest dawns (Psalm 92). About the meaning of the Sabbath rest we read in Hebrews 3 and 4. On that day he praises the lovingkindness, Adonai, and faithfulness of the LORD. Psalm 92 shows us prophetically what is found in the heart of the believing remnant. They are “the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Rev 14:4). They have seen Christ in Psalm 91 and have become followers of Him, just like the Lord’s disciples in the Gospels.

Division of the psalm

The psalm has the stylistic figure of a chiasm, which is a stylistic figure consisting of a repetition with a reversal. This chiasm – we can also speak of a ‘pyramid form’ – at the same time gives the layout of the psalm:

A. The work of redemption is accomplished (verses 1b-4).

---B. The consequences for the antichrist and his followers (verses 5-7).

-----C. The Most High is the eternal LORD (verse 8).

---B. The consequences for the hostile nations (verses 9-11).

A. The consequences of the work of redemption for the believers (verses 12-15).

We see that through this figure of speech, attention falls on the middle verse:

“But You, O LORD, are on high forever” (verse 8).

The glorification of God is the purpose of creation. Because of sin, man falls short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Salvation results in God being glorified beyond measure!

Psa 92:1-5 | It Is Good to Give Thanks to the LORD

| 1 A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day.

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning
And Your faithfulness by night,
3 With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp,
With resounding music upon the lyre.
4 For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done,
I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.
5 How great are Your works, O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep.*

This “psalm” is also “a song”, which underscores its character as a song of giving thanks. It is impossible to view the glory of the Lord Jesus in a cold, sober, distant manner. Every aspect of God’s glory that is taken into the heart will bring thanksgiving and worship. We see that here with the faithful remnant of Israel. See also at Psalm 65:1.

It is the only psalm that has in its heading “for the Sabbath day”. The Sabbath is the weekly day of rest (Exo 20:8-11). God gave that day to His people to remember especially on that day that He rested from His work of creation (Gen 2:2) and that redemption is also entirely His work (Deu 5:12-15). The Sabbath day is the day of rest of God’s creation work. Its full realization is the thousand-year realm of peace, which is the Sabbath of God’s work of redemption (Heb 4:9).

Resting on the Sabbath day means acknowledging that God is the origin of all things. Then the God-fearing Jew renounces all his own interests to think only of God and give thanks to Him for Who He is and what He has done. This will be the occupation in the realm of peace, which may well be called the millennial Sabbath.

The Sabbath is not meant to be a day of rest only in the sense that no work is done. Rest does not mean doing nothing. Rest means that the work is accomplished and as a result there is praise, giving thanks and worship. God also wants His people to praise Him on that day and also come together for it (Lev 23:3). According to God’s original intention, the Sabbath is not a burden, but a delight. That intention will be enjoyed by God’s people in the realm of peace.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews makes it clear to the Jewish believers, who are a type of the faithful remnant, that for the people of God the Sabbath rest means entering into the rest of God. To enter into the rest of God requires obedience of faith (Heb 3:18-19). Looking to the Lord Jesus gives so much comfort and encouragement that the believing remnant praises and give thanks to the LORD. In the realm of peace they will have entered into the rest of God.

It is not just right or justified, but “it is good to give thanks to the LORD” (verse 1b). Literally it says: “Good it is to give thanks to the LORD.” This makes it clear that the emphasis is on the word “good”. This is consistent with what the Lord Jesus says in John 4: “The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers” (Jn 4:23b). Good also implies lovely and pleasing (Psa 147:1).

It is a good activity and it has a good effect. Thanksgiving is to the glory of God and makes us happy and gives us peace. It is not only an obligation, but a desire. Above all, there is the desire of God Himself to be given thanks and praised. He is enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3). The LORD is worthy of being given thanks; He has done countless things worthy of thanksgiving. Who He is and what He has done gives abundant reason to praise Him.

His “name” expresses fully Who He is. As we see more of that – for us to that the Father name is added – we will sing praises to that “name”. The name “Most High” is God’s name, or the name of the Messiah, in the realm of peace, where He will reign as the Most High over all the works of God’s hands. That great Sabbath will be full of the singing of psalms to His glory because He has fulfilled all His promises.

It is good at the beginning of each new day or new period, “in the morning”, to “declare” God’s “lovingkindness” (verse 2). “In the morning” we can apply to the realm of peace. It is the “morning without clouds” of which David speaks (2Sam 23:4). The morning is the end of the night. Here it speaks of the new covenant on the basis of the blood of Christ, the blood of the new covenant (Mt 26:28). That is the foundation of the lovingkindness of God, the rich blessing of God on the basis of the covenant love of God.

All the mercy, love, care, all His wonders and all His acts in favor of them in the past will be declared, or proclaimed, throughout the Sabbath of the realm of peace (Psa 136:1-26). We can also apply this to our lives, in which that morning has arrived through the coming of the Lord Jesus into our lives. We can continually sing of His lovingkindness, Adonai, of His favors (Psa 89:1b).

When the morning has passed and the day is over, evening falls and night comes. We look back on the day and can then praise His faithfulness. At the end of the day we will testify to the faithfulness of God, Who has not been unfaithful for a moment. The thanksgiving takes place throughout the day. In the sacrifices it is expressed by the daily burnt offering which is offered twice a day: in the morning and in the evening (Exo 29:38-42).

If we apply the night to our lives, there can be nights in life, times when everything seems dark and hopeless. Then it is good to think of His faithfulness. He is and remains faithful even when we are going through a difficult time. When we think of His faithfulness, a song of thanksgiving comes into our hearts in the midst of the difficulties.

When giving thanks, singing psalms and declaring, various musical instruments are used (verse 3). They do not drown out the singing, but accompany the singing with melodious music. It is not about the melody but about the words (cf. Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).

What the LORD has done is a continual source of joy (verse 4). By this, above all, are meant His deeds in redemption. As a result, entering into His rest has become possible. When we see that, it makes us rejoice. The same applies to the "works of Your hands". Except in the work of redemption, we also see them in creation as a whole. We see them in all His ordinances, everything He instituted at creation, such as marriage and the family. He upholds it. About that we may sing joyfully.

We come to the exclamation: "How great are Your works, O LORD!" (verse 5; cf. Isa 28:29; Rom 11:33-34). His works are the outworking of His thoughts. His works make His thoughts known. We see this in the work of redemption and in the work of judgment that He exercises over the wicked and the antichrist.

All His deeds and works refer to Him, Who with all His deeds and works carries out a plan devised by Him. His thoughts are unfathomable by man, for they “are very deep” (cf. Job 11:7; Psa 40:5; 1Cor 2:11b). We, New Testament believers, can come to know His thoughts through His Spirit Whom He has given us (1Cor 2:9-10,12).

Psa 92:6-11 | God’s Enemies Perish

*6 A senseless man has no knowledge,
Nor does a stupid man understand this:
7 That when the wicked sprouted up like grass
And all who did iniquity flourished,
It [was only] that they might be destroyed forevermore.
8 But You, O LORD, are on high forever.
9 For, behold, Your enemies, O LORD,
For, behold, Your enemies will perish;
All who do iniquity will be scattered.
10 But You have exalted my horn like [that of] the wild ox;
I have been anointed with fresh oil.
11 And my eye has looked [exultantly] upon my foes,
My ears hear of the evildoers who rise up against me.*

“A senseless man”, the man who does not know God, as the animals do not know God, “has no knowledge” (verse 6). “Nor does a stupid man”, or a fool, the man who says there is no God, “understand this.” Here we are talking about the antichrist, the man who exalts himself as god (2Thes 2:4). He is the senseless man (singular) and the stupid man. Such a man is blind to all the deeds and works of God. He, in his senselessness and stupidity, passes them by carelessly and even mockingly, while the God-fearing one is deeply impressed by them and praises God for them.

Those who lack the fear, the awe, for God, lack the understanding of God’s actions. This is what the wicked, that are the followers of the antichrist, will experience first hand (verse 7). They seem to prosper, they “sprouted up like grass and all who did iniquity flourished” (cf. Psa 90:5-6; 73:3-12). They do not know and do not understand that the only thing that wrongdoing ends in is to “be destroyed forevermore” (1Thes 5:3). Their prosper-

ity in this life will not continue into eternity, but will undergo a dramatic change (Psa 73:18-19).

Opposed to the senseless man, the stupid man, and the wicked, all of whom will be swept away forever after a brief sojourn on earth, is “the LORD ... on high forever” (verse 8). “On high” here is the translation of *marom*, which means exalted, that is, in heaven. His supreme authority never comes to an end. Always He will maintain His place as the Most High. This verse is the climax of the psalm.

This will be demonstrated, among other things, by the perishing of hostile nations (verse 9). The God-fearing one points out to the LORD His enemies. Twice the psalmist says to the LORD “for, behold, Your enemies”, which prophetically are the Assyrians (Isa 10:5) led by the king of the North. They live in rebellion against God and want to harm His people. There is no doubt in his mind that they will perish. They will have no chance to disrupt God’s plans (Psa 2:4).

Also, God will everywhere scatter “all who do iniquity”. Here we see God acting. He scatters the wrongdoers, He chases them on the run, everywhere. They often operate in gangs and then feel capable of doing great things. But they will be defeated and dispersed in all directions and come to places in solitude where they will perish in their misery.

Verse 10 begins with the word “but”, indicating that a contrast with the preceding follows. How very different are God’s dealings with the God-fearing. The God-fearing is aware of this. He says in faith: “You have exalted my horn like [that of] the wild ox.” The horn is a symbol of strength (Psa 89:17). The wild ox (Psa 22:21) is also known for its indomitable strength (Job 39:10-13). It is an empowering picture of the power God gives to the righteous. It points to the exalted place of the righteous: he will no longer be trampled, but will reign (cf. Zec 12:5-6).

The righteous adds that he “has been anointed [or has become moist] with fresh oil”. There is an abundance of oil. He is not merely anointed with oil (Psa 23:5), but poured over with it (cf. Isa 32:15). It is also “fresh” oil. It speaks of a renewal, of a new position and a new situation. It also speaks of purity and brilliance. The whole appearance is beneficent to behold. In

doing so, the focus is not on the righteous, but on Him from Whom the oil comes: God.

Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,28). Fresh oil – that is, the pure, first-pressed oil, also called anointing oil, used to anoint the high priest and priests, kings and prophets, and for sacrifices – reminds us of the “renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Tit 3:6). The outward power (the horn and the wild ox) comes from within, where renewal has taken place. The renewal of the Holy Spirit means the renewal because of the Holy Spirit, the renewal that emanates from Him and is wrought by Him (cf. Eze 36:25-27).

From that new position, the righteous will see the fall of his foes, or those who lie in wait for him (verse 11; Isa 66:24). The foes are people who, from an invisible place, are stalking him in order to attack him unexpectedly as soon as they see an opportunity to do so. The roles will be reversed and he will see how they fall. He will also hear with his ears what happens to the evildoers. God will deal with his foes and evildoers.

Psa 92:12-15 | Flourishing and Yielding Fruit

12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree,

He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Planted in the house of the LORD,

They will flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They will still yield fruit in old age;

They shall be full of sap and very green,

15 To declare that the LORD is upright;

[He is] my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

When the wicked and enemies are cut down like grass, it is time for blessing for the righteous (verse 12; Psa 1:3). In contrast to the wicked who are like grass and have been cut down, he “will flourish like the palm tree”. The branches of the palm tree symbolize victory (Mt 21:8) and the cedar symbolizes stateliness (Isa 37:24). The palm tree and the cedar are stately evergreen trees. The palm tree grows in the wilderness and the cedar in the mountains.

A palm tree grows straight up. Thus, the righteous will flourish and grow up because he has received life from God and has been planted in His

house and in the courts thereof (verse 13; Jer 17:7-8). It is, of course, imagery. It means that the righteous may have daily fellowship with Him Who dwells in His house in the midst of His people. The courts are the places of the temple where the common people may also come. They speak of daily life.

In God's house there is no aging process. Those planted in it do not cease to yield fruit in old age, but continue to do so (verse 14; cf. Psa 52:8). Nor does their fruit wither, but remains fresh and green (cf. Isa 40:30-31). They don't keep telling stories from the old box, but give a new, fresh harvest each time. The outer man is decaying, but the inner man is being renewed day by day (2Cor 4:16).

In the beginning of the psalm, in verse 2, the psalmist declares the loving-kindness of the LORD in the morning. Here, in his old age, the righteous continues to yield fruit in declaring "that the LORD is upright" (verse 15). To that end he remains fresh and green. He remains fresh and green because the LORD is his rock, his strength (Deu 32:4,15). He confesses that he owes this to Him and His unchanging power.

He declares that "the LORD is upright" and that "there is no unrighteousness in Him". It is a double declaration of His absolute incorruptibility. Therefore, He is completely trustworthy. 'True' in Hebrew is *yashar* and means upright or right. He is right in His words and His works. He is right regarding His Person. Therefore, there can never be injustice in Him.

Psalm 93

Introduction

Psalm 93 can be seen as the first psalm in a series of psalms (Psalms 93-101) that describe and sing of the kingship of the LORD, Yahweh, that is, the Lord Jesus. At the same time, Psalm 93 is also a continuation of the previous psalms. It is the fulfillment of the promises of the LORD as promised in Psalm 92.

The LORD is now King. In Psalm 93, the faithful remnant sings of the consequences of God's action in favor of His people. We also see this in Psalms 96, 97 and 99. In the new series of psalms, beginning with Psalm 94, we get a look back at the trials the remnant went through.

Psa 93:1-4 | The LORD Reigns

*1 The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.*

*2 Your throne is established from of old;
You are from everlasting.*

*3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice,
The floods lift up their pounding waves.*

*4 More than the sounds of many waters,
[Than] the mighty breakers of the sea,
The LORD on high is mighty.*

The psalm begins with the statement that “the LORD reigns” (verse 1). Literally it says “the LORD is King”. This is what the people of God who were redeemed after the great tribulation profess (cf. Exo 15:18). That the LORD reigns means that the Messiah reigns. He has taken His place as King in Jerusalem. He is the Immanuel, the God with us. The Messiah is none other than the LORD, Yahweh, Who has been given government by God because He is the Son of Man (Jn 5:22,27).

The LORD has always been King (Exo 15:18). Yet Israel preferred to choose a man as king (1Sam 12:12). In the near future, a man, the antichrist, according to the election of apostate Israel, will be king over Israel. In Psalm 93, the Lord Jesus has taken His rightful place as King (Isa 52:7). Its announcement is repeated among the nations in Psalms 96, 97 and 99 (Psa 96:10; 97:1; 99:1).

When the Lord Jesus appears in the world the second time (Heb 9:28), it is to reign openly. He also rules now, but in secret, not openly visible to the world. To His own it is visible, namely in faith. His second appearance will be in no way like His first appearance. The first time He appeared as a Baby, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. We can also think of the moment when He presents Himself as the rightful King to Israel, on Palm Sunday, seated on the colt of a donkey, the young of a donkey (Zec 9:9). At His second appearance, He will come on the clouds of heaven and be "clothed ... with strength". Clothing is part of a person's being; it shows others who a person is inwardly.

He comes in the clothing appropriate for the occasion. The Messiah "has clothed and girded Himself with strength". He has not girded Himself with all kinds of weapons, but "with strength" given to Him (cf. Mt 28:18). This goes far beyond all kinds of means by which He defeats enemies. What He is clothed with figuratively pictures His power and majesty. He appears as King of kings and Lord of lords. 'Girded' is a military expression (Isa 8:9), in other words, the power with which the Lord Jesus is girded He uses to nullify enemies.

His power is His ability by which He as Creator created all things (Rev 4:11) and carries all things according to the purpose He has for all that He created (Heb 1:3). In this no one can oppose Him. It has seemed that way for a while, but that has been only appearance. Now He is going to carry out His plan, for He is also the Redeemer (Rev 5:1-14). As Creator and Redeemer, He is the rightful Owner.

The world "is firmly established, it will not be moved", for He is in power (Psa 96:10). All the political, economic and spiritual powers that have caused the world to totter have been removed by judgment. Their power is gone forever. Now He rules forever. He does so according to God's orig-

inal ordinances, as He established them at creation (Psa 24:1-2). Therefore, the world stands unshaken (Psa 104:5).

The throne on which He sits, from which He now exercises His power openly, is not new (verse 2). It is a throne which “is established from of old”. He is “from everlasting”. Therefore, His power is from eternity. After all, there is no time imaginable when He has not been powerful. His throne stands unshaken from of old, no matter what men and nations on earth may do or think. There is no evil that can ever approach or affect that throne. A throne established from of old refers to it as a kingdom destined from the foundation of the world (Mt 13:35).

“The floods” (verse 3) with their powerfully flowing waters are symbols of power systems that determine the thinking and life of human society. Prophetically they are a reference to great powers like Assyria (Isa 8:7-10) with its Euphrates, powers that can only be broken down by the LORD himself, the Immanuel. They are influences that “lift up” themselves against God. They “lift up their voice”, indicating that they make themselves heard emphatically.

With their compelling, pernicious teachings, they drown society. They “lift up their pounding waves”. This indicates that they pump their teachings into society with power and violence. We see this in our time in the systematic destruction of marriage and family instituted by God and the difference between man and woman established by God in creation.

The believer responds to this with peace and assurance: “The LORD on high is mighty”, mightier “than the sounds of many waters, [than] the mighty breakers of the sea” (verse 4). He is untouchable by the mighty nations. The mighty waters of the sea with its mighty waves are a picture of the peoples, the nations (Isa 17:12; Rev 17:15). They feel powerful and fizzle in rebellious pride which is symbolically represented in “the mighty breakers” (Psa 2:1-3; Job 38:11). God will answer all this pride with mocking laughter and scathing judgment by sending His Son, the Messiah (Psa 2:4-9; cf. Isa 8:7-10).

Psa 93:5 | Holiness Is an Ornament

| *5 Your testimonies are fully confirmed;*

*Holiness befits Your house,
O LORD, forevermore.*

The exalted action of God above the nations, the majesty with which He is clothed, and the power with which He is girded, prove that His “testimonies are fully confirmed” (cf. Psa 19:7b). His testimonies include everything to which He has given testimony. They are all the statements that God has made through His word and through His prophets. It involves everything about Himself, about man, and what He has promised.

His testimonies are His words and therefore “fully confirmed” (cf. 1Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2Tim 2:11; Tit 1:9; 3:8; Rev 21:5; 22:6). Faith rests on this. Faith trusts in the Word of God as in God Himself, not only for the final victory, but also for the way to it.

His testimonies are embedded in His holiness. They focus the heart of the believer on God. The standard of holiness is found in His house, where He dwells and where everything responds to His holiness. His house on earth is the great result of His work of redemption. God did not dwell with Adam or with faithful individual believers. He dwells with a redeemed people (Exo 29:45-46). This is God’s testimony of holiness on earth.

It is an ornament of His house, for there is nothing of sin or injustice present, defiling it (cf. Eze 43:12). Whatever is not holy does not belong to Him (cf. Rev 21:27). Nor will this ever change, just as He never changes. This ornament of holiness remains “forevermore”. Everything that belongs to Him bears this mark of holiness. It is sanctified by and for Him, dedicated to Him.

Psalm 94

Introduction

In Psalms 94-101 we have a review to the time of the great tribulation, just before the appearing of Christ. It is the time when the antichrist is king in Israel, the Jewish temple is rebuilt, and the believing Jews are persecuted. The remnant suffers greatly from injustice during the reign of the anti-christ. They cry out to the LORD for help. Psalm 94 puts into words the feelings of this faithful remnant.

The Lord Jesus describes this situation in Luke 18 in the parable of the unjust judge (Lk 18:1-8). Psalm 94 specifically describes the widow's request for justice to be done to her (Lk 18:3).

This psalm was sung – according to Jewish tradition – by the priests while Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers were busy destroying the temple.

Psa 94:1-7 | Call to Render Recompense

1 O LORD, God of vengeance,
God of vengeance, shine forth!
2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth,
Render recompense to the proud.
3 How long shall the wicked, O LORD,
How long shall the wicked exult?
4 They pour forth [words], they speak arrogantly;
All who do wickedness vaunt themselves.
5 They crush Your people, O LORD,
And afflict Your heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger
And murder the orphans.
7 They have said, "The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed."

The psalmist cries out to the "God of vengeance" (verse 1). By "vengeance" we should not think of angry, bitter feelings but of a hunger and thirst for

justice (Mt 5:6; Rev 6:9-10). Justice means that God must repay the evil deeds of the enemy in order to redeem His people (Psa 18:47-48). The Hebrew word for vengeance, *naqam*, means an action in which the victim is protected and the perpetrators are punished. The name "God of vengeance [or: retribution]" occurs twice in this verse to underline it.

The call to the God of vengeance involves asking God to avenge all injustice. It is not a one-time call, but a constant one (cf. Lk 18:1,7). That God is the God of vengeance also implies that He is the Only One Who has the right to exercise vengeance and no one else (Deu 32:35; Nah 1:2; Rom 12:19; 1Thes 4:6). He can, however, delegate that vengeance, setting the boundaries for it (Num 35:19-25; Jos 20:5; 2Kgs 9:7; Rom 13:4).

The call for vengeance – revenge in the sense of retribution – is appropriate for the God-fearing Jew (cf. Jer 11:20; Rev 6:9-11). The vengeance of God is the exercise of justice over the injustice that the wicked have done to God and His people. The psalmist calls that God "LORD", appealing to God's faithfulness to His covenant with His people Israel. For us who live in the age of grace, we will pray for those who wrong us (Mt 5:44; Lk 23:34; Acts 7:60; Rom 12:14; 1Cor 4:12).

The psalmist knows that it is not for him to exercise vengeance, but only for God to do so (cf. 1Sam 24:13). Therefore, he asks Him. Nor does he seek satisfaction for the injustice suffered, but because vengeance paves the way for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The request of the remnant to "shine forth" is the request to send the Messiah to deliver them from their enemies (Psa 80:1-3; cf. Deu 33:2). In the return to earth of His Son, the Messiah Jesus, God will appear shining.

Then the psalmist calls God "Judge of the earth" (verse 2; Gen 18:25). The whole earth is under His authority. The "proud" have had their way for too long. Proudness is the sin of the devil (1Tim 3:6). The antichrist, called the wicked, is prideful (Psa 10:2) by exalting himself to a god (2Thes 2:4). In the pride of Herod we see a type of the pride of the antichrist (Acts 12:22-23). The proud and wicked in verses 2-3 refer to the antichrist and his followers.

It is high time for the Judge to exalt Himself, to rise up, to show His judicial majesty and "render recompense". The proud have all along been

pretending to be 'judge of the earth', denying God (see the explanation at Psalm 82:1). This evil has its own 'reward' and that is the judgment of God.

That God will act is not a question for the psalmist. But *when* will He do so (verse 3)? "How long" will God tolerate the wicked going about their business undisturbed (cf. Psa 17:9-14; 92:7)? It seems as if there is no end to their proud behavior. How long will He just sit and watch? They have all the fun in the world and God does not halt them. How often do we have that thought too?

There is reason enough to give them the deserved reward of judgment. The psalmist points out to God a number of things. First, he points to their mouths. Their mouths "pour forth [words], they speak arrogantly" (verse 4; cf. Pro 15:2b,28b). They boast of the injustice they do, which allows them to afford the luxurious life they live (Psa 73:3-12).

He lists some of the acts of injustice they do and points them out to the "LORD":

1. "They crush Your people" (verse 5; cf. Mt 24:9-22). The wicked are violating the people who are His, the people He has chosen to be His people. They crush them, trample them underfoot. And yet they are His people, the people of whom He is King. What king does not stand up for his people?
2. They "afflict Your heritage". The wicked take away freedom from the LORD's heritage, from what belongs to Him. A Jew's possessions, such as the land, are the heritage of the LORD (Lev 25:23). "They", that is prophetically the antichrist and his followers, are oppressing those whom He has delivered from bondage to be His heritage. Why does He allow this to happen without intervening?
3. And surely He must also see what the wicked do to "the widow and the stranger" and the "orphans": they slay and murder them (verse 6). These crimes prove a special heartlessness and cruelty. The widow, stranger and orphan are extremely vulnerable people. They often have little more than their lives. Toward them, the wicked prove that they are not only out to increase their possessions, but that they act out of murderous lust.

In this light, what James writes prophetically about them in his letter is appealing: “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of [our] God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress” (Jam 1:27a). It is not a call to visit them for a chat, but to visit them in view of their needs.

The psalmist’s vexing question in connection with this is: where is the LORD’s care for these defenseless people? After all, He has specifically guaranteed Himself for them (Deu 10:17-18; Psa 68:5). However, He seems to be indifferent to what is being done to His people, His property, and the vulnerable groups of people. The wicked can go about their business without any fear of God’s judgment.

Are those wicked people right, then, when they say in their arrogance: “The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob pay heed” (verse 7; cf. Psa 73:11)? That the wicked can go about their business undisturbed seems to confirm their words. What can the God-fearing object to this? He does not understand how God can allow this, knowing that God will still uphold His honor. He cannot reconcile this.

In the age of grace in which we live, “he who now restrains” (2Thes 2:7), that is the Holy Spirit, is still present to stop the full revelation of evil. When soon the church is taken up, the Holy Spirit also no longer dwells on earth. Then evil will be able to run rampant. During that time, the remnant of Israel will be severely persecuted by their own king, the antichrist. It can be compared to David who was persecuted by Saul and later by Absalom.

Psa 94:8-11 | The LORD Knows Man

*8 Pay heed, you senseless among the people;
And when will you understand, stupid ones?
9 He who planted the ear, does He not hear?
He who formed the eye, does He not see?
10 He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke,
[Even] He who teaches man knowledge?
11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man,
That they are a [mere] breath.*

The psalmist, the God-fearing, has asked God His questions, questions with which he wrestles. Now he addresses the “senseless among the peo-

ple” and the “stupid ones” (verse 8; Psa 92:7). The people to whom the psalmist is speaking are not using their minds; they are “senseless”. The Hebrew word for senseless, *ba’ar*, means unwise and boorish. The word can also be translated ‘brute’ (Eze 21:31). In addition, they are foolish, for they say by their way of life that there is no God. These people are not atheists; they do not deny the existence of God, but they have deliberately shut Him out of their lives. They refuse any interference from Him in their lives.

How long will it be before they become understanding? They still can if they pay attention to what he is going to say, if they take it to heart (cf. Isa 58:1-12). What he is about to say has undiminished force for all mankind, even today!

They must be well aware that God is present in everything they say, do and think. He leaves no doubt about that (cf. Exo 2:24-25). He begins with God as the Planter of the ear (verse 9; cf. Psa 115:3-8). He planted the ear, reminiscent of digging a hole in the ground to put a plant in it. Thus God made a hole on the side of the head to put in it an ear, that is, the ability to hear.

His question: “He who planted the ear, does He not hear?”, concerns all the words they spoke haughtily. The question means that He of course hears all their words. He Who gives man the ability to hear is the all-hearing God. All that man has and can do are attributes of God which He has given him and which He Himself possesses in an infinitely higher degree.

The same is true of seeing. The question: “He who formed the eye, does He not see?”, concerns all the injustice they do. Of course He, the Former of the eye, sees that. He has artfully formed the eye as a potter artfully forms a pot. The eye is an artifact of God in which His skill and wisdom are expressed. His eyes see all that all the eyes of all men see. Nothing escapes Him from what they do (2Chr 16:9).

God is not only the Planter of the ear and the Former of the eye of individual man. He is also the Chastener of “the nations” (verse 10). He also controls and checks the nations. He hears their wicked cries and perceives them with His eyes (Gen 18:20-21). They are rebuked by Him because of their rebellion against Him.

He can do this, for example, through natural disasters or epidemics – such as the current (we write 2020) Covid-19 pandemic – which are at the same time a call to repentance (Isa 55:6-7). By doing so, He shows that He is above the nations of the earth. It is His method by which He “teaches man knowledge”. He is the great Teacher Who teaches man about Who He is and who man himself is. He is the Omniscient.

The LORD hears all the words of man. He sees all the deeds of man. Words and deeds are externally perceptible. But it goes even deeper. “The LORD knows” also the hidden “thoughts of man” (verse 11; Mt 9:3-4). This is connected to the previous verse. He Who teaches man knowledge is the One Who knows all that man thinks, what is in His heart (Acts 1:24).

With His knowledge, He also gives His judgment of all that man devises. “They are a [mere] breath”, that’s all He says about it. What people can be deeply impressed by God sweeps off the table with one swing. That is how little all their intellectual babbling represents. Breath, in Hebrew *hebel*, means without substance, vain, insignificant, nonsensical. The book of Ecclesiastes describes in detail the meaning of this word through a large number of examples.

This verse is quoted by Paul to show the value that man’s wisdom has in God’s sight (1Cor 3:20). He thereby makes it clear to the Corinthians, who are impressed with worldly wisdom, that the deliberations of men, even of the wise, are without substance, volatile.

Psa 94:12-13 | Chastening, Teaching and Relief

*12 Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD,
And whom You teach out of Your law;
13 That You may grant him relief from the days of adversity,
Until a pit is dug for the wicked.*

The believing remnant pronounces the “blessed” on “the man whom You chasten, O LORD” (verse 12). This is a different chastening than the chastening given to the nations. It is given in general terms because it is of general application. This chastening is the portion of the God-fearing: “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines [or: chastens], and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb 12:6). God gives that discipline, “so

that we may share His holiness” (Heb 12:10). It is a necessary chastening given for this purpose.

Whoever undergoes this chastening is not alienated from God as a result, but rather driven out to Him. Such a person is taught by God from His law. It makes someone willing to accept this teaching. He will thereby grow in the knowledge of God and of His ways with him. This leads to the result described in the next verse.

He who appreciates the LORD’s chastening receives from Him “relief from the days of adversity” (verse 13). The days of adversity are the days of the great tribulation that will come upon the people of God, and especially the believers among them, through “the wicked”, the antichrist. His reign will come to an end (Rev 19:20), for a pit will be dug for him.

It does not say who digs the pit. Possibly it applies to him, as it did to Haman at the time: “He who digs a pit [for someone else] will fall into it [himself]” (Pro 26:27a; cf. Jer 18:20). That pit is his grave. As soon as it is dug, his exercise of power is over. That is what the God-fearing confidently and with peace in his heart looks forward to in the time of the great tribulation.

If we learn to bow under the chastening of God, it will give us peace during the times when we are overwhelmed by difficulties that people put on us. We then experience “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb 12:11). Then we know that the difficulties will end one day. For us, that is not so much the death of the wicked, but the coming of the Lord to take us to Himself. This view keeps us from becoming impatient, lest we think that God does not care about our difficulties.

Psa 94:14-19 | The LORD Helps

*14 For the LORD will not abandon His people,
Nor will He forsake His inheritance.*

*15 For judgment will again be righteous,
And all the upright in heart will follow it.*

16 Who will stand up for me against evildoers?

Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?

17 If the LORD had not been my help,

My soul would soon have dwelt in [the abode of] silence.

*18 If I should say, "My foot has slipped,"
Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.
19 When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,
Your consolations delight my soul.*

It is clear to faith that "the LORD will not abandon His people" (verse 14; cf. Rom 11:1), even though it appears that they are in the power of the wicked (verse 5). He remains faithful. The assurance of this is a comfort in the midst of distress. With the same assurance of faith, the psalmist says that the LORD will not "forsake His inheritance". His property is His inheritance, which is His precious possession (Exo 19:5b). Knowing that we are precious to Him quiets the mind.

This comforting assurance flows from the knowledge that "judgment will again be righteous" (verse 15). Now the judgment pronounced by men and carried out is unjust by sin. That it is unjust now we see in the clearest way in Pilate's judgment of the Lord Jesus. Pilate passes the most unjust judgment ever. In him and Christ we see the greatest possible contrast between judgment and justice.

When Christ reigns, "judgment will again be righteous" (cf. Isa 1:25-26). In Him, judgment and righteousness are in perfect harmony with each other. To that time the God-fearing looks forward. When Christ executes His judgments, He does so completely righteously. No one will dispute that, and "all the upright in heart will follow it". What they have always believed in their hearts, they will then speak aloud and clear: there is a God Who does justice on earth.

The psalmist, the upright in heart, the God-fearing, expresses the question of who will "stand up for me against evildoers?" (verse 16). It is a question that arises from the circumstances he has described in the first part of the psalm (verses 3-6). The same is true of the question: "Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?" Then he expressed his faith in God Who hears all and Who will not forsake His people or forsake His inheritance. He will repay injustice (verse 1).

He also experienced this during the time when God's people and inheritance were trampled and oppressed. There was no one to stand up for him against the evildoers and committers of unrighteous. But the LORD was

there. He was his Helper and helped him through it. If He had not been his “help”, he “would soon have dwelt in [the abode of] silence” that is in the grave (verse 17). Then he would not have been able to say a word, for he would have “dwelt in silence”, that is, he would be dead (Psa 115:17).

He has been at the end of his strength. His foot has slipped (verse 18). This is what he said to the LORD. And the LORD has helped him. He sustained him with His mercy. Lovingkindness here again is the assurance of God’s faithfulness to His covenant. That faithfulness for us and for the believing remnant is based on the blood of the new covenant. The fact that Christ was raised from the dead gives us the firm assurance that God is for us (Rom 4:24-25; 8:31).

The LORD has given him the consciousness that He loves him, in spite of the trampling and oppression or just during the trampling and oppression. The lovingkindness of God is felt at its deepest when circumstances are full of misery. He does not take away the misery, but comes with His lovingkindness to sustain us (cf. 2Cor 12:7-9a).

In a time of severe and hopeless suffering, the thoughts of a believer multiply within him (verse 19). He asks himself and God countless questions, questions that torment him, but to which there comes no answer. He can’t figure it out. All these questions cause great inner turmoil. Outwardly there is strife, inwardly there is fear (cf. 2Cor 7:5). Then there are God’s consolations. God refreshes the soul of the wrestling believer by His presence. The Hebrew word for consolation, *naham*, means ‘to sigh deeply with relief’.

When the wrestling soul is led to look away from himself and his problems and to turn his heart to God, the need has not disappeared, but God has joined in it. This can sometimes be a lengthy process. Nevertheless, the believer will finally end up with God. Then when he looks back on that dark period in his life, he will testify that he got through that period because God was his Helper.

Psa 94:20-21 | Injustice Prevails

20 Can a throne of destruction be allied with You,
One which devises mischief by decree?

*21 They band themselves together against the life of the righteous
And condemn the innocent to death.*

Surely it cannot be that God made an alliance with the ungodly judges, can it (verse 20)? This is the question the troubled God-fearing remnant is asking in the time of the great tribulation when the antichrist reigns. He knows that God rules. What he sees is that evil rules. But “a throne of destruction” – that is, the throne of the antichrist – has not made an alliance with God, has it? After all, God does not intervene. Surely God will not ally Himself to “one which devises mischief by decree”, who enacts a law that brings calamity upon His people, will He?

This throne of destruction and the decree which devises mischief are directed “against the life of the righteous” (verse 21). The antichrist and his followers conspire against him. Their legislation really does establish mischief, for they “condemn the innocent to death”. They are out for the blood of the innocent righteous and for this they modify the legislation and pervert the law.

Psa 94:22-23 | The LORD Is a Stronghold

*22 But the LORD has been my stronghold,
And my God the rock of my refuge.
23 He has brought back their wickedness upon them
And will destroy them in their evil;
The LORD our God will destroy them.*

The righteous did have to flee from the enemy, but he found in “the LORD” his “stronghold” (verse 22; cf. Psa 46:7,11). The “stronghold” can also be translated “high place”. Safety is found in an exalted place and that is the LORD Himself.

This is the result of all the enemy’s attempts to make life impossible for the righteous. The trust in the LORD is strengthened by it. The personal bond with God, “my God”, becomes closer because of it. Through suffering, the heart comes into closer fellowship with Him. He is “a rock”, unshakable, and “my refuge”, a hiding place.

In that security the believer comes to rest (cf. Psa 3:6). He surrenders those who wrong him into the hands of God. The wicked will suffer the fate they

sought to inflict on the faithful (verse 23). It will return upon their head. God will put them to death in the wickedness they do. He will do this initially through His disciplinary rod, Assyria (Isa 10:5). This is how they will experience what they have sought to do to the righteous. This is how it will be: “The LORD our God will destroy them” (cf. Acts 12:1-4,21-23; Lk 18:7-8).

Psalm 95

Introduction

Psalm 95 is a song of thanksgiving. In it the people of Israel are prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus. This song of thanksgiving has its origin in the eternal power and Divine nature of God seen from His works of creation with understanding (Rom 1:20). At the same time, the warning sounds that the people can only enter God's rest, the realm of peace, *by faith*. The history of the people's disobedience in the wilderness is like a warning sign, warning of the danger of unbelief, which is an obstacle to be able to enter.

After this we find a series of psalms with songs of thanksgiving related to the glory of the realm of peace.

Psa 95:1-5 | The LORD Is a Great God

*1 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD,
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
3 For the LORD is a great God
And a great King above all gods,
4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth,
The peaks of the mountains are His also.
5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it,
And His hands formed the dry land.*

Here we find the shining forth of the LORD (Psa 94:1) to take possession of the earth and the sea. In Psalm 95 we find a call to the earth or land – the Hebrew word *eretz* means both 'earth' and 'land' – Israel and in Psalm 96 we find a call to the sea, i.e. the nations. In both cases the call is to bow the knee before Him (Isa 45:23; Phil 2:9-11). It is painted this way in Revelation 10: "I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, ... He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land" (Rev 10:1a,2b).

The call in verses 1-2 is to magnify the LORD. The reasons are:

1. He is greater than all idols, gods and powers (verse 3).
2. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things (verses 4-5).
3. He is the Shepherd of His people (verses 6-7).

It begins with the call to sing joyfully “to the LORD” (verse 1). Shouts of joy are to be given “to the rock of our salvation”. “Sing for joy” and “shout joyfully” are expressions of a heart that is full of gratitude for Who the LORD is and what He has done. Here the psalmist does not do this individually, but urges the whole people to do so.

The LORD is here the unshakable rock of the people’s salvation. The psalmist does not speak of ‘my salvation’, but of “our salvation”. The rock of salvation (Psa 18:2) is the struck rock (Exo 17:5-6). We know that the rock is Christ and the rock “followed” the people, that is, was present with them from the beginning to the end (1Cor 10:4).

The whole people are a redeemed people. The people have been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, from the dangers of the wilderness, from the enemies who oppressed and threatened them in the land. That He is the rock means that salvation is inviolable and eternally certain.

The singing and rejoicing is not to be done personally nor just anywhere, but “before His presence” (verse 2). There they are “with thanksgiving”, that is, with words in which they express their gratitude to Him. There they are “with psalms”. In the psalms that they sing to Him with joy, they praise Him.

The word “for” with which verse 3 begins indicates the reason that follows for the call made in the previous verses. There appear to be several reasons. First, “the LORD is a great God”. He towers above everything and encompasses everything. There is also no comparison to anyone or anything (Isa 46:9). He is great.

“A great King” is He “above all gods”. That He is a great King means that He is the King of kings. That He is above all gods He has shown in the past by defeating the gods of Egypt (Exo 15:11). There are some who are called gods (1Cor 8:5). These are dead idols behind which are demonic powers. They are not rivals of Him, but His subjects. God rules over them as “a

great King". He sits on the throne and everyone is subordinate to Him. We do not see this now, but in faith we see Him to Whom all things are subject (Heb 2:8b).

Connected to this is a subsequent exaltation of Him that gives cause to rejoice before Him and to sing psalms. The dead idols are local gods, but God is the God of all creation (verse 4; cf. Isa 40:26). Everything in the universe is His possession. No one else can lay claim to it. His right to it is absolute and total.

Just as copyright law provides that the creator of a particular work has a right to the ups and downs of that work, so God as Creator of heaven and earth has a right to His creation (Rev 4:11). For unbelievers, they must get ready to meet their God (Amos 4:12). Every human being is called to remember his Creator already in his youth (Ecc 12:1).

This applies to "the depths of the earth" and "the peaks of mountains". The deepest known place of the earth is the Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean with a depth of about eleven kilometers. It is a place of deep darkness, where there has never been any sunlight, but to God it is as light there as it is on earth. Not only can He descend to such deep places, but they are also in His "hand". That is, He has authority over them, He controls and governs all that is in them.

What is true of the deepest places is also true of the highest places, of "the peaks of the mountains". These "are His". He made the mountains; they belong to Him. Their height and power reflect His exaltedness above what is exalted on earth. If the deepest depths and the highest heights are in His hand, everything in between is also in His hand.

"The sea" is also "His, for it was He who made it" (verse 5). Man has idolized the creation, such as trees and stones, and the creatures, such as animals and even man. The psalmist makes it clear that creation was made and created by God and therefore we must never equate it with God. In the same way, the fourth book of Psalms begins by stating in Psalm 90 that the eternal God brought forth this creation (Psa 90:2).

Because He, emphatically, He and no one else, made the sea, it is His inalienable property. The same is true of "the dry land". His hands formed it. There is no question of a development, an 'evolutionary process', which

would have given the dry land the form it has today after billions of years. No, the dry land is a piece of art that the Creator has formed by His own hands.

Psa 95:6-7 | The Sheep of His Hand

6 Come, let us worship and bow down,

Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

7 For He is our God,

And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

Today, if you would hear His voice,

In verse 6, the psalmist calls upon the faithful remnant to “worship and bow down” before the LORD and “kneel” before Him. This is a repetition and deepening of what we saw in verses 1-2. It is deepening because it is not just about creation, but about the fact that the LORD formed them as a people (verse 6) and cared for them as a Shepherd (verse 7).

Worshipping, bowing down, and kneeling are three postures of deep reverence and awe, where the worshiper makes himself as little as possible before God. True worship is not making a lot of noise, where the heart can be empty, but an attitude that is appropriate toward Him, “our Maker”.

For us, members of God’s heavenly people, the church, it is true that He has acquired the church by the blood of His own [Son] (Acts 20:28). When we are impressed by Him, we are not pushed over, nor do we remain standing, but fall down before Him (Rev 5:14b).

Again there follows a “for” after which the reason is given for taking this attitude of deep reverence and awe (verse 7). Now it is not because He is the Creator and sovereign Ruler of all the earth, as in the preceding verses, but because He is the Shepherd of His people (Eze 34:15-16). He is in a special relationship with them.

They call themselves “the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand” (cf. Psa 79:13; 100:3). By this they indicate that they depend on Him like sheep depend on the shepherd. He ensures that they find pasture, that they get food. Thereby He also leads them by His hand. Even more, the expression “sheep of His hand”, or sheep of His caring hand, means that He protects them with His hand. They are secure in His hand (cf. Jn 10:28-29).

In the last line of verse 7, the LORD, Yahweh, speaks. He does so “today”. He says that here, in the time of the psalmist. He says that to the Hebrews hundreds of years later (Heb 3:7). He says that to us, too. Each time He speaks, that He lets His people hear His voice, it is “today”. Again and again He makes His people hear His voice. “Today” refers to those to whom the Word comes at the time He speaks and they hear it in person, while they live. The question is what they do when they hear His voice. ‘Today’ allows no delay to later. It is important to respond to God’s voice immediately in obedience.

God Himself makes clear in the next verse by an example from their history how they responded to His voice in the past. This example contains a serious warning. It presents them with a choice. It also presents us with a choice, because the ‘today’ applies to us now! God also speaks to us ‘today’ and does so through His Word. The Lord Jesus did so, too, when He said to the people: “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace!” (Lk 19:42).

Psa 95:8-11 | Warning of Hardening

*8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,
9 “When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.
10 “For forty years I loathed [that] generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.
11 “Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”*

The warning is: if they hear His voice, they must not harden their hearts (verse 8). Here God is speaking. Their fathers did harden their hearts in the past, namely “at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness”. Meribah – meaning ‘contention’ (about water) or ‘bitterness’ – is a place near Kadesh (Num 20:1). It is there that Moses brings forth water from the rock at the end of the forty-year wilderness wanderings (Num 20:10-13).

This wilderness place Meribah near Kadesh at the end of the wilderness journey must be distinguished from the place Massah and Meribah in Rafidim (Exo 17:1). There the murmuring people received water from the rock at the *beginning* of the wilderness journey. This place is given the double name of Massah and Meribah, meaning 'temptation' and 'strife' or 'bitterness' (Exo 17:7). Both meanings are echoed in the quotation of this verse in the letter to the Hebrews: "Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked [Meribah] Me, as in the day of trial [Massah] in the wilderness" (Heb 3:8).

The people tested God in the wilderness, tried Him or tempted Him (verse 9). To test Him is to taunt Him, as a whining child does, to see how far they could go in their unbelief. They tested Him, challenged Him, to show whether He is in their midst or not (Exo 17:7). Such a test can be compared to asking the sun to prove that it is shining, while at the same time we are standing in the full sun. Such a question shows irrefutably that such a person is blind. This is also the case with the people that is testing or trying God. This is evident from the reproach God makes to the people when He says: "They tried Me, though they had seen My work."

He has ceaselessly proven His presence in their midst. His work is undeniable. They have seen His deliverance from Egypt, they have seen Him make a path through the Red Sea and drown the Egyptians in it. Each day they have seen His care through the manna that was ready for them each morning. It is pure unbelief to challenge God after seeing so many works to show that He is in their midst.

Therefore, the warning to the believing remnant is: Take to heart the warning of your own history. As for man, history teaches that man learns nothing from history. With the believing remnant it must be different, they must not harden their hearts, but put their trust in the LORD.

This attitude of Israel, unfortunately, is not an incident, but has characterized the people throughout their journey through the wilderness. We hear this in God's words: "For forty years I loathed [that] generation" (verse 10). For forty years He showed His care for them (Deu 4:32-35). He has delivered them, led them and cared for them and yet they went right against

Him (cf. Deu 6:16; 9:22; 33:8). This strong expression of disgust does indicate how much they dishonored God with their attitude.

We can make the big mistake of thinking that we are better than they are. It is therefore important that we too take this warning to heart (1Cor 10:11; Heb 3:14-19; 4:1-7). We will do so if we remember that He, Who did not spare even His own Son, but gave Him up for us, will with Him also give us all things (Rom 8:32).

If this is how the people responded to all of God's care, it is not surprising that He became angry toward this generation. God also indicates the deep cause: to err in their sinful heart. Because their heart has always strayed from God, they have not known His ways. They have understood nothing of His actions, whether He has dealt with them in blessing or in judgment.

Moses did know God's ways, for God Himself made them known to him (Psa 103:7) because he feared and loved Him. To know God's ways it is necessary that we give Him our heart. That is what He asks for (Pro 23:26). When we give Him our heart, we are giving Him our whole life, that He may govern it. Then we walk in His way that ends in glory.

It is impossible for God to allow His people, who so err in their heart, to enter into His rest (verse 11; Num 14:21-23). Because they so wander with their heart and are so ignorant of His ways, He cannot but swear in His anger that He will never receive them in His rest. "My rest" is God's rest. It is the rest He has when He will dwell in the midst of His people. That is the promised land, where the people will live in peace and security, without fear of enemies. This rest will only be experienced in the realm of peace of the Messiah, the great Son of David.

Psalm 96

Introduction

The call to the people of Israel in Psalm 95 to praise the LORD as a great King (Psa 95:1-7) is also made to the nations in the now following psalms (Psalms 96-100) (cf. Mt 24:14; Isa 12:4). In these, it is not the kingship of David that is sung, but that of the LORD, that is, the Lord Jesus:

Psalm 96 begins with: "Sing to the LORD a new song" (Psa 96:1).

Psalm 97 begins with: "The LORD reigns" [literally "the LORD is King"] (Psa 97:1).

Psalm 98 begins with: "O Sing to the LORD a new song" (Psa 98:1).

Psalm 99 begins with: "The LORD reigns" [literally "the LORD is King"] (Psa 99:1).

Psalm 100 begins with: "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth" (Psa 100:1).

David's kingship and that of the Lord Jesus are very closely connected with each other, for the great Son of David is the LORD of hosts. These verses look forward to the fulfillment of the promises when the LORD openly exercises His authority over the nations.

Psalm 96 is almost word for word the middle part of the song of praise in 1 Chronicles 16 (1Chr 16:23-33). Because of this, we know that this psalm was written by David. David instructs in 1 Chronicles 16 to thank and praise the LORD through the service of Asaph and his brethren (1Chr 16:7). This song of praise is a compilation of portions from various psalms, including Psalm 96.

1 Chronicles 16 concludes the description of the great event of placing the ark in Jerusalem, the king's city. This confirms the public worship of God during the reign of David. In bringing the ark up to Jerusalem we see a picture of the Messiah coming to earth to reign. That the ark was brought in (1Chr 16:1), prophetically means that in Psalms 96-100 Christ is seen to

have already come and taken His place as King! God brought His firstborn Son into the world (Heb 1:6; Psa 89:27).

Psa 96:1-6 | A New Song to the LORD

*1 Sing to the LORD a new song;
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.
3 Tell of His glory among the nations,
His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.
4 For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
But the LORD made the heavens.
6 Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.*

The Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – has as heading above this psalm: ‘When the house was built after the exile, a song of David.’ [The house is the tabernacle and the exile is the exile of the ark during the time it had fallen into the hands of the Philistines.]

The call sounds to the nations to “sing to the LORD a new song” (verse 1). The first song sung in the Bible is the song of Moses (Exo 15:1-18). It is sung immediately after the deliverance from Egypt. Again, in Psalms 96-100, all people are called to sing because the LORD’s salvation has come in and through the Lord Jesus: Jesus means the LORD, Yahweh, saves.

A song comes after redemption, as in Exodus 15. A new song comes after a new redemption from the LORD (cf. Lam 3:22-23). The phrase “new song” occurs seven times in the Old Testament, six of which occur in Psalms (Psa 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1), and once in Isaiah (Isa 42:10). In the New Testament it occurs twice in Revelation (Rev 5:9; 14:3).

The call comes from Israel, who are God’s people. They have been rescued from distress and introduced into blessing by the coming of the Messiah. It is a new situation in the history of the world. Christ reigns and God is ac-

known by the nations. This calls for a new song from the nations (cf. Psa 33:3). A new song is then already being sung in heaven (Rev 5:9-10).

“All the earth” is called to sing to the LORD. The people are overwhelmed by the great goodness that is their portion. In this they want the nations to share who have been brought into connection with them. The glorious consequences of Christ’s coming are sung about and all are called to sing along.

In verse 2, the call to sing to the LORD and praise His Name is heard again. The motive is the salvation of God that He has wrought for His people. The nations are to bring the message of this “from day to day”, that is, they are to do so continuously, unceasingly. Just as the people of Israel must bring the burnt offering daily, in the morning and in the evening, to the LORD (Exo 29:38-42), so also in the realm of peace the offering of praise (Psa 50:14) will ascend daily from the mouth of Israel (Psalm 95) and the nations (Psalm 96). Yes, the book of Psalms ends in Psalm 150 with the words: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Hallelujah!” (Psa 150:6).

Likewise, we are called to tell of God’s salvation every day, wherever He gives us the opportunity to do so. This is to His glory and possibly to the eternal blessing of someone who hears our testimony.

The command is to “tell His glory among the nations” (verse 3). His honor is seen in “His wonderful deeds”. We can think of the wonders He did in Egypt in delivering His people from slavery. We can apply it to the wonder of our deliverance from the power of sin and the numerous wonders He has done in our lives.

The LORD is indeed “great ... and greatly to be praised” (verse 4). He is not ‘greater than’, but He alone is great in an absolute sense, He is infinitely, incomparably great (Psa 77:13). Therefore, He alone is worthy of great praise. He is certainly “above all gods” and at the same time “to be feared above” them (cf. Psa 66:3,5). His greatness inspires awe.

By “gods”, given the context here, we can best think of angels or persons of law, beings with a certain authority. But they are dwarfed by Him. They are extremely limited creatures, both in terms of their person and their abilities. Angels can be powerful, but God is Almighty. He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).

The nations have their gods (verse 5; 1Cor 8:5-6; cf. Deu 4:19). These gods are apostate angels or demons. Idols are dead pieces of matter (Isa 2:8; 44:9-20). Behind them are demons (1Cor 10:19-20). God created matter. Man in his great folly takes dead matter to worship it. Idols are nothing, nullities (1Cor 8:4). They are creatures of man's imagination (Isa 40:19-20; cf. Rom 1:21) under the inspiration of demons. Opposed to man's imagination is the LORD Who "made the heavens". He has made the whole area of heaven and therefore only He may be worshiped. He gives His glory to no other (Isa 2:17-18; 42:8).

Everything that is "before Him", that is, everything that is in His presence, radiates "splendor and majesty" (verse 6). Whatever is in His presence reflects the features of His Being. He places His majesty and glory on everything around Him. So it is also "in His sanctuary" in the midst of His people.

The parallel section in 1 Chronicles 16 says "in His place", and that means 'heaven' (1Chr 16:27). When the Lord Jesus returns, that fourfold glory mentioned here in verse 6 will also be visible from Zion, His sanctuary on earth. There are "strength and beauty" there, which means that His sanctuary is the source of strength and becomes visible from there. And when His power becomes visible, the splendor, the all-transcending glory of God becomes visible.

Psa 96:7-9 | Worldwide Praise to the LORD

7 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,

Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name;

Bring an offering and come into His courts.

9 Worship the LORD in holy attire;

Tremble before Him, all the earth.

The "families of the peoples" (cf. Gen 10:2-20) are called to "ascribe to the LORD glory and strength" (verse 7). The nations are made up of families, people who are connected not only by the same nationality but also by blood ties (cf. Zec 12:12-14). Nothing can be given to Him that He does not already possess. He possesses all glory and strength. To give Him glory

and strength means to say to Him that He is worthy of all glory and that all strength belongs to Him.

They give Him the glory of His Name when they come into His courts with sacrifices (verse 8). By doing so, they make it clear that they can only come into God's presence with offerings. Man cannot approach God empty-handed. The offerings speak of the work of Christ, Who became the offering for sin. Only on the basis of His work and faith in it God can receive people into His presence. As a result, His Name is honored. Coming with offerings means acknowledging and agreeing with God's way to Him.

The common expression for "offering" is derived from the words 'draw near'. In other words, in order to draw near to God one must offer an offering. Here it is not the common word for offering, but another word, namely the word 'gift', a word from which the word 'grain offering' is derived. It is here to be able to approach "His courts", plural, that is, two courts, namely the outer court and the inner court (cf. Eze 40:17-19).

Not only are the outward offerings important, but also the worshipping before Him with inward trembling of awe (verse 9). An offering is only pleasing to and acceptable by God if we come "in holy attire" as the expression of a humble mind and awe of Him (cf. Psa 51:19). "All the earth", that is, all the nations of the earth, are called to worship and tremble "before Him". "Before Him" means in His presence, under His watchful eye.

Psa 96:10-13 | The LORD Reigns

*10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved;
He will judge the peoples with equity."
11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
Let the sea roar, and all it contains;
12 Let the field exult, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy
13 Before the LORD, for He is coming,
For He is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
And the peoples in His faithfulness.*

These verses look ahead to the realm of peace, where all nature is in rapture for the Messiah. The message that “the LORD reigns” – literally “the LORD is King”; the LORD is the Messiah –, is to be made known “among the nations” (verse 10). Under all the governments of men, the world has known no firmness and has always moved. This situation will come to an end under His kingship. Everything is given firmness and stability through Him because He has girded Himself with power (Psa 93:1).

This will be evident when “He will judge the peoples with equity”. The Lord Jesus will reign as the true Melchizedek, whose name means king of righteousness (Heb 7:1-2; Psa 9:8-9). Incorruptible and perfectly righteous, He will judge from “His glorious throne” (Mt 25:31-46). His equitable justice is the basis for an unshakable world. What He says and decides is fair and just and therefore of lasting value. It is unchanging, He never has to return to it.

“The heavens”, that is, the inhabitants of heaven, are called to rejoice (verse 11). Heaven was created by the LORD (verse 5), heaven rejoices (here), and heaven declares His righteousness (Psa 97:6). When the believing remnant has overcome satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, the “heavens and you who dwell in them” are called to “rejoice” (Rev 12:11-12).

“The earth”, that is the people living on earth, is called to rejoice. Heaven and earth belong together as created by the same Creator. They unite in joy because the Messiah has accepted His kingship (cf. Rev 18:20; 19:6). This means the end of all injustice and the righteous judgment of all injustice ever committed. “The sea”, which is always a picture of the rebellious nations, “and all that it contains” is now called upon to join roaringly with the rejoicing and joy.

“The field ... and all that is in it”, such as the animals and plants, is called upon to “exult” (verse 12). “The trees of the forest” will then “sing for joy”. The whole creation in all its parts, the invisible and the visible, is called to express joy because the time has come for the LORD to take His seat on His throne to judge the earth (cf. Isa 44:23). Creation is then freed from the curse that has come upon it through man’s sin (Rom 8:21).

The occasion of this outburst of joy is the coming of the Messiah (verse 13). Full of enthusiasm, mention is made of His coming. His coming is “to judge the earth”. He always rules, but then it will be visible to all. The rules by which He reigns are those of righteousness (cf. Acts 17:31) and faithfulness, for He is the omniscient, almighty God.

This is an impressive moment, a moment of unprecedented importance. It is the great turning point in human history. Now everything is going to be totally different: God is going to rule through His Son. He has given all judgment to Him because He is the Son of Man (Jn 5:27). Through judgment, there will be order and peace in the world. The earth is regenerated (Mt 19:28).

Psalm 97

Introduction

In Psalm 97, the last verse of the previous psalm is discussed at length, pointing to the coming of the Messiah (Psa 96:13). In the psalm we now have before us, the Messiah appears. This event and its consequences are sung about here. The message to Mary about the reign of the Son she will receive is prophetically presented (Lk 1:32).

Isaiah exclaims: “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news ... [and] “says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”” [or: “Your God is King”] (Isa 52:7; cf. Psa 93:1). Already in Psalm 96, this message was passed on by Zion to the world: “The LORD is King” (Psa 96:10). This is now further explored in Psalm 97 and Psalm 99. Accordingly, both psalms begin with the exclamation: “The LORD [Yahweh] reigns [or: is King]” (Psa 97:1; Psa 99:1; cf. Rev 19:6; 11:15-17).

Psa 97:1-5 | The LORD Reigns

*1 The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
Let the many islands be glad.
2 Clouds and thick darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.
3 Fire goes before Him
And burns up His adversaries round about.
4 His lightnings lit up the world;
The earth saw and trembled.
5 The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.*

The psalmist exclaims that “the LORD reigns” [literally, “Yahweh is King”] (verse 1). He sits on the throne. The universe is not ruled by natural laws or the authority of an evil power. There is a sovereign Ruler, Who is wise, holy, just and sensible. Therefore: “Let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad.” To do this they are called. The many islands are mentioned

separately because they are far away (Jer 31:10). But they too may rejoice, for the blessing of the Messiah's reign comes to them as well. The LORD is not only King over Israel, He is the King of kings, He rules over the whole earth.

The LORD, that is the Messiah, envelops Himself in "clouds and thick darkness" (verse 2). These features indicate that what He does cannot be followed by humans. How could mortal men understand Him in His inimitable judicial acts? They will acknowledge them, without realizing their depth. This does not mean that in Him there is darkness. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1Jn 1:5; Psa 104:2; 1Tim 6:16). Creatures cannot fathom that light. To us humans, therefore, He is surrounded by dark clouds.

He rules in "righteousness and justice". His rule is perfect. A judicial error does not occur, let alone a twisting of the law. "The foundation of His throne" consists precisely in the exercise of utter justice. His government will be salutary after all the corrupt governments of which the world has been full before His coming. His kingdom is not founded on arbitrariness, as is so often the case with governments today, but on righteousness and justice. Therefore, His reign endures forever (Pro 16:12; 25:5).

He not only pronounces righteous judgments, but also executes them. We see this in the "fire" that "goes before Him" (verse 3). Fire here represents the consuming judgment on sin (cf. Lev 10:1-2). God is a consuming fire, both in the Old Testament (Deu 4:24) and in the New Testament (Heb 12:29). His holiness does not tolerate sin in His presence (cf. 1Pet 1:16). That is what "His adversaries" will experience when He "burns up ... round about" (cf. 2Thes 1:7-8; Psa 68:2).

In addition to the flame around Him that consumes everything that does not submit to His holiness, there are "His lightnings" (verse 4). Lightning flashes also make a deep impression. They lit up the world and reveal everything in it. They are the sudden, inimitable deliverers of God's judgments. "The earth saw and trembled", for they are terrifying and irresistible. Such an outpouring of power the earth has never seen.

"The mountains", symbols of stability and immobility, "melted like wax at the presence of the LORD" (verse 5; cf. Mic 1:4). That consuming is His ap-

pearance. Nothing will stand when He appears and judges. This judgment belongs to Him because He is “the Lord of the whole earth”. He is Adonai, the sovereign Ruler of the universe Who shows His presence to the earth.

Psa 97:6-7 | All Gods Worship Him

*6 The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen His glory.
7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images,
Who boast themselves of idols;
Worship Him, all you gods.*

When the LORD appears, He comes from heaven, where everything is in accordance with “His righteousness” (verse 6). He is Himself the declaration of heaven. “All the peoples” on earth will see “His glory” when He appears. When the LORD appears, He will come as “a righteous God and a Savior” [or “a Redeemer”, literal translation] (Isa 45:21). This means that the justice or righteousness of God will be seen in His acts of redemption.

His appearance also includes judgment on those “who serve graven images” and “boast themselves of idols” (verse 7). It will bring shame on them. They, in their folly, have lowered themselves to idolatry and have boasted of their self-made idols. Those would help them, they thought.

In doing so, they have defied God and denied Him. When they come face to face with the true God, there is nothing left of their senseless reliance on their idols (Isa 2:20). “All ... gods” to whom they have worshiped must worship the LORD. “Gods” are all kinds of authority figures, in the visible and the invisible world (cf. Dan 10:13,20-21). Here angels are meant first and foremost, as is evident from the quotation of this phrase in the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:6).

Psa 97:8-9 | The Most High

*8 Zion heard [this] and was glad,
And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.
9 For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth;
You are exalted far above all gods.*

“Zion heard” of the Messiah’s expulsion of the rebels and idolaters “and was glad” (verse 8). The same is true of “the daughters of Judah”, referring to the villages and towns in Judah. The judgments of the LORD cause joy to all who are associated with Him. They share in His feelings about evil and rejoice in the judgment He executes over it (cf. Rev 18:20). The judgments of God mean that the remnant will be delivered from their enemies; therefore they rejoice (Psa 48:11).

Now it is clear to everyone Who is “the LORD Most High over all the earth” (verse 9). It is none other than the “LORD”. The name “God Most High” (Gen 14:18-22), *El Elyon*, is the title of God in the realm of peace. Here we see that the LORD, as the Most High, is exalted far above all gods.

The remnant and all who acknowledge Him in His dominion say to Him: “You are exalted far above all gods.” He is to be compared with none; He far exceeds all conceivable rulers. He is “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5), “the King of kings and the Lord of lords” (1Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16; cf. Deu 10:17). He is also higher than the angels (Heb 1:5-13).

Psa 97:10-12 | Light Is Sown

*10 Hate evil, you who love the LORD,
Who preserves the souls of His godly ones;
He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
11 Light is sown [like seed] for the righteous
And gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.*

In these verses, the word is addressed to the remnant. They are addressed as “you who love the LORD” (verse 10). This characterizes them. Loving the LORD is not just an emotional thing, it is a choice of the heart. It is a choice to, with all that is in a person, love Him, be faithful to Him, and trust in His covenant. To that, “hate evil” is connected directly. It is a lie to say to love God and not at the same time hate all that is evil (cf. 1Jn 1:6). To love the LORD means to hate all that He hates (cf. Pro 8:13).

The prophet Amos also presented these two characteristics (Amos 5:14-15). Those who have both of these characteristics are “His godly ones”. They

are in His favor because they are faithful to Him. Their souls, their lives, He preserves. Godly ones, Hebrew *chasid*, are those who are faithful to the covenant. "He delivers them from the hand of the wicked." He stands up for them and will not allow His adversaries to take final control of them.

The coming of the Messiah is like the sowing of light (verse 11). After all, He is called "the sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2). He makes known to "the righteous" the way to the realm of peace and goes before them on that way. It never gets dark on that way and in their heart. He irradiates that way with His light. That light is sown also means that it is intended to bring forth fruit, fruit that corresponds to the seed. That is seen in those who walk as children of light (cf. Pro 4:18; Eph 5:7-9).

The sowing of light also results in joy. There is no true joy without light, just as there is no light that does not produce joy. His coming means "gladness for the upright in heart". All who have their heart set on Him are upright in heart. It is their desire that He be glorified. This can be seen in their lives as well, for they do His will.

The last verse is a call to all the "righteous ones" to "be glad in the LORD" (verse 12). He has wondrously turned everything for the better for them with His power. Therefore, they are called to give thanks and to do so "to His holy name", literally "for the memory of His holiness".

The name LORD is in remembrance of the redemption from Egypt (Exo 3:15). We may celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. The remnant in the future will praise the LORD in remembrance of His holiness. Their prayer in the time of the great tribulation is: "Hallowed be Your name" (Mt 6:9). The holiness of the Name of the LORD is connected to the fate of His people (Eze 36:20-28). The exile was to the dishonor of the LORD's holiness, while the redemption of Israel, both outwardly and inwardly, is to the honor of the holiness of His Name!

It is not His love for and mercy on them that cause them to praise Him, but His holiness. It is precisely His holiness that proves His complete reckoning with sin, by which any threat of a disturbance of the peace is nullified. They can enjoy the blessing of His reign undisturbed with praise and thanks and joy.

Psalm 98

Introduction

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him” (Rev 19:6b-7a).

We may well put these verses as the title above this psalm, for with the coming of Christ, the King of Israel, the cup of thanksgiving and praise of the faithful remnant of Israel overflows. Back then, the people sang a song because of their deliverance from Egypt (Exo 15:1-18; Psa 77:11-12). But in Isaiah 43, the LORD says: “Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? ... The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise” (Isa 43:18-19a,21).

The song of praise is a new song after a new redemption. Compare Revelation 15 where the LORD is called the King of the nations and all the nations will come and bow down before Him (Rev 15:3-4). The expressions in the new song of this psalm come from the second half of the book of Isaiah (verse 1 - Isa 42:10; 51:16; 52:10; verse 2 - Isa 51:5; 40:5; verse 3 - Isa 49:8; verse 4 - Isa 44:23; 52:9; verse 7 - Isa 55:12).

Not only will the remnant magnify the LORD (verses 4-6), but also the nations, symbolically represented by the sea (verses 7-9), who were at first in rebellion against God, will rejoice before the LORD. Yes, “let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Hallelujah!” (Psa 150:6).

Psa 98:1-3 | Sing to the Redeemer

1 A Psalm.

O sing to the LORD a new song,

For He has done wonderful things,

His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him.

2 The LORD has made known His salvation;

He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

3 *He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;*

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

This is “a psalm” (verse 1a). It is the only psalm in the entire book with this short heading. But the content is all-encompassing. The psalmist again calls for singing “a new song” to the LORD, because He has brought about a new age (verse 1b; cf. *Psa 96:1; 33:3*). To that belongs a new song.

It is not just a repetition of the song from Psalm 96. It is a strengthening of it. In Psalm 96 we find a song of praise for the Creator-God, here it is a song of praise for the Redeemer-God, a song of praise that belongs to a triumphal march! It is also an answer to the prayers of the remnant (cf. *Isa 64:1-4*).

To bring about that new age, a time of undisturbed blessing for His people and the whole earth, “He has done wonderful things” (cf. *Psa 77:14; 86:10*). He has caused everything to turn for the better for His people. In performing His wonders, no one helped Him. He did it Himself, with “His right hand and His holy arm”. His right hand speaks of power (cf. *Isa 59:16; 63:5*). His arm also speaks of power to which “holy” is added here because His work is a holy work.

These “have gained the victory for Him”, that is, through them redemption, salvation has been gained. While His people deserved judgment, He brought them into blessing for His own sake. This is not primarily about His people, but about Him. The purpose of the work of salvation is the maintaining of His own authority and government.

Every conversion of a human being is a wonder brought about by God. There is nothing of man in it. Those who have been converted will realize that it is because of a work of God’s Spirit in their hearts. By grace a man is saved, not by works (*Eph 2:8*). Every believer will eternally praise Him for this with songs of thanksgiving and worship. He has done everything to the praise of the glory of His grace (*Eph 1:5-6*).

Israel’s salvation is “His salvation” (verse 2). *He* has established His kingdom, *He* has done it. It is *His* salvation. That’s how faith sees it. He has made that known all over the earth, not by proclamation in words, but by doing it. In the past it was visible in the redemption of His people from

Egypt and the return from exile in Babylon. Above all, it is visible in the work Christ accomplished on the cross.

His salvation and His righteousness are two sides of His work. His salvation means blessing for all who are saved. His righteousness is the basis for this, for Christ fulfilled His righteousness by bearing the sins of all who are saved. Therefore, God can make His salvation come true.

“His lovingkindness and His faithfulness” (verse 3) are the starting point for the unfolding of His power in His salvation and His righteousness. Lovingkindness or love and faithfulness are always present in Him. It belongs to His Being. Lovingkindness is the blessing, love and goodness of the LORD by virtue of His covenant; faithfulness is the assurance that He and His covenant are unchanging.

In His lovingkindness and faithfulness, He has always had in His heart the promised blessing for His people, “the house of Israel” (cf. Lk 1:54-55,72). The house of Israel is the whole people, the remnant of the two and ten tribes, in the land. All unbelievers perished. The remnant of Israel is “all Israel” that is saved (Rom 11:26; cf. Zec 13:8-9).

The people did think that He had forgotten them (Psa 77:9). But that is impossible, for He cannot forget His lovingkindness and His faithfulness. He cannot deny Himself (2Tim 2:13). That is what the house of Israel will experience. The testimony of “the salvation of our God” will be seen by “all the ends of the earth”. The psalmist speaks of “our God”, that is, the God of His people, the God Who takes care of His people. Everyone on earth will see this and honor Him for it.

The Hebrew word *eretz*, translated here as “earth”, may also be translated as “land” (Israel). The choice depends on the context. Given the contrast with verse 7 – the sea, symbolizing the nations – it is better to translate the word *eretz* with ‘land’ in verse 3 and in verse 4. Then in verses 4-6 we find the praise song of Israel and in verses 7-9 the praise song of the nations.

Psa 98:4-6 | Shout Joyfully before the King

4 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.
5 Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,

With the lyre and the sound of melody.

6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn

Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.

What has been said about the LORD in the preceding verses about the redemption He has wrought for His people demands a response. That comes from the psalmist, who calls on “all the earth” to “shout joyfully to the LORD” (verse 4). It must be an outburst of joyful shouting and singing praises (cf. Isa 44:23; 49:13; 52:9; 54:1; 55:12).

The singing of the praises must be accompanied by a stringed instrument, the lyre, and the singing must be loud (verse 5; cf. Isa 51:3). There are also two wind instruments: trumpets and the horn (verse 6). The trumpet is used to call the people together and bring them to God’s remembrance (Num 10:2,8-10). The sound of the horn announces the jubilee year, when everything is returned to its rightful owner, and the enthronement of the king (Lev 25:9; 1Kgs 1:39). Both events are fulfilled with the coming of the Messiah.

All the additions underscore the revelry. The joy swells into a great concert. It could not be otherwise, for the great “King, the LORD” reigns. He has taken the reign upon Himself and brought the earth back under the rule of God. That means great prosperity and blessing for God’s people and the whole earth. Who then would not be immensely happy?

For us, the Lord Jesus already has dominion over us now. God has already made Him Lord and Christ. He possesses His kingdom in heaven and in the heart of every person who has accepted Him as Lord and confesses it with his mouth (Rom 10:9-10). Such a person is a subject in the kingdom of God which at this time consists of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”, in which Christ is served (Rom 14:17-18).

Psa 98:7-9 | Sing for Joy Before the Judge

7 Let the sea roar and all it contains,

The world and those who dwell in it.

8 Let the rivers clap their hands,

Let the mountains sing together for joy

9 Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth;

He will judge the world with righteousness

And the peoples with equity.

Because the Creator-King reigns, the sea and the world of the nations are called to join the chorus of the joyful shouting crowd (verse 7). “The sea ... and all it contains” is the sea of the nations. It is synonymous with the second half of the verse “the world and those who dwell in it” (cf. Psa 96:11b). The sea of nations, once whipped up and troubled, producing mire and mud (Isa 57:20), is now going to clap its hands before the LORD, Who has come. There will be an outburst of joy. “The sea” is to “roar and all it contains”. The sea, which has always been mighty and indomitable, joins with all that it contains with its roaring voice to the chorus shouting for joy before the King.

The foothills of the sea, the rivers, which traverse the world, and the mountains, which rise above the world, are called to express themselves in a loud and joyful tone (verse 8; cf. Isa 55:12). The expressions of joy fill the creation that has been freed from the sighing caused by sin (Rom 8:19-22). Creation breathes a sigh of relief; it comes to rest and to the purpose for which God created it: to honor Him.

Why should the whole world rejoice and be merry “before the LORD” (verse 9)? Because He is coming to judge the world in righteousness. That means that all evil will be righteously removed by Him and then He will rule righteously (Isa 11:3-5). This is what the believer and with him the whole creation craves.

Psalm 99

Introduction

The LORD reigns, literally: the LORD is King. This is mentioned for the fourth time (Psa 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). He has accepted His royal rule (Rev 19:6) and sits on His glorious throne (Mt 25:31). Now Christ is not only seated on His Father's throne (Rev 3:21), He is now also seated on His own throne along with the overcomers, the remnant. He is truthfully "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1Tim 6:15).

The intercession of the remnant through Moses, Aaron and Samuel (verse 6) is answered and is followed by praise from the remnant (cf. Psa 50:15). Now that the kingdom has come, the Name of the LORD is hallowed (Eze 36:22-23).

Psa 99:1-3 | The LORD Reigns and Is Holy

*1 The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble;
He is enthroned [above] the cherubim, let the earth shake!*
*2 The LORD is great in Zion,
And He is exalted above all the peoples.*
*3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name;
Holy is He.*

The psalm is a song of praise following the description of Christ's reign on earth (verse 1). The roles are reversed. Israel enjoys the blessing, the nations must tremble. From the building of the tabernacle and the ark, the LORD "is enthroned [above] the cherubim" who stand on the mercy seat on the ark (Exo 25:20; 1Sam 4:4; 2Sam 6:2). The cherubim are always mentioned in connection with the throne of God, in connection with His government (Gen 3:24; Isa 37:16; Eze 10:1-20). The ark with the cherubim stood in the hidden part of the holy of holies. The cherubim, the guardians of His holiness, have remained hidden. Now He rules openly in Zion, which is Jerusalem. It befits the earth to tremble before that King.

He “is great” (verse 2). He is great in Himself. It is not a matter of comparison, which then shows that He is the greatest. There is simply no one to compare to Him. He is great. Israel knows that God is great (Deu 10:17). Now all nations must also acknowledge that.

He is immeasurably, boundlessly great in power, love, justice and in all His features. In that indescribable greatness He dwells “in Zion” which He has chosen as His dwelling place on earth. He is also “exalted above all the peoples”. All nations are subject to Him. He is “great” to His people and “exalted” to the nations.

The psalmist addresses the LORD directly in the first line of verse 3. He says to Him that it is appropriate that they “praise Your great and awesome name”. His Name is the expression of all that He is. His Name encompasses His Being and all His features. The psalmist concludes by stating: “Holy is He.” He is absolutely set apart from all that He has made. It does not mean that He is not involved in it, but He is not part of anything. He is holy in relation to all that is.

The hallowing or profaning of the Name of the LORD has to do with the condition of His people. If the people are not doing well, then the Name of the LORD, His covenant name, will be profaned. People will say: ‘It is the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave the land.’ Conversely, the Name of the LORD is hallowed when Israel is restored (cf. Eze 36:20-28).

Psa 99:4-5 | The LORD Executes Justice and Is Holy

*4 The strength of the King loves justice;
You have established equity;
You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Exalt the LORD our God
And worship at His footstool;
Holy is He.*

Not only the Name of the King is to be praised, but also “the strength of the King” (verse 4; Mt 28:18). His strength is not expressed in a capricious, arbitrary exercise of power. His power is exercised in righteousness, that is, in a just manner. That exercise is not done out of Self-protection, but because He “loves justice” (cf. Psa 45:7). With Him, power, love, and jus-

tice go together. This is a combination of features that no earthly ruler has ever had.

His justice, the way He rules, is “equity”. “Equity” means according to a fair, just, balanced judgment. His government is completely fair to all, there is nothing to be questioned by anyone, everyone accepts His government because it is absolutely just and embedded in love for His God, His creatures and His creation.

This justice is now found nowhere. Instead of equitable government, there is so often corrupt government. When He rules, He establishes that equitable government on the whole earth, using Israel as an example. He has “executed justice and righteousness in Jacob”. The people are called “Jacob”, not ‘Israel’. This emphasizes the election of Jacob by God. This election cannot be undone by the unfaithfulness the people have often shown.

Then the call sounds to “exalt the LORD our God” (verse 5). That call applies first and foremost to Israel, for only they can speak of “our God”. To praise is to speak of with appreciation and praise. It is to honor and exalt. This is done by worshiping “at His footstool”, by which is meant the ark of the covenant in the temple or the temple itself (1Chr 28:2; Psa 132:7).

On the footstool rest the feet of a king. Worshiping at it means making the deepest possible bow, expressing the deepest reverence. While this will be done primarily by God’s people, it will also be done by the nations (Zec 14:16). This attitude toward Him is appropriate, for “holy is He”. This verse is a refrain, which has already sounded in verse 3 and with some changes also appears in verse 9.

Psa 99:6-9 | The LORD Hears and Is Holy

*6 Moses and Aaron were among His priests,
And Samuel was among those who called on His name;
They called upon the LORD and He answered them.
7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
They kept His testimonies
And the statute that He gave them.
8 O LORD our God, You answered them;
You were a forgiving God to them,*

And [yet] an avenger of their [evil] deeds.

9 Exalt the LORD our God

And worship at His holy hill,

For holy is the LORD our God.

The LORD is the same King in the realm of peace as He was in the days of Moses and of Aaron and of Samuel (verse 6). Moses and Aaron have been “among His priests” the men through whom He has interacted with His people. In a strict sense, Moses was not a priest, but he was one who served God in a priestly way through his intercessions. Samuel is mentioned by name among others who have called on His Name for the benefit of His people.

All three cried out to the LORD and He answered them (Exo 17:10-13; 32:11-14; Num 12:13; 16:19-22; 21:7; 1Sam 7:5,8-9; 12:16-18,23; cf. Jer 15:1). They did not call out to Him in vain. The calling out to Him happened because of the people’s aberrations. Based on their calling, God spared His people and brought them into the land and helped them there. Thus, God will give the final blessing to His people on the basis of the intercession of the Lord Jesus.

The LORD spoke to His people “in the pillar of cloud”. This is a speaking not with words, but by His guidance. He went before them in a pillar of cloud and showed them the way (verse 7; Exo 13:21). Moses, Aaron and Samuel “kept His testimonies and the statute that He gave them”. They listened to Him and therefore He listened to them.

The psalmist again addresses the LORD directly in verse 8. He calls Him again, as in verse 5, the “LORD our God”. That is how they know Him, God is their God. He knows that God has heard the three men mentioned because He was “a forgiving God to them”. God was able to forgive the sins of the people after Moses, Aaron and Samuel intervened with God as priests for the people.

Thereby He also had to exercise “vengeance” over “their [evil] deeds”. The wrong, sinful deeds they have done, God does not condone. He can forgive on the basis of the work of His Son which He had already foreseen in the Old Testament (cf. Rom 3:25). Yet sinful deeds result in God punishing them.

God's acts of mercy have been manifested in the past with regard to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. This leads the psalmist to call once more for the LORD to be praised, to sing His praises, and to honor Him (verse 9; verse 5). The place he designates for this purpose is "at His holy mountain". There they are to worship, make themselves small before Him, thus emphasizing His greatness.

The psalmist concludes by once again professing the holiness of the LORD: "For holy is the LORD our God." This is always the reason for praise and worship. He, with Whom they are connected, is "the LORD", Yahweh, the God of the covenant He has made with them, allowing them to call Him "our God".

At the same time, He is "holy", completely separated from evil and free from any connection with sin. For people who are naturally depraved sinners, this makes the privilege of being brought into contact with Him unspeakably great. This cannot but produce great thankfulness, which is expressed in eternal praise and worship. Each time of the three times it is said that He is holy (verses 3,5,9) it is associated with the call to praise the LORD.

Psalm 100

Introduction

This is the second-to-last in the series of psalms describing the coming of the LORD as King, the Messiah (Psalms 93-101). Now that the LORD's kingdom is established, everyone is invited to offer a sacrifice of praise in Jerusalem (cf. Isa 2:2; Zec 14:16).

Psa 100:1-3 | Serve the LORD With Gladness

*1 A Psalm for Thanksgiving.
Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.
3 Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
[We are] His people and the sheep of His pasture.*

When Christ reigns, this “psalm for thanksgiving” will be sung (verse 1). This psalm for thanksgiving is sung when the LORD takes His rightful place as King over the earth. That it is called “a psalm for thanksgiving” indicates that it is sung at the time of the giving of the thank offering in the temple.

It is a call to “shout joyfully to the LORD”, a call that concerns “all the earth”. All the inhabitants of the earth are called to share in the joy and worship of Israel (cf. Deu 32:43). The counterpart of this psalm of praise for us, believers of the New Testament dispensation, is found in Ephesians 1 and Revelation 5 (Eph 1:3; Rev 1:5b).

It is a privilege to come into God's presence and serve Him there “with gladness” and “with joyful singing” (verse 2). Serving is the service of worship and also the service of all of life. We may worship God and put our lives at His disposal. We may serve Him with all that we are and have. Because God's people have failed to do so, God has sent enemies to them and imposed on them the iron yoke of slavery (Deu 28:47-48).

God's people testify to all the earth "that the LORD Himself is God" (verse 3). They acknowledge Him as their Creator, for "it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves" (cf. Isa 29:23; 60:21). They did not come into being and become His people in their own strength. It is only His work. He created the people and made them His people (cf. Deu 32:6b). He is their Former (Isa 43:1; 45:11).

God's people also stand in a special relationship to Him, namely as sheep in relation to a shepherd. They are "His people and the sheep of His pasture". God is not only their Creator, He is also their Shepherd. We see this in the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, Who as the good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. He is not only their Creator but also their Savior (Mt 1:21). He brings them to "His pasture", where He cares for them with all that is good for them (Psa 23:1-6). This verse is a confession of faith about Israel's origin (cf. Psa 95:7a).

Psa 100:4-5 | The LORD Is Good

*4 Enter His gates with thanksgiving
[And] His courts with praise.*

Give thanks to Him, bless His name.

5 For the LORD is good;

His lovingkindness is everlasting

And His faithfulness to all generations.

In verse 3 it is about Israel, but verse 4 is addressed to all, including the nations. To Israel and all the nations is said to enter "His gates with thanksgiving". "His gates" are the gates of Jerusalem. Of these the LORD says that He loves them more than all the dwellings of Jacob (Psa 87:2). He dwells in that city, for there is His dwelling place, the temple. All worshippers may bring their sacrifice "with praise" into "His courts", which are the courts of the temple. So close to Him, so in His presence, it is not difficult to praise Him and praise His Name.

The occasion for thus coming to Him and praising Him are His goodness, His lovingkindness, and His faithfulness (verse 5). Of all people, there is no one who does good, "there is not even one" (Rom 3:12b). Only "the LORD is good" (cf. Mk 10:18). He always has good in mind. Everything He

does and everything He gives is good. Always He causes all things to work together for good to those “who love God” (Rom 8:28).

He is not good only every now and then. He *is* good and therefore “His lovingkindness is everlasting” (cf. Psa 136:1). His lovingkindness is not just lovingkindness as a feature, but lovingkindness that manifests itself in actions. Therefore, in Psalm 136, in each of the 26 verses of that psalm, God’s lovingkindness is linked to an act that demonstrates His lovingkindness. Forever here means during the realm of peace.

“Good” is not the same as “lovingkindness”. “Good” is the translation of the Hebrew word *tov*. “Lovingkindness” is the translation of the Hebrew word Adonai. What the text is saying is that God’s lovingkindness is evidenced by His goodness. ‘Goodness no one can take away from God because that is what He is. ‘Lovingkindness’ can be lost (cf. Gen 24:27; Jer 16:5). Lovingkindness is based on the covenant. If Israel does not keep the covenant, it loses the lovingkindness of God. On the basis of the blood of the new covenant, God’s lovingkindness can remain forever (Jer 31:31-33; Mt 26:28), while He remains eternally what He always was: good.

In direct connection with His lovingkindness, which is everlasting, by which is meant here the realm of peace, “His faithfulness” is mentioned (cf. Exo 34:6-7; Psa 25:6-7). His faithfulness is “to all generations”. Each new generation born in the realm of peace may count on His faithfulness. We may also count on this for the time we live on earth, as well as the generations that come after us, until the moment the Lord Jesus comes to take up His church.

Psalm 101

Introduction

This psalm describes the principles of lovingkindness and justice according to which the King will rule His house and His land. In it there is no room for evil. It is the last psalm in the series of psalms dealing with the King and His reign (Psalms 93-101).

In Deuteronomy 17 we find the law for the king (Deu 17:18-20). He must continually take in the Word of God to learn to fear the LORD and thereby be so formed that he will be the king after God's heart. Psalm 101 sings of such a king, yes, the only King with a heart in which God's law dwells, Whose heart is perfect to rule. He is the Only One Who can say: "Your Law is within my heart" (Psa 40:8b).

On this King will rest the Spirit of the LORD (Isa 11:2-5). As a result, He is perfectly suited to reign. Psalm 101 is a song of praise from and about Him. He is the Son of David Who speaks of the Lord (LORD) of David (Mt 22:41-45).

We can say that this psalm is the measuring stick and touchstone for all governments in today's world. The same applies to the exercise of the gift of leadership in the church (Rom 12:8).

Division of the psalm

Verses 1-5 The King Christ.

Verses 6-8 The subjects in the realm of peace.

Psa 101:1-4 | The Integrity of the Heart of the King

1 A Psalm of David.

I will sing of lovingkindness and justice,

To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.

2 I will give heed to the blameless way.

When will You come to me?

I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.

*3 I will set no worthless thing before my eyes;
 I hate the work of those who fall away;
 It shall not fasten its grip on me.
 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me;
 I will know no evil.*

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

David says he “will sing of lovingkindness and justice” (verse 1b). “Lovingkindness and justice” are the basis of his reign. This has been a desire with David, which he has not always lived up to. It is perfectly true in the Son of David, the Messiah. That is true of everything in this psalm. We see in what David says a description of the Messiah.

That the Messiah sings about lovingkindness and justice is because He finds His joy in displaying both of these features in His government. He possesses them because they are the attributes of the LORD. That is why He sings praises to the LORD. He honors Him by doing so.

It is a self-exhortation. He is actually saying: “Let me sing.” He is full of it, and from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks (cf. Psa 89:1). The LORD has shown lovingkindness and justice, and about that the King wants to sing (verse 1). That will also exhort him to reign in fear of the LORD (verse 2).

A king must “give heed to”, or “behave prudently in” reigning with wise policies, not letting himself to be influenced in his reign and administration of justice (verse 2). We see this with the Messiah. Just as the Lord Jesus acted wisely during His first coming to earth (Isa 52:13), so He will also act wisely (the same verb as in Isaiah 52) during His second coming, in His government.

Personally He is blameless and goes “the perfect way” or a “way of integrity”. This is necessary in the first place. A blameless way is a way that is completely in accordance with God’s will. Only the Lord Jesus has gone that way. The psalm is primarily about Him.

The King asks the LORD for His presence, His nearness. This is also perfect with the Lord Jesus. He can say “the Father is with Me” (Jn 16:32). This

enabled Him to behave prudently and go a blameless way. It shows His dependence on God.

He will show that He is bent on acting and walking according to the will of God by walking in His house “in the integrity” of His heart. An integrous heart is a heart that is always bent on doing the right thing so that it is to God’s glory. His “house” is the house of Israel. ‘Integrous’ is trustworthy, honest, not corruptible. This is a prerequisite for going the way of the LORD (Psa 119:1).

For us New Testament believers, this means to celebrate the feast with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1Cor 5:7-8). We do this when we live for the Lord Jesus. He is the true unleavened bread. In His life on earth and His life in heaven now, there is nothing of sin, of which leaven is a picture. He lives for His Father in everything.

Integrity of heart is evident in His abhorrence of every form of evil. The Messiah begins by saying what He will not set before His eyes (verse 3). He will not turn His eye to a “worthless thing”. What is in His heart, His integrity, is incompatible with is worthless i.e. with a practice that causes destruction. That He will not look at it implies that He will not even have ‘eye contact’ with it. Certainly, as King, He will see and judge corrupt practices, but here we are talking about His personal integrity toward His God (Psa 119:37; Isa 33:15-17). Job is in some respect a follower of Him (Job 31:1).

The word ‘eyes’ occurs four times in this psalm and speaks of what is present to someone, what he sees. Here in verse 3 ‘set before him’ means to set as a goal in his life. In verse 5 ‘a haughty look’ means that someone seeks great things in life, that is pride. In verse 6 ‘my eyes upon’ is what is in a person’s surroundings and what his interest is in. In verse 7 ‘before me’ means: that I will not endure in my presence.

In the heart of the Messiah there is no connection with evil. What is in His heart is “hate” for “the work of those who fall away”. Therefore, the deeds of apostates “shall not fasten its grip on me”. There is no attachment in Him by which corrupt practices and apostates could affect Him (Jn 14:30). These negative characteristics are an endorsement of His complete devotion to God (cf. Psa 1:1-2).

In verse 4, the psalmist returns to the heart. “A perverse heart” is contrasted with “the integrity” of his heart of verse 2. The Messiah throws the perverse heart far from Himself. This does not concern only what is in Him. He “will know no evil”. The evildoer follows the promptings of his devious heart. With him the God-fearing King, the Messiah, wants nothing to do. He does not even know him (cf. Mt 7:21-23). This evildoer is the antichrist, who leads the apostates, who are also all evildoers, in depraved practices.

Psa 101:5-8 | Integrity in the Reign of the King

*5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy;
No one who has a haughty look and an arrogant heart will I endure.
6 My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me;
He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.
7 He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house;
He who speaks falsehood shall not maintain his position before me.
8 Every morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land,
So as to cut off from the city of the LORD all those who do iniquity.*

The King abhors and hates what the apostates do, which is reflected in His judgment on their actions. He cannot tolerate any form of iniquity in His kingdom. Whoever is in His immediate vicinity must be as integrous as He is, which means that such a person has His nature. Then he possesses the same integrity.

Someone with whom it is otherwise, for example, one who “secretly slanders his neighbor”, He destroys (verse 5). Here we see that the King also knows what takes place in secret, even if it is a slander spoken in secret (Pro 20:8; Rev 1:14). Nothing is hidden from Him; He sees all secret sins and sees through all motives, as the history of Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates (Acts 5:1-11). False accusations prove that someone has “a haughty look and an arrogant heart”. Messiah will not “endure” that and judges it (Deu 19:18-19).

The end of the two ways of Psalm 1 is now described. Those whom He can tolerate in His environment and also use to carry out His orders are “the faithful of the land” (verse 6). His eyes are on them (cf. verse 3a). In

them He sees the same mind that is also in Him. People can be intelligent and knowledgeable and have experience, but these important qualities are worthless if they are not faithful. Faithfulness is the most important thing in being busy for the Lord (1Cor 4:2; Mt 25:21,23).

The faithful may sit with Him, in His immediate presence. Sitting can mean sitting at His table and eating with Him (cf. 2Sam 9:11,13). It can also mean sitting with Him on a throne to reign with Him (Mt 19:28; Rev 3:21; 4:4). To reign with Him, a believer must be faithful. The Messiah surrounds Himself with people who are going in the same way as the way He is going, that is, "a blameless way" (verse 2). They may "minister to" Him by dispensing blessings from Him to all over whom He rules.

In contrast, He removes from His house him "who practices deceit" (verse 7). These are the frauds, the hypocrites, the people who pretend to be integrous, but in their hearts have not bowed down to the Messiah (Psa 18:44; 66:3; 81:15). They are holding to a form of godliness, but deny its power (2Tim 3:5).

After doing justice in His own life and in His reign, the King does justice in "the land" and "the city of the LORD", which is Jerusalem (verse 8). In the realm of peace, although the devil is bound, man is still able to sin (Isa 65:20). Getting rid of the wicked and all who do injustice is an activity with which the Messiah begins each day in the realm of peace (Jer 21:12; Zep 3:5; cf. 2Sam 15:2). In this regard, the history of Ananias and Sapphira is an example of the swift justice (Acts 5:1-11) that will take place during the realm of peace.

Psalm 102

Introduction

While three disciples on the mountain of transfiguration (Lk 9:29-30) were eyewitnesses to the majesty of the Lord Jesus during the realm of peace (2Pet 1:16), Moses and Elijah spoke to the Lord of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Lk 9:31), that is, about His suffering and death. We see the same thing here in Psalms. While in Psalms 93-101 we admire the majesty of the LORD, that is the Lord Jesus, adoringly, in Psalm 102 He speaks of His suffering (cf. Lk 24:26). In this psalm we find prophetic what is later mentioned in Hebrews 5: "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety" (Heb 5:7).

This psalm is called a penitential psalm. The origin of this designation lies in its use in the liturgy of the church, in which the seven penitential psalms are sung on Ash Wednesday. Psalm 102 is the fifth of the seven so named (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). In this psalm, the psalmist does not speak of his sins, but of the great misery in which he finds himself. The psalmist is depicted as the epitome of misery in every possible area of life. Physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, he has reached a low point.

It is a Messianic psalm. The Messiah is speaking here. This is evident from the quotation of verses 26-28 in Hebrews 1 where the quotation refers to Christ (Heb 1:10-12). This psalm is not so much about Christ's atoning suffering, but about His suffering in connection with the judgment that God had to bring on Israel and Jerusalem. Christ identifies Himself with His people, the faithful remnant, who suffer from that judgment. The New Testament clearly distinguishes between the atoning suffering of the Lord Jesus – then suffering is mentioned in the singular – and suffering as God's Witness – then suffering is mentioned in the plural. The latter is a suffering that must also be endured by believers.

The suffering described in this psalm is not only His suffering in Gethsemane or before Pilate and Herod and at His crucifixion. His whole life from His birth has been suffering. This does not mean that He has been under the anger of God all His life. That is an absolutely reprehensible teaching. Only during the three hours of darkness did He bear the anger of God for sins. All His life God was well pleased in Him. He has had no part in sin and, precisely because of that, has had a perfect sense of it. This has caused Him to suffer in a way that we cannot comprehend. That suffering has weighed Him down.

What the believing remnant acknowledges as a just suffering, He voluntarily experienced by becoming Man. It is a suffering in His soul caused by seeing the consequences of sin. For example, the Lord wept at the grave of Lazarus (Jn 11:35). He has thus shown His sympathy in the sorrow of Mary and Martha. Yet His sorrow is much deeper than that of the sisters, for He perfectly knows the cause of death, which is sin. He did not weep so much over the loss. He knew that a few moments later He would raise Lazarus from the dead to life. He wept for the cause of it.

Psa 102:1-2 | Cry For Help

1 A Prayer of the Afflicted when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the LORD.

Hear my prayer, O LORD!

And let my cry for help come to You.

2 Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress;

Incline Your ear to me;

In the day when I call answer me quickly.

Verse 1a is the title of the psalm. As a title, it is exceptionally long. Everything in the title draws extra attention to the suffering of Christ. In this psalm we hear Christ as Man speaking of the feelings of His heart in the midst of circumstances that press Him down. We must always bear this in mind when we read this psalm. At the same time, we must never forget that He is God Himself. We are reminded of this impressively in the final verses of the psalm.

Christ here calls Himself “the Afflicted” (cf. Psa 86:1), an expression that also applies to the remnant. He is afflicted because God’s people have been severely punished by God for their unfaithfulness. The cause of that judgment, the realization of its necessity, weighs so heavily on Him that He “is faint”. All He can do is complain. It is one great “complaint”. He pours out His complaint “before the LORD”.

He personally, of course, has no part in the unfaithfulness of God’s people, but He shares in its consequences. He sympathizes with the faithful remnant who will be particularly strengthened by His sympathy. Thus He helps them bear the consequences of their unfaithfulness. It is one of the many occasions during His life that shows that in all their affliction He was afflicted (Isa 63:9). We see something similar when the Lord Jesus is baptized by John the baptist. He does this for the sake of righteousness, for in this way He makes Himself one with the believing remnant of Israel.

He does not *lay* His complaint down before God, but *pours* it out. ‘Pouring out’ indicates the power with which He prays. That He does it “before the LORD” shows on Whom He has placed His hope, with Whom He seeks help. This is an example for us when we are in great need.

The Lord Jesus is the Praying One (verse 1b; Psa 109:4b). As mentioned, we see Him in this psalm as a true Man. He asks the LORD to listen to His prayer and let His cries for help come to Him. The Lord Himself knows that the Father always hears Him (Jn 11:42), but here He is the mouth of the remnant. He is in great need and cries out to God, but has the feeling that God is not listening to His cries for help. That is why He addresses Him so insistently. The Lord Jesus wept when He saw Jerusalem (Lk 19:41). He wished that the city might have known the things which make for peace (Lk 19:42).

He also asks God not to hide His face from Him because He has the impression that God does (verse 2). Humbly pleading, He asks if God will incline His ear to Him. It is a plea for His attention. He longs fervently for the listening ear of God.

It is for Him “the day of my distress”. Therefore, it is the day that He calls and looks forward to a quick answer. Days of distress are days of special trial and great need. God allows such days to test the hearts of His own

and see where they seek their help. For the Lord Jesus, God has always been His refuge, He was cast upon Him from the womb (Psa 22:10).

Psa 102:3-11 | Lifted Up and Cast Away

*3 For my days have been consumed in smoke,
And my bones have been scorched like a hearth.
4 My heart has been smitten like grass and has withered away,
Indeed, I forget to eat my bread.
5 Because of the loudness of my groaning
My bones cling to my flesh.
6 I resemble a pelican of the wilderness;
I have become like an owl of the waste places.
7 I lie awake,
I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.
8 My enemies have reproached me all day long;
Those who deride me have used my [name] as a curse.
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread
And mingled my drink with weeping
10 Because of Your indignation and Your wrath,
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.
11 My days are like a lengthened shadow,
And I wither away like grass.*

The sufferings of the Messiah during His life on earth were deep. We find in verses 3-5 His physical suffering, in verses 6-7 the suffering of His soul, in verse 8 the suffering from the side of men, and in verses 9-10 the suffering from the side of God.

To be able to somewhat empathize with the reality of His feelings that He shares with us in these verses, we need the help of God's Spirit. Often it is with us as with Peter, James and John. The Lord Jesus asks them to watch with Him, while He is very distressed and troubled because of the work He is going to accomplish on the cross. But they fall asleep, while the Lord Jesus is in severe battle, and He has asked them to watch with Him (Mt 26:36-43; Mk 14:32-40).

He complains that His days “have been consumed in smoke” (verse 3). So quickly and volatile He sees His days passing, while no result is visible. The effort of His life in the service of His God has cost Him everything, but it all seems to have been in vain (cf. Isa 49:4a). It is the suffering of the deathbed, facing death. His “bones have been scorched like a hearth”. The bones glow with a high fever, which makes the strength disappear.

His heart has been smitten with the affliction in which He is (verse 4). It is “smitten like grass and has withered away”. The life has gone out of it through dehydration. He is so engrossed in affliction that He has forgotten to “eat” His “bread”. The affliction of Zion, which He feels to be His affliction, has completely seized Him, He cannot think of anything else. All appetite has disappeared.

His suffering is visible. He suffers intense pains. Because of “the loudness of” His “groaning”, His bones cling to His flesh (verse 5; cf. Job 19:20). The loud groaning takes all His energy. His bones become visible through His skin.

Added to this is His great loneliness! He felt Himself to be “a pelican of the wilderness” and “like an owl of the waste places” (verse 6). It is not certain which bird, of which the name is translated here as “pelican”, it was. What we do know for sure is that this bird is lonely. A wilderness is an exemplar of loneliness.

The owl is a bird that lives in solitude and has waste places as its natural habitat. The emphasis is on the fact that the environment has become a mess. This has become the Lord’s habitat. No one understood Him, neither His family nor His disciples. He has been alone in His perfect apprehension of the real spiritual situation of Jerusalem and Zion, which have become a mess. Under this He has suffered.

His suffering is not just present during the day. He complains that He lies awake (verse 7). The affliction is so great that it keeps Him awake, restless. He cannot sleep because of it. Loneliness is often felt even more deeply at night than during the day. The Lord says that He has “become like a lonely bird [or: sparrow] on a housetop”. The sparrow mostly lives with others. A lonely sparrow on the roof is an exemplar of solitude, which at the same time makes him vulnerable to birds of prey, his natural enemies.

The Hebrew word is actually the general term for “bird”, which is often translated as “sparrow”. A solitary bird on the roof at night is an exemplar of restlessness, but also of vulnerability.

That the Lord Jesus is lonely does not mean that He is left alone. Added to the pain of solitude is the scorn of His enemies which they pour out on Him all day long (verse 8; cf. Isa 53:3). It is as rubbing salt in someone’s wounds. There is no one who feels sorry for Him. On the contrary, His enemies exploit His vulnerability to rage against Him.

Thereby they use His Name “as a curse”. They swear by His Name that they will do Him harm. We can compare it to names like those of Zedekiah and Ahab, which were used as a curse during the time of exile (Jer 29:22). Thus the name of the psalmist is used as a curse by saying to someone: ‘May happen to you what happened to the psalmist!’ It is a curse. It is also not just a few who want to harm Him, but a whole group.

Daily food consists of bread and drink. For the Lord, it was not so. In verse 4 He says that He forgot to eat His bread. Now He says that He has “eaten ashes like bread” (verse 9). Bread serves to strengthen (Psa 104:14). From ashes all life is gone and speaks of death and the sorrow that accompanies it (Jer 6:26).

What He drank, He “mingled ... with weeping” (cf. Psa 42:3). Drinking serves to refresh, but tears are caused by sorrow. To drink tears means to drink sorrow. This does not refresh, but depresses. These are mourning rituals (Jer 6:26; Est 4:1). That ashes are eaten instead of sprinkled on the head and tears are drunk instead of shed means extreme mourning.

Twice in the Gospels it is mentioned that the Lord Jesus wept (Jn 11:35; Lk 19:41). One time it is silently shedding tears, and the other time it is crying aloud. Here we read that His whole life was marked by tears and sorrow. Here we get a deep glimpse into the soul, the emotional life of the Lord. If we can get an eye and a heart for this as we walk with Him, how much more precious He becomes to us!

In verses 1b-2, Christ is speaking to God. We see this in the use of the words “You” and “Your”. Then in verses 3-9 we hear the reasons for His cry for help. In verse 10, Christ speaks to God again. He says to God that He accepts suffering from His hand. He speaks of what God has done to

Him. He tells the LORD, His God, that He has “lifted” Him “up”, or exalted Him, to be the Messiah of His people. But instead of being able to take possession of the kingdom, He has “cast” Him “away”, or humiliated Him (cf. Psa 30:7).

Instead of living a long life in the favor of God as Messiah to His people, His days are “like a lengthened shadow” (verse 11; Psa 109:23). When shadows lengthen, it indicates that the sun will soon set and it will be night. The Messiah does not see it getting light, but He sees that soon night will fall over His life. He foresees His death. He experiences that He withers away “like grass” (cf. verse 5). All prosperity disappears from His life, all life flows from His body.

Psa 102:12-17 | God Takes Care of Zion

*12 But You, O LORD, abide forever,
And Your name to all generations.
13 You will arise [and] have compassion on Zion;
For it is time to be gracious to her,
For the appointed time has come.
14 Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones
And feel pity for her dust.
15 So the nations will fear the name of the LORD
And all the kings of the earth Your glory.
16 For the LORD has built up Zion;
He has appeared in His glory.
17 He has regarded the prayer of the destitute
And has not despised their prayer.*

The Messiah, after describing the affliction in which He finds Himself and the suffering He bears, turns to the “LORD” (verse 12). The word “but” with which this verse begins indicates that a contrast with the preceding follows. The Messiah suffers, but not forever because He knows that the LORD abides forever and with it His faithfulness to what He has promised. The name “LORD”, Yahweh, by which He addresses God, already indicates this. After all, LORD is the name of God as the God of the covenant. The remembrance of that Name goes “to all generations” (cf. Psa 100:5; 22:30; 78:3-7).

In verse 12 the emphasis is on the fact that the faithfulness of the LORD is everlasting. He is LORD, the I AM, or the eternal Being, He is the same yesterday and today and forever. Therefore, His lovingkindness toward His people is unchanging. But ... how is this compatible with the condition of the psalmist in verses 1-11?

We find the answer in verse 13. Now the LORD "will arise" and "have compassion on Zion". He will arise and go and act, and that for the sake of the remembrance of His Name. In all affliction, this is the assurance of faith in the LORD. He will intervene on behalf of His people and His city. He will do so when His judgments have the result He desires.

The LORD has set a time to bring Israel back, a time to restore Israel and Zion (Dan 9:24). The latter begins with the command to restore (the walls of) Jerusalem (Dan 9:25; Neh 2:1-6). When God's time has come, He will have compassion on Zion. The people have deserved total judgment, but He preserves a remnant according to the election of His grace. At the appointed time, He will accept His people again. Faith sees that ahead.

God will do a work in His servants. He will give love in their hearts for "her stones", indicating that Zion is broken down (verse 14). He will fill them with feeling pity "for her dust", indicating how much Zion is in ruins. The word for "feel pity" in verse 14 is the same as "have compassion" in verse 13. As the LORD is gracious to Zion, so the remnant is to the dust and stones of Zion. We see a foreshadowing of this in people like Ezra and Nehemiah who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon full of love and compassion for Zion. In the end time, it will happen through the faithful remnant.

We may well ask ourselves about our love and compassion for the church of God which is also a mess. Do we long to rebuild what lies in ruins? We can do that by helping everywhere with God's Word where people long to be a local church as God has made known in His Word. To the remnant, as well as to us, it is said: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psa 122:6), which is the dwelling place of God in the midst of His earthly people. We may pray that for what is now God's dwelling place on earth, God's heavenly people, His church.

When Zion is rebuilt, the nations surrounding Israel will “fear the name of the LORD” (verse 15). The rebuilding of Zion is proof that God is not against His people, but for them. The nations have spoken against God’s people defamatory of Him as a powerless God (2Chr 32:9-17; Neh 4:2). At the time appointed by God, they will see that He is for His people and therefore be in awe of Him.

The LORD is building Zion, though He uses His servants to do so (verse 16; cf. Psa 127:1). When He has rebuilt Zion, which now lies in ruins, He will appear “in His glory”. He will dwell in Zion in the midst of His people. From there, His glory will be seen all over the earth.

He will do His restorative work in response to “the prayer of the destitute”, showing that He has “not despised their prayer” (verse 17). “The destitute” or “naked” are those who have lost all their dignity and have a very low opinion of themselves. They are “the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3) and therefore the opposite of the spirit of Laodicea (Rev 3:17). The Lord Jesus is the true “poor in spirit” (cf. Psa 109:22,25). He never sought His own glory, but always that of His God. The believing remnant exhibits His attributes.

How much has been prayed for the restoration of Zion throughout the ages. This applies above all to the Messiah. Following Him, it is also true of the faithful remnant – whom God has always kept to Himself throughout the ages – in the future (Zep 3:12-13).

Psa 102:18-22 | Assurance of Restoration of Zion

*18 This will be written for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
19 For He looked down from His holy height;
From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,
20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To set free those who were doomed to death,
21 That [men] may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion
And His praise in Jerusalem,
22 When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.*

In these verses, in answer to the prayer of the destitute remnant (verses 17,20), the Holy Spirit gives a description of the restoration of Zion, that is Jerusalem, under the reign of the Messiah. The LORD will restore the dignity of the remnant and of Zion. This is “written for the generation to come” (verse 18). This description is fixed. Each succeeding generation can read here God’s plan for the future of Jerusalem. It will culminate in a people “to be created”. That people will “praise the LORD”. God is working restoration and He is creating a people who will enjoy the blessings of this restoration.

The word “for” with which verse 19 begins indicates that the reason for what was said in the previous verse now follows. He has “looked down from His holy height” (cf. Deu 26:15; Isa 57:15; 63:15). He is exalted high above the earth and in His holiness also perfectly separated from the sin that is rampant there. Yet He has always been involved in what goes on on earth and especially in what is done to His people. He has gazed “from heaven ... upon the earth” (cf. Psa 113:5-6).

In heaven He has heard “the groaning of the prisoner” (verse 20; cf. Exo 2:23-25; 3:7-8). His purpose is “to set free those who were doomed to death”. Death is a prison. In it, not only Israel is imprisoned, but all people are imprisoned in it. In this prison are people who are condemned to die. From that prison only Christ can deliver. He is stronger than death and the devil who has the power of death (Heb 2:14-15).

Through what He will do with His people, the believing remnant, people “will tell of the name of the LORD in Zion and His praise in Jerusalem” (verse 21). Every work of restoration, whether in Israel or, in our day, in an individual believer or a local church, has as its goal that God is given thanks and praised.

Those who have been brought into connection with God and Christ are living proof of the power of God to turn things around for the better. From that comes a testimony, which works praise for God in the place where He dwells. When the Lord Jesus reigns, “the peoples are gathered together” to tell Him His praise (verse 22). “The kingdoms” will come “to serve the LORD”. Everything and everyone will be subject to Him and serve Him joyfully (Isa 2:3).

Psa 102:23-28 | God Is the Same

23 He has weakened my strength in the way;

He has shortened my days.

24 I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days,

Your years are throughout all generations.

25 "Of old You founded the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

26 "Even they will perish, but You endure;

And all of them will wear out like a garment;

Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

27 "But You are the same,

And Your years will not come to an end.

28 "The children of Your servants will continue,

And their descendants will be established before You."

After the encouraging prospect of the restoration that will come in verses 12-22, we hear the suffering Messiah speak again (verse 23). The Messiah sees the hand of God in what befalls Him. He accepts everything from the hand of God. God has pressed down His power on the way He has gone on earth.

The word "afflicted" in verse 1a is derived from the word "weakened" here in verse 23. In verse 1a Christ is the Afflicted. Here in verse 23 He returns to His suffering described in verses 1b-11 as the suffering in which God pressed Him down. Here we see the Messiah going His way on earth in humiliation. He identifies Himself again with His people, who feel powerless in the way they must go.

Besides being rendered powerless (cf. 2Cor 13:4a), the days of His sojourn on earth were shortened. He has not been able to make them full. For this He complained to His God, saying to Him: "O my God, do not take me away in the midst [literally: half] of my days" (verse 24a; cf. Isa 38:2-3). He was thirty-three years old when He died and thus in the prime of His life as Man. When He speaks of Himself as 'the green tree' (Lk 23:31), we hear in it the same sentiments. The contrast here is between the God Who is eternally enthroned (verse 12) and His own downtrodden life cut off in the midst of the normal human age of seventy years (Psa 90:10).

As a God-fearing Israelite, if He is obedient, He has the promise of a long life in the land. By His blameless life, He deserved it. And now He is taken away from life. As Man this is a terrible prospect for Him. No one has ever been so obedient and dedicated to God, and yet He is being eradicated, taken away from life.

Halfway through verse 24, the Speaker changes and the Messiah receives an answer from God to His questions. The proof that this is about the Messiah is found in Hebrews 1, where verses 25-27 of this psalm are quoted to prove that the Lord Jesus is the LORD, Yahweh, Himself (Heb 1:10-12). Therefore, God says to Him that His years continue “throughout all generations”. He will be taken away at the half of His days, but He will rise from the dead. Here we find one of the many indications that Christ had to die and then rise from the dead (Mt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19).

Then His God says to Him that He is the Creator of earth and heaven (verse 25; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2). No matter how humbled He may be as a Man on earth, He has “of old ... founded the earth” and “the heavens are the work” of His “hands”. He is at the beginning of all things. All things owe their origin to Him Who Himself did not originate, but is the Eternal.

Here we find one of the many indications that Christ is both the Son of Man and the eternal God. Christ is the Immanuel (Isa 7:14; 8:8; Mt 1:23), the ‘God with us’. He Who was taken away halfway His days of His life on earth (verses 23-24a), is the eternal One (verses 24b-27), the Creator of heaven and earth (verses 25-26).

Nor does He have an end, while His works do, for “they will perish” (verse 26). Mockers may say that everything remains as it was from the beginning of creation (2Pet 3:3-4), but they will be disillusioned. The material world has no life in itself, nor is it eternal like its Creator. The transition from verse 25 to verse 26 is the transition from creation to decay, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 21 (Gen 1:1; Rev 21:1). It indicates the tremendous contrast that exists between the Creator and the creation.

It will be with creation as with a “garment”. A garment wears out through use. He will deal with creation as with “clothing”. He will do with it what a man does when He puts on another coat. Then He takes off the old one and puts on the new one. In both cases, what was there at first disappears.

The old disappears after a process of wearing out, the new appears by a brief act. This is how the Son acts with creation. The old creation disappears as old. He exchanges it for a new creation. He creates a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 20:11; 21:1).

But the Son does not change. He is “the same” forever (verse 27; Heb 13:8). His “years will not come to an end”. His years will continue endlessly, even now that He has become Man, for even as Man He knows no end. Creation will be changed, regenerated (Mt 19:28) and renewed (Rev 21:1), but He Himself is the Eternal and Unchanging One. He is at the beginning of all things and at the end of all things He is still there.

This is also a great encouragement in view of the coming generations (verse 28). We may sometimes wonder how they will fare. Then we may look to Him. He is to each generation what He has been to earlier generations. Generations and circumstances change, but He does not change.

Therefore, the children dwell securely and “their descendants will be established before” God. This means that the descendants of the believing remnant will remain steadfast in the faith (Isa 59:21). They will no longer be driven from their inheritance and from their land or taken away. Yahweh’s promise guarantees this. Heaven and earth will pass away, but His words will not pass away (Mt 5:18; 24:35).

Psalm 103

Introduction

In Psalm 102, the believing remnant saw the suffering of Christ *with* the people of Israel. In Psalm 103 they see that Christ also suffered *for* or *on behalf* of the people. The Lord opens the understanding of the remnant making them realize that the Christ had to suffer and thus enter His glory (Lk 24:46). In Psalm 103 they see that Christ's suffering is the suffering of the Servant of the LORD as a guilt offering (Isa 53:10) and as the sin offerings of the day of atonement (Lev 16:5-28).

It is not possible to contemplate the meaning of Christ's suffering in an objective, detached way. We see, therefore, that once the remnant begins to understand the meaning of the suffering, they begin to sing a song of praise. Psalm 103 begins with two exhortations and ends with four exhortations to praise the LORD.

Who can remain silent when he has been made partaker of so great a salvation?

Psa 103:1-5 | Bless the LORD, O My Soul

1 [A Psalm] of David.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,

And all that is within me, [bless] His holy name.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,

And forget none of His benefits;

3 Who pardons all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases;

4 Who redeems your life from the pit,

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;

5 Who satisfies your years with good things,

[So that] your youth is renewed like the eagle.

This is a psalm "of David" (verse 1). He calls on himself to praise the LORD. His "soul" means his feelings. He also wants "all that is within" him, his

whole inner being, his will, his thoughts and deliberations, to praise God's holy Name. His Name includes all His attributes and actions.

We cannot be half married; neither can we love the LORD our God with part of our heart, part of our soul, and part of our strength (Deu 6:5). So cannot David, so cannot the remnant, and so cannot we, in Psalm 103 praise God with only *a part* of what is in him, in them, in us.

The Lord Jesus has given us everything, He has given Himself. It is our spiritual service of worship to present our body to God as a living and holy sacrifice (Rom 12:1) and to praise Him with all that is within us. He is worthy to be magnified and He is worthy to be served with all our being. He is worthy to receive praise from all that is within us.

All of God's actions flow from Who He is and bear His inscription. Who He is and what He does calls for praise by David's whole person. Verse 1 is blessing, or praising, the LORD for Who He is, verse 2 for what He does. The latter continues until verse 18. Then in verse 19 Who He is comes as the occasion for praising and giving thanks to Him in verses 20-22.

His Name is holy because everything He is and does bears the mark of holiness. It is all completely free from any stain of sin or even the thought of it. God is light and there is no darkness in Him (1Jn 1:5). This is evident in all that He does.

One more time David says that his soul will bless, or praise, the LORD (verse 2). He also said that in verse 1, but now he says it with reference to all God's benefits. Of these he must not and will not forget one. It concerns both the material and the spiritual benefits. It is necessary for us to remind ourselves of this, for we are quite forgetful. Forgetfulness with regard to all the benefits that God has bestowed on us is inexcusable and shows ingratitude.

The greatest and first-mentioned benefit, however, is the pardon or forgiveness of "all" our "iniquities" (verse 3; cf. Isa 53:4-5). The pardon of God concerns every iniquity, without exception. Its confession is presupposed here (1Jn 1:9). If one iniquity were not pardoned, Christ's work and God's pardon would forever fall short. Fortunately, it is not like that. The pardon is total because the work of Christ is perfect.

The word for “pardon” here is not the ordinary word for forgiveness, but a word that implies Divine forgiveness of serious transgressions (cf. Psa 25:11). This is the basis of pardon that we find in picture in the day of atonement. It is on this basis that the angel Gabriel can speak to Daniel about atoning iniquity and bringing in eternal righteousness (Dan 9:24).

The LORD is also the Healer (Exo 15:26). In conjunction with the pardon of iniquity, He also heals “all your diseases”. The total healing of all diseases, both of the body and the soul, will take place in the realm of peace, for then His people will serve Him (Exo 23:25). In the Lord Jesus’ healing of the paralytic we see this portrayed (Mt 9:2-7). He first forgives the paralytic his sins and then heals him physically. So it will also be in the future with the remnant (cf. Rev 22:2).

In the age in which we now live, there can be no claim to total healing. That the believer is healed by the wounds of the Lord Jesus (1Pet 2:24), refers to the health of the spiritual life that had been affected and destroyed by sin. The wounds referred to here are not the wounds through the scourging given to Him by Pilate’s soldiers, but the wounds of God’s judgment on sin. Wounds caused by men cannot possibly have a healing effect on people.

The Lord Jesus suffered God’s judgment on the cross for sin. The sins of those who believe are removed thereby. It is a fallacy to assume that thereby the *consequences* of sin, such as sickness, were also removed. Taking on Himself the infirmities and carrying away the diseases does not refer to the cross, but to His life on earth (Mt 8:16-17). It does not say that the Lord Jesus bore the diseases on the cross and therefore a believer would no longer need to be ill. Just as the Lord can sympathize with infirmities, He can sympathize with them in the case of diseases, which He cannot do with sins.

The next benefit to praise God for is that He “redeems your life from the pit” (verse 4). By this the psalmist is saying that he has been redeemed from death. This is consistent with the horizon of the believer in the Old Testament. Next, he says that he is crowned “with lovingkindness and compassion”. He experiences the covenant faithfulness or lovingkindness

of the LORD during his life. The same is true of compassion, which is the compassion with the believer's affliction in this life.

It is about the reversal of the believer's fate: instead of the threat of death, he is now crowned – others translate 'surrounded' – with lovingkindness and compassion. He is therefore invulnerable to the threat of destruction. This is possible only because the suffering and death of Christ brought about reconciliation. It is the fulfillment of the word: "Death is consumed to victory" (1Cor 15:54; Isa 25:8a).

In a general sense, the believer knows that destruction has no hold on him. He can die, but death has no power over him. The Lord Jesus by His resurrection has conquered death for everyone who believes in Him (Jn 11:25-26).

God satisfies the "years" – or "soul", as it can also be translated – of His own "with good things" (verse 5). It means that He lavishes the believer with blessings, with good things. As a result, we can say that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, that praise will be the result. This also relates to life on this side of the grave.

This is not about food, but about giving thanks, speaking and singing good words about all the benefits that God has rendered. The mouth will be full of thanksgiving. This will never end, for in the regeneration, that is in the realm of peace, eternal youth will be enjoyed with renewed vigor (cf. Psa 110:3).

The eagle, which Isaiah also speaks of (Isa 40:31), confirms the picture of renewal of power. An eagle is a mighty bird that dominates the skies. It can live up to thirty years in the wild and up to sixty years in captivity. Until its sixth year, this powerful bird receives a new plumage each year, so its age is recognizable by its plumage.

Psa 103:6-12 | Judgments and Lovingkindness

*6 The LORD performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.*

*7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the sons of Israel.*

8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,

Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

9 He will not always strive [with us],

Nor will He keep [His anger] forever.

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,

Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

12 As far as the east is from the west,

So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

David in verses 1-5 has given thanks to the LORD for all the benefits He has done to his soul. Nor is it just any benefit, but a great benefit, namely, that a reversal has taken place in his condition. First he was on the way to destruction, sick because of God's discipline over his iniquity. The great beneficence of the LORD is that He has delivered him from all this and has showered him with such great blessings that it is impossible for him to remain silent about this great salvation.

He now proceeds to sing of the "righteous deeds" of the LORD (verse 6). These righteous deeds involve His "judgments for all who are oppressed". They are manifested when He provides justice to the oppressed by redeeming them, while this also includes punishing the oppressors. We still live in a world today that is full of unjust acts and injustice. This does not come from the LORD, but from man living without Him.

When the LORD reigns, when He sits on His throne (Mt 25:31), there will be an end to all injustice. He will put an end to it by doing "righteous deeds", which are the righteous judgments by which He will punish and remove injustice. "For all who are oppressed", who have suffered injustice for the sake of His Name, He will do justice. He will lead them into the peace and blessing of the realm of peace.

God has plans for the future. This includes two things: firstly, deliverance from the hand of the enemy and secondly, pardon of iniquities. He has "made known ... to Moses" the plans for the future of His people and the ways in which He will realize them (verse 7). Moses went to Him to show him the tabernacle (Exo 25:40; Heb 8:5). In it He reveals His plan, and that is that He wants to dwell in the midst of a redeemed people. "To the sons

of Israel” He has made known “His acts”. He did so by delivering them out of the bondage of Egypt and bringing them into the promised land.

The people had to be delivered from an outward enemy, but also from their iniquities. Only then could the LORD dwell in their midst. Likewise it will be in the future. There is deliverance from the hand of the wicked, both those of the nations and those of their own people, but above all there is deliverance from their iniquities.

All the ways and deeds of the LORD show that He is “compassionate and gracious” and “slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness” (verse 8). This is the glory of God that He demonstrated to Moses when Moses marveled at how the LORD could spare the people after the sin with the golden calf (Exo 34:6-7). Each time His people have turned away from Him and begun to serve idols, He has shown His mercy and grace by sparing them. How often His patience has been tested. That He did not exterminate them is because He is “abounding in lovingkindness”.

God “will not always strive” (verse 9; Isa 57:16). With the people of Israel, the LORD could come and dwell in their midst by virtue of the day of atonement (Lev 16:1-34). What happened on that day, the sacrifices that were offered, points to the Lord’s work on the cross, as explained in Hebrews 9-10 (Heb 9:1-28; 10:1-22). This applies to all who have confessed their sins.

The moment the high priest, who appeared before God on behalf of the people, returned by the power of the blood, the people knew for certain that for that one year their sins had been taken away. Thus Christ, our High Priest, was raised from the dead for our justification (Rom 4:25).

The believer may know that His sins were borne by the Lord Jesus on the cross (1Pet 2:24). God called Him to account and gave Him the righteous judgment for those sins. As a result, they were blotted out and put away. The full heat of His anger on those sins has gone over His Son. Therefore, He does not keep His anger on the repentant sinner forever, but forgives him and blesses him.

In a contact with someone who adheres to the false teaching of the universal atonement, these verses were quoted by him as proof that God saves everyone. ‘For’, he claimed, ‘God is compassionate and gracious, patient

and rich in mercy, and He does not keep His anger forever'. This way of interpreting the Bible is a great deception with fatal consequences.

We are saved from such 'own interpretation' when we understand that the actions of God in this psalm are illustrated in the feast of the day of atonement in Leviticus 16. On that day, something is done to two goats. The first goat is slaughtered. This speaks of *satisfaction* to God's honor being restored. This is what the Lord Jesus did. On that basis, reconciliation can be *offered to all people*.

The second goat is sent into the wilderness after the high priest confessed the sins of Israel while laying his hands on the head of this goat. This, too, the Lord Jesus did by taking the sins upon Himself of every person who, repenting of his sins, confessed them to God. This speaks of *substitution*, that is, forgiveness of sins only actually takes place for each person who with repentance confesses his sins to God. Only those who believe receive forgiveness of sins, for only of them are the sins actually reconciled by the sacrifice of Christ. With those sins He was burdened and on them He received God's judgment.

We must remember that here David is speaking as the mouth of the faithful remnant of Israel in the future. He praises God for the forgiveness of his sins. He is aware that his iniquities have been forgiven. He knows that his life has been redeemed from the grave. He experiences because of the forgiveness, that God is not angry forever. He is freed from God's wrath, which afflicts everyone who is unrepentant. Every person who believes that Christ has borne the wrath of God for him, will praise God for it forever!

Psalm 103 speaks of a man who has repented and done penance and is aware of forgiveness. What David says in it, no unconverted man says and will say in eternity no man who has not repented on earth. On earth repentance must happen and on earth sins must be forgiven and not in the hereafter (Mt 9:6).

Those who have confessed their sins and received forgiveness are deeply aware that it is only grace that God did not deal with them according to their sins and did not reward according to their iniquities (verse 10; cf. Exo 34:7). David speaks here in the plural, "us" and "our". He is here express-

ing the feelings of the faithful remnant who have entered into the blessing of the realm of peace. They are not there by virtue of any merit of their own.

What the believing remnant says applies to an even greater degree to the New Testament believer. He will also partake of all the blessings of the realm of peace (Heb 11:40). Above and beyond this he is blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. These were given to him by pure grace from God "Who is rich in mercy" and "because of His great love" (Eph 1:3; 2:1-10). Shall we not give Him eternal praise for this and begin with it now on earth?

Who can measure the distance between the earth and heaven (verse 11)? It is a distance immeasurable to humans. No one has ever been able to discover the 'ceiling' of heaven. As immeasurably "high as the heavens are above the earth, that great is His lovingkindness [that is Adonai, covenant faithfulness] toward those who fear Him".

All who "fear Him" – this phrase occurs three times in the psalm (verses 11,15,17) – are the object of the power of His lovingkindness. (This is, by the way, another proof of the lie of the universal atonement.) God has worked in them the fear, that is the awe, of Him. It is all His work.

The remnant here praises the *power* of His lovingkindness. Now that Christ has laid the foundation of the covenant through the blood of the new covenant, the power of God's lovingkindness or covenant faithfulness is so infinitely great that the Lord Jesus can declare: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18).

In the unbounded power of His lovingkindness God has fulfilled all His promises to a failing people. He has mercifully taken care of them in a mighty way, while they completely forfeited the right to all of God's promises. His power has become visible in His Son, the Mediator of the new covenant, Who has fulfilled all the conditions of God's covenant. What is impossible for man to do, namely, to save himself, God is able to do (Lk 18:25-27).

For the transgressions done by the people, He, in the power of His lovingkindness, also provided (verse 12). Transgressions require retribution. That retribution He has asked for and received from His Son. Christ con-

fessed the transgressions of those who believe in Him toward God as His own and suffered the judgment of God for them (2Cor 5:21). This means that God no longer sees sin in those who have confessed them, because Christ died for them. He received the wages for it (Rom 6:23a).

The remnant is aware that their sins have been carried away. They indicate the distance between them and their transgressions by pointing to the distance between “the east” and “the west”. This does not mean a geographical distance, but a distance between the west, where the offeror stands, and the east to which the goat laden with the people’s sins has been sent away through the East Gate of Jerusalem toward the wilderness in the east. The goat is let loose in a secluded wilderness never to return. That the forgiven transgressions will never come back to haunt them is confirmed in other ways by other verses in Scripture (Isa 38:17b; Jer 50:20; Mic 7:19; Heb 8:12).

Psa 103:13-19 | Compassion and Righteousness

*13 Just as a father has compassion on [his] children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*

*14 For He Himself knows our frame;
He is mindful that we are [but] dust.*

*15 As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,
And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

*17 But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on
those who fear Him,*

And His righteousness to children’s children,

*18 To those who keep His covenant
And remember His precepts to do them.*

*19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,
And His sovereignty rules over all.*

David compares the LORD to “a father” who “has compassion on [his] children” (verse 13). There is this difference, however, that an earthly father bears his young children, whereas with God’s people and with us the situation is that God bears all His own, young and old, throughout their lives (Isa 46:3-4).

The LORD, Yahweh, the God of the covenant with His people, takes care in the same way as a father “on those who fear Him”. We see here the tender care of God for His vulnerable people, which are those who are in awe of Him and live in reverence for Him. He has brought them into that relationship with Him.

David did not personally know God as Father, nor will the believing remnant know Him that way. Several times God is called the Father of His people. This has the meaning of ‘origin’ and does not represent the relationship of the individual Israelite to Him (Deu 32:6; Isa 63:16; 64:7; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1). It is the privilege of the New Testament believer to know God personally as Father and to call Him “Abba, Father” by the Spirit of sonship (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

The remnant is aware of their weakness. And that is the very reason for God’s compassion: “For He Himself knows our frame”, i.e. ‘what we are made of’ (verse 14). God “is mindful that we are [but] dust”, He will never forget that, because He made us “of dust from the ground” (Gen 2:7; 3:19). If we continue to remember that we will recognize our dependence on Him.

In verses 15-16 David elaborates on the weakness and perishableness of man. Man is but a ‘mortal man’ with a brief existence on earth (verse 15). He depicts its brevity and rapidly withering splendor as follows: “His days are like grass, like a flower of the field, so he flourishes” (cf. Isa 40:7; 1Pet 1:24; Psa 90:5-6). His life is so fragile that a breath of wind blows him away (verse 16). This is the hot, scorching wilderness wind from the east of Israel, which within hours has scorched everything. Then “it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer”. He disappeared from sight for good without leaving a trace of his previous presence.

Opposite to this is “the lovingkindness of the LORD” (verse 17). It is not volatile, temporary, transient, “but ... from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him”. It is a feature of Him Who is the Eternal. His lovingkindness never comes to an end. Earlier it was said of His mercy that in its space it is immeasurable, incomprehensible (verse 11). Now it is said that His lovingkindness never ends, is endless, extends to all eternity. We understand that this is only possible because His covenant faithfulness, His

lovingkindness, is based on the blood of the new covenant, the precious blood of Christ.

And on whom does it extend? “On those who fear Him.” This characterizes the believer in all times and the believing remnant in particular in the end time. It is the evidence of new life. They are entering the realm of peace. Those who fear God, those who live in reverence and awe of Him, are the eternal object of His lovingkindness.

The second line of verse 17 is not about the LORD’s lovingkindness, but about “His righteousness”. Lovingkindness and righteousness are never in conflict. Lovingkindness is based on righteousness. The “children’s children” are the succeeding generations. They will first have to acknowledge God’s righteousness in judgment on who they are. Then they will partake of the lovingkindness of God and abide in it (cf. Isa 59:21).

The next generations will “keep” God’s “covenant and remember His precepts to do them” (verse 18). They will do so and thereby show that they have bowed before Him confessing their sins. They have been given a new nature by which they will obey Him. By nature, man cannot and will not do that (Rom 8:6-8). He can only do it if he has a new heart (cf. Eze 36:25-27).

Verse 19 begins with “the LORD” giving emphasis to His Person. That Person is so glorious that it gives rise to the fourfold praise that follows. This is no longer because of what He did (verses 2-18), but now, as in verse 1, because of Who He is.

The section of verses 19-22 begins and ends with His reign. That the *kind* God is also the *reigning* God is underscored by the comment that He has “established His throne in the heavens” (verse 19). This is the case now, in this age, and will also be the case in the realm of peace. An established throne is a fixed, unshakable throne. He does not change in His reign. During the realm of peace, His throne will also be on earth. At that time, “His sovereignty rules over all” in heaven and on earth.

Psa 103:20-22 | Praise the LORD

20 Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Mighty in strength, who perform His word,

O obeying the voice of His word!
21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You who serve Him, doing His will.
22 Bless the LORD, all you works of His,
In all places of His dominion;
Bless the LORD, O my soul!

When the time comes for the LORD's kingdom to rule over all, a call follows to all and everything to bless or praise the LORD. The first to be called to bless Him are "His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!" (verse 20). They are close to Him. They are "mighty in strength", performing in obedience the word that He speaks, without any objection. They are sent out to serve those who inherit salvation (Heb 1:14).

After the call to the angels who are executors of His word, the circle of those who are called to bless or praise the LORD is extended to all "His hosts" (verse 21). His hosts are all the heavenly hosts. In addition to performers of His word, there are also angels who have special care for the maintenance of God's holiness, such as cherubim. There is also mention of seraphs. All angels are mighty in strength. What tremendous strength an army of angels must possess. But they are all under the supreme command of the LORD and they only "serve Him, doing His will".

Finally, all His "works, in all places of His dominion" are called to bless or to praise Him (verse 22). Here the circle of those who praise God is extended to the entire universe. After all, there is no area in the universe that is not under His dominion.

We find these praises in Revelation 5: first the angels (Rev 5:12), then all the creatures (Rev 5:13) and finally the worship without words of the elders, which are the believers (Rev 5:14). In Psalm 103 we find twice the angels (verses 20-21), then all the creatures (verse 22a) and finally the psalmist (verse 22b).

The last line of verse 22 makes it personal again. All and sundry will bless Him, but will I? For the psalmist, it is not a question. He concludes what he started this psalm with in verse 1: the call to his soul to bless, or praise, the LORD. The LORD is eternally worthy of it.

Psalm 104

Introduction

Psalm 104 is a song of praise to the LORD as the Creator and Sustainer of His creation. Psalm 103 sings of the LORD's lovingkindness toward His people. Psalm 104 sings more about the power, wisdom, and lovingkindness of God toward all creation (cf. Rev 4:11).

We find five psalms related to creation:

1. Psalm 8 Creation and man (Psa 8:4-9).
2. Psalm 19 Creation and the law, the Word of God (Psa 19:1-6).
3. Psalm 29 The forces of nature, especially thunder (Psa 29:3-9).
4. Psalm 104 The cosmos, which speaks of God's eternal power and Divine nature (Psa 104:1-32; Rom 1:20; Genesis 1-2).
5. Psalm 148 Creation joins to give thanks the LORD (Psa 148:1-14).

Division of the psalm

Verses 1-4 The heavens.

Verses 5-9 The earth.

Verses 10-13 The waters.

Verses 14-18 The plants.

Verses 19-23 The lights: arrangement of time.

Verses 24-30 The wisdom of God in creation.

Verses 31-35 Praise on the occasion of creation.

Psa 104:1-4 | God Is Great

*1 Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD my God, You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor and majesty,
2 Covering Yourself with light as with a cloak,*

Stretching out heaven like a [tent] curtain.

3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters;

He makes the clouds His chariot;

He walks upon the wings of the wind;

4 He makes the winds His messengers,

Flaming fire His ministers.

The psalm begins and ends with the same call as Psalm 103 to “my soul” to praise the LORD (verse 1; verse 35; Psa 103:1,22). The reason for praising the LORD is different. The reason for praising the LORD in Psalm 103 is His lovingkindness and faithfulness; here in Psalm 104 that reason is God’s majesty and glory in creation.

Then the psalmist addresses God directly. He calls Him “LORD my God”. He is in a personal relationship with the Creator of heaven and earth and knows Him as “my God”. He addresses Him with confidence. There is no question of any popularity toward God. On the contrary, full of admiration and in deep awe, he says to Him: “You are very great.” It is not creation, but God Who is worthy of being magnified.

Also, he sees that the LORD is “clothed with splendor and majesty”. This points to the royal dignity of His government of creation. This is how the LORD revealed Himself to him. Without revelation, we do not know Who God is. When He reveals Himself, His splendor and majesty become visible. Then it becomes clear that He rules the universe. We recognize God by what becomes visible of Him. God has become visible to us in His creation, that is, we see in it “His eternal power and divine nature” (Rom 1:20).

He says to Him that He covers Himself “with light as with a cloak” (verse 2). Here we are reminded of the first day of creation, the day God created light (Gen 1:3-5). This light is not sunlight, for the sun was not created until the fourth day of creation. What God creates does not come from nothing, but from Himself. “God is light” (1Jn 1:5) and is “in the light” (1Jn 1:7). He “dwells in unapproachable light” (1Tim 6:16). Here we read that He covers Himself with light.

When it says that He covers Himself with light, it means that He lets the light shine in a concealing manner (cf. Hab 3:4). If God were to reveal Himself in absolute light, it would be the end of man and creation. He has re-

vealed Himself in Christ in a concealing light (Jn 1:18). In Christ, the light of God has come into the world without consuming the world.

As already mentioned, God reveals Himself in His creation. We see this when we look at “heaven”, which He stretches out “like [a tent] curtain” (cf. Psa 19:1,4) to dwell in it. He reveals Himself in it. The tent curtain spans the earth (Isa 40:22), so we can also see this tent as a dwelling place for people on earth. When a tent curtain is stretched out, it creates a space to live under. So it is also with the heavens that are stretched out, creating a space to dwell under them, namely the earth.

Then the psalmist changes from speaking *to* the LORD to speaking *about* the LORD. We find this alternation of speaking *to* and speaking *about* and vice versa more often in this psalm. Above the stretched out heaven, the blue sky, the psalmist sees with his spiritual eye the Divine “upper chambers”, the chambers of God’s heavenly palace (verse 3). He connects its ceiling with the waters, which are the waters above the earth. Here we see a reference to the second day of creation (Gen 1:6-8). God gives to the waters, which have no stability, by His power the stability to establish His dwelling there.

The psalmist then says that God “makes the clouds His chariot” and that He “walks upon the wings of the wind” (cf. Isa 19:1; Psa 18:11). Here we see God’s further interference with the earth. The clouds and the wind symbolize His government of the earth. He rides and He walks above the earth and governs it all.

For His reign of the earth He employs “the winds” or “His angels” whom He makes “His messengers” (verse 4; cf. Psa 103:20-22). These servants He makes “flaming fire”. These are winds (=spirits), e.g. storms, and flaming fire, e.g. lightning. This depicts angels, who are ministering spirits. They are messengers of God who also guard the holiness of God as cherubim with flaming fire.

They are subordinate to the Messiah, Who is the Son, while the angels are servants (Heb 1:7). They make known that God is “a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29). God is surrounded by servants, by reasonable beings like angels and by inanimate elements like the clouds and the wind. He deploys all these servants according to His pleasure and wisdom.

Psa 104:5-9 | A Boundary Set On the Sea

*5 He established the earth upon its foundations,
 So that it will not totter forever and ever.*
*6 You covered it with the deep as with a garment;
 The waters were standing above the mountains.*
*7 At Your rebuke they fled,
 At the sound of Your thunder they hurried away.*
*8 The mountains rose; the valleys sank down
 To the place which You established for them.*
*9 You set a boundary that they may not pass over,
 So that they will not return to cover the earth.*

What the psalmist describes in verse 5 does correspond to God's work described in Genesis 1, but he does it poetically. We are reminded of the third day of creation. The dry land comes forth (Gen 1:9-10; cf. Job 38:4-6). God "established the earth upon its foundations" (cf. 1Sam 2:8; Psa 96:10b). The LORD is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is also the Sustainer of creation, for the earth "will not totter forever and ever".

In verse 6 we see a reference to the history of the flood (Gen 7:17-20). In this too we recognize the hand of the LORD (Gen 7:4). The historical flood is denied in the end time, the time in which we live (2Pet 3:3-6).

The psalmist depicts the end of the flood by depicting that God rebukes the waters (verse 7). Then they hurry away. They rush off, hastened to do so by the sound of God's thunder.

After the power of God in the flood, the mountains rose up and the valleys sank down in the place that God had "established for them" (verse 8). When He brought forth the dry, He gave the waters of the sea their place in the valleys, among other things, as oceans.

The sea is under the authority of God. In His power over the sea, He has set a boundary on the water (verse 9; Job 38:8-11). The earth will not be covered by water again. That there was a worldwide flood was due to the wickedness of man. Then God said that He will not destroy the world by water again (Gen 9:11-17).

That does not mean that God's judgment will not come upon the earth once again if man persists in his sin. However, that judgment will not come by a new flood, but by fire. Peter says that "the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water", but that "the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction" (2Pet 3:6-7).

Psa 104:10-18 | God Cares For His Creation

*10 He sends forth springs in the valleys;
They flow between the mountains;
11 They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
12 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell;
They lift up [their] voices among the branches.
13 He waters the mountains from His upper chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works.
14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the labor of man,
So that he may bring forth food from the earth,
15 And wine which makes man's heart glad,
So that he may make [his] face glisten with oil,
And food which sustains man's heart.
16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill,
The cedars of Lebanon which He planted,
17 Where the birds build their nests,
[And] the stork, whose home is the fir trees.
18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
The cliffs are a refuge for the shephanim.*

The "springs", where we can think of the rain clouds, are controlled by God (verse 10; cf. Job 37:11-12; 38:25-26). He determines that they should pour out their water "between the mountains", leading the streams of water to the valleys. These are the dry riverbeds, the wadis. When it rains, they fill up and form rivers that flow between the mountains. The springs are the places where the water from the wadis meet.

By means of this watering system God has made, He “gives drink to every beast of the field” (verse 11). This is how He keeps them alive. Also “the wild donkeys quench their thirst” there. Wild donkeys live in the dry wilderness and desperately need the water. The most indomitable animals, living far from man and completely independent of man’s help, are an object of care to God.

God also makes sure that the birds can drink. He has made the watering places so that “the birds of the heavens” can dwell by them (verse 12). Near the waters grow trees and plants where the birds can dwell and find their food. They drink and return to their place in the branches where they make their voices heard by singing to God’s glory, as it were, to thank Him for His care of them.

The water comes directly from the presence of God, “from His upper chambers” (verse 13). From there He “waters” the mountains. That “the earth is satisfied by the fruit of His works” means that the rivers, as the fruit of God’s work in giving rain, satisfy the earth with water making the earth fertile. Through the rain, God “causes the grass to grow for the cattle”, as well as, for example, wheat as a “vegetation for the labor of man” (verse 14). Thus, God brings forth “food [literally: bread] from the earth” for all creatures on earth.

Wine, oil and food [literally: bread] (verse 15) are presented as foods that come from the earth. In fact, they are the end products of grapes, olives, and wheat after they have been processed by man. It is good to keep in mind that the end product has its origin in the earth where God made it grow (1Cor 3:7). Also, it is good to remember that the end product came about only because God gave man the wisdom and strength to do so. We see here that the LORD is not only the Creator. He is also the Sustainer of creation, His creatures, and so also of man.

The three raw materials from which the final products are made are the summary of the fruit of the land. They are often mentioned in the same breath: “your grain and your new wine and your oil” (Deu 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4). Wine here is associated with joy (cf. Jdg 9:13; Ecc 10:19). The oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit with Whom the believer is anointed

(1Jn 2:20,27). In the bread we see a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who is the bread of life (Jn 6:35).

There is not only abundance of everything on that one, same earth, but also great diversity. From the water God gives, “the trees of the LORD drink their fill [literally: are satisfied]” (verse 16). The trees tower impressively high above the grass. That is why they are called “trees of the LORD”. Compare “cedars of God” which are mighty cedars (Psa 80:10). The trees provide many kinds of fruit, as well as timber to build with. Wood can also serve as firewood, both for sacrifices and for cooking.

Trees are thereby a place where the birds nest, where they have their young and feed and protect them (verse 17; verse 12). The stork is mentioned by name, as are the fir trees, or cypress trees, the trees where she has her home. Cypress timber was used in the building of the temple (1Kgs 5:8,10; 6:15,34; 2Chr 2:8; 3:5). The stork is an unclean bird (Lev 11:19; Deu 14:18), but she knows her seasons (Jer 8:7) and also has her fixed home. Both are given to her by God.

For the wild goats and for the shephanim [coney or rock badgers], God made another shelter (verse 18). Each animal has been given its own shelter by God. There it feels at home and also safe. Thus, “the high mountains”, which are difficult for man to climb, are “for the wild goats” an area of protection. Similarly, are the cliffs “a refuge for the shephanim”. They “are not mighty people, yet they make their houses in the rocks” (Pro 30:26).

Psa 104:19-23 | God Regulates the Rhythm of Day and Night

*19 He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the place of its setting.
20 You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
In which all the beasts of the forest prowls about.
21 The young lions roar after their prey
And seek their food from God.
22 [When] the sun rises they withdraw
And lie down in their dens.
23 Man goes forth to his work
And to his labor until evening.*

God also made a unique time arrangement (verse 19). Here we are reminded of the fourth day of creation (Gen 1:14-19). This clock of God is never ahead and never behind, but always on time. Man can set his clock to it. Nor can he change it. It is wisdom if, as far as possible, he adapts to it. The 24-hour economy breaks with this regularity, resulting in much disruption of family life and social life.

The moon was made by God “for the seasons”. Because of this, He made the months as units of time. These seasons God has also given to His people in regard to the various feast days or feast times He wants them to keep for Him (Lev 23:2,4). The word for “seasons” is translated “appointed times” in Leviticus 23. This refers to the times when the LORD wanted to meet with His people. Some of the feasts of the LORD are determined by the moon: the Passover and the Feast of Booths when it is full moon, and the Feast of the blowing of trumpets when it is new moon.

“The sun” is represented as a celestial body that “knows the place of its setting”. It is always obedient to God’s command to do so. It never sets before its time. Man knows that he can rely on the sun. So do the other creatures rely on the sun, especially the nocturnal animals, for they can emerge when the sun sets. Everything serves the good of man and beast.

The psalmist again addresses God directly when he speaks of darkness and night (verse 20). God “appoints darkness and it becomes night”. Darkness comes and night falls as a result of an act of God. Then life does not cease, but the nocturnal animals begin to live. “All the beasts of the forest prowl about” in search of food.

“The young lions” make themselves heard (verse 21). They “roar after prey and seek their food from God”. God gives it to them (cf. Job 38:39-40; Psa 147:9). In this they are examples to countless people who devour food without any thought of God. The believer will ask God for food and thank Him for the food He gives (Mt 6:11; 1Tim 4:4-5). This again shows that the LORD is the Sustainer of His creatures. The issue here is not the LORD as Creator, but as Sustainer. When He had created heaven and earth there were no predators and prey, the animals lived in harmony with each other. We are talking about the period after the Fall.

The night ends when “the sun rises” (verse 22). It becomes light and the darkness is dispelled. A new situation arises. The nocturnal animals know that their time to provide themselves with food is over. It is time to go to sleep. They “withdraw and lie down in their dens”. There they are until the sun sets again.

At the rising of the sun, it is time for man to wake up, get up, and go “forth to his work” (verse 23). Arriving at his workplace, he begins “his labor”. With this he is busy “until the evening”. He finds full satisfaction in his service work, which he can do with all his creativity and skill.

Psa 104:24-29 | God Made All His Works in Wisdom

*24 O LORD, how many are Your works!
In wisdom You have made them all;
The earth is full of Your possessions.
25 There is the sea, great and broad,
In which are swarms without number,
Animals both small and great.
26 There the ships move along,
[And] Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it.
27 They all wait for You
To give them their food in due season.
28 You give to them, they gather [it] up;
You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
29 You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
You take away their spirit, they expire
And return to their dust.*

All previous structures were created by God with precision. Everything interlocks like the wheels of a clockwork. He has given everything in creation a fixed place and time and takes care of both life and inanimate matter. The whole cycle of time and life comes from Him and He sustains it. We cannot help but exclaim in admiration with the psalmist: “O LORD, how many are Your works!” (verse 24).

The psalmist again speaks directly to God. He says to Him that in all His works His wisdom is evident. “In wisdom” He has “made them all”.

Wherever we look on earth or in the deepest seas, we see His possessions everywhere. When we look at creation with a telescope, with a microscope or even an electron microscope, we see His wisdom and His possessions. The earth is full of it, both by day and by night. It is all His, it is His possession. What a poor, blind, fool man is who believes that the earth and life on it came into being 'by chance' and developed through evolution.

Then the psalmist looks at the sea (verse 25). What he sees overwhelms him. He sees how "great and broad" the sea is. The sea is full of life. There are "swarms" living in it. Their number is so great that they cannot be counted. Nor are they all equal in size, for there are "beasts both small and great". God has also provided great variety in the life in the sea. Here we recognize the fifth day of creation (Gen 1:20-23).

On the sea "ships move along" (verse 26). This is also striking when the psalmist looks at the sea. The sea carries the ships. It is a wondrous sight. The ships cross the great, wide expanse of the sea to areas that are otherwise inaccessible. God has made it possible for man to navigate the sea.

Another thing that stands out about the sea is that it is a playing area for a special sea creature, the "Leviathan", which God has "formed to sport in it". From the description of this beast in the book of Job, it is clear that it is an indomitable giant, like a dinosaur, which man is incapable of subduing (see commentary on Job 41). But God deals with him with 'playful ease'. He shows him the space where he can move. Beyond that he cannot go. He is completely in the power of God.

All life on earth depends on God. The beasts know this instinctively. "They", the psalmist says to God, "all wait for You, to give them their food in due season" (verse 27). With this we can connect the sixth day of creation, which is not only about the creation of the beasts and man, but also about the provision of food for man and beasts (Gen 1:29-30).

They have no food sources of their own. God has to give it to them. Even if they can stockpile, it is because God gives it to them. When God gives it, they go out and gather it (verse 28; cf. Exo 16:4; Rth 2:8). They receive food from His opened hand. To open the hand means to give (Deu 15:8,11). Thus "they are satisfied with good". When God opens His hand to give,

He gives with a generous hand. He also always gives the good, and so much, that the recipient is satiated with it.

It may also be that God hides His face (verse 29). This is a terrible thing, causing such a great terror that it “dismays” them. Even worse is when He “takes away their spirit [or: breath]”. Then “they expire and return to their dust”. Life and death are in the hand of God. Everything depends on Him. All life ends when He withdraws Himself.

Psa 104:30-32 | God’s Glory Endures Forever

30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;

And You renew the face of the ground.

31 Let the glory of the LORD endure forever;

Let the LORD be glad in His works;

32 He looks at the earth, and it trembles;

He touches the mountains, and they smoke.

The taking away of the breath is not God’s last word with regard to His creation. In verse 30, the psalmist describes new life after a drought or after a winter, as a picture of the regeneration of the earth: the realm of peace. It is a picture of the work of the Spirit of God Who brings about a new creation by renewing “the face of the ground”.

The same will happen when the realm of peace is established (Isa 65:17). That will happen after the period of the great tribulation. We see a picture of this in the flood and afterwards. After the flood, which ended all life on earth, Noah and his family come to an earth with a renewed face.

In the realm of peace, “the glory of the LORD” will “endure forever” (verse 31). All that is then is the work of God Himself through His Spirit. At that time, “the LORD” is “glad in His works”. All who enter into the realm of peace will rejoice with Him in it. It is like the Sabbath, the seventh day, when God sees all that He has made and sees that it is very good (Gen 1:31; 2:1-3).

He remains the Almighty even then (verse 32). His gaze alone is enough to make the earth tremble (cf. Hab 3:10). And when He touches the seemingly unshakable mountains with His finger, “they smoke”. We see this at Mount Sinai when God descends upon it (Exo 19:18).

Psa 104:33-35 | What Endures and Who Disappears

*33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
34 Let my meditation be pleasing to Him;
As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.
35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Praise the LORD!*

After his description of God's wonderful work in creation, the psalmist comes to the exclamation that he "will sing to the LORD as long as" he lives (verse 33). The psalmist again calls the LORD "my God" here, emphasizing his personal relationship with the LORD. The psalmist praises the LORD for Who He is.

He will continue with it and never stop. Always He will see new reasons to praise Him even more. There will eternally be an increase of reasons. The glory of God is so great that it will never be fully fathomed. Eternally there will be new things visible that are reason to honor Him.

All the foregoing is material for meditating on Him, on His Person (verse 34). Everything that has become visible of God in His works points to the greatness of Himself. It is about Him. His works refer to Him. Meditating on Him is "pleasing to Him". There is no activity that is more pleasant. The psalmist is "glad in the LORD" Himself. This is the fellowship that leads to complete joy (1Jn 1:1-4). We see it in the three forms of boasting of which the apostle Paul speaks. The believer boasts "in the hope of the glory of God", he boasts "in tribulations", and finally he boasts "in God" Himself, through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:2,3,11).

Those who do not join in with the song of praise to the LORD are "sinners" and "the wicked" (verse 35). They do not acknowledge Him as the source of all their material blessings (cf. Rom 1:21). Therefore, they have no right to a place on God's earth. These people will disappear from the earth and not be there anymore. They do not belong in a world fully established and maintained by God, of which Christ is the center and object of worship.

The psalmist ends with the same words with which he began the psalm: "Bless the LORD, O my soul" (verse 1). His soul is full of all that he has sung and especially of Him about Whom he has sung.

The final word of the psalm is "hallelujah!" or "praise the LORD!" This is a call to others to praise the LORD. First the call to oneself to praise the LORD sounds, and then a call to others.

The word "hallelujah" appears in the Old Testament only in Psalms. In this psalm we hear it for the first time. After this it is used twenty-three more times. In the New Testament it occurs only in Revelation, where it is exclaimed four times (Rev 19:1,3,4,6).

Psalm 105

Introduction

This psalm recounts what the LORD has done to fulfill His covenant with Abraham. The psalmist describes the great and powerful acts of God at the origin of His people, acts that the people should hold in grateful memory. He sings of the LORD's faithfulness toward His people.

In Psalm 104 we find the glory of the LORD in connection with creation. In Psalms 105-106 we find the glory of the LORD in connection with His people Israel. Psalm 105 describes the ways of the LORD with His people before the law of Sinai, that is, the ways of God's grace. The basis of those ways is the covenant He made with Abraham.

We see an example of the ways of God's grace in the family of John the baptist in the Gospel according to Luke, which can be called the Gospel of God's grace. His mother's name is Elisabeth, which means God has promised (covenant). His father's name is Zechariah, which means the LORD has remembered. The name of their son, John, means the LORD is gracious. That means that the LORD's faithfulness to His covenant is only possible by the way of His grace, through the Mediator Who shed the blood of the new covenant. We recognize that here in Psalm 105.

The psalm begins at the beginning of Israel's history and ends with the people's entry into the promised land. We find these paths described in the section from Genesis 15 to Exodus 17. There is not a word about the sins and deviations of God's people. Psalm 105 is only about what God has done. Finally, the remnant of the people are introduced into the promised land (verses 44-45).

Psalm 106 describes the ways of the LORD with His people after the law at Sinai, that is, the failure of the people because of their rebellion and sin. That psalm skips the period described in Psalm 105.

We can compare the difference between the two psalms to the difference between the books of Chronicles and the books of Kings. In the books of

Chronicles the emphasis is on the grace of God and in the books of Kings the (failing) responsibility of man, the people of Israel, is emphasized.

The history of God's grace to Israel described in Psalm 105 is the history of Abraham (verses 7-15), Joseph (verses 16-22) and Moses (verses 23-43). Compare the speech of Stephen in Acts 7 where he also speaks of the history of Abraham (Acts 7:2-8), Joseph (Acts 7:9-16) and Moses (Acts 7:17-43). In Psalm 105 we find in the story of Abraham the *promise* of God's grace, in that of Joseph the *source* of God's grace, namely the suffering of Christ, and in that of Moses the *effect* of God's grace, the redemption of the people.

Psa 105:1-6 | Activities of God's People

1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name;

Make known His deeds among the peoples.

2 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;

Speak of all His wonders.

3 Glory in His holy name;

Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.

4 Seek the LORD and His strength;

Seek His face continually.

5 Remember His wonders which He has done,

His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth,

6 O seed of Abraham, His servant,

O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!

In 1 Chronicles 16 we can find the words of verses 1-15 of this psalm almost word for word. There the words used here are attributed to David (1Chr 16:7-22). The fact that no poet of this psalm is named places even greater emphasis on its content as the expression of every believing heart. These verses first mention the activities to which God's people are called (verses 1-6; 1Chr 16:8-13) and then the promises of God (verses 7-15; 1Chr 16:14-22).

As we read verses 1-6, we see the activities to which the people are called as descendants of Israel and Jacob. The activities include to give thanks, call upon, make known (verse 1), sing, sing praises, speak (verse 2), glory, be glad (verse 3), seek (verse 4), remember (verse 5).

The psalmist begins by calling to give thanks to the LORD, the God of the covenant (verse 1). Then he says that God's people must call upon His Name, that is, mention His Name when they speak of His wonders. Only those who are in a covenant relationship with Him can do that. This connection with God also has an outward aspect, to the nations around them. "Among the peoples" God's people are to give testimony of God's deeds. We see in this verse that the people are "a holy priesthood" toward God (verse 1a; 1Pet 2:5) and that they are also "a royal priesthood" toward the nations around them (verse 1b; 1Pet 2:9).

In all these activities, the wonders of the LORD are made the subject of the song, and the deeds are displayed in which He reveals Himself, also to the nations. We may consider that for us all this is far exceeded by the wonders of the Lord Jesus at His coming in the flesh, His work on the cross, His resurrection and His glorification. What occasions for us to 'display' all this in worship before God!

God's people have every reason to sing to Him and to do so with singing praises to Him (verse 2). Connected to that is the next call: they are to "speak of all His wonders". God has done so many wonders for His people. Several are mentioned later in the psalm. "Speaking" means that they are to meditate on God's wonders and bear witness to them (cf. Psa 77:12-13).

The glory of the people lies "in His holy name" (verse 3). God's name is holy. This is how He has made Himself known (Exo 3:15). That they are joined to Him, or rather, that He has joined them to Himself, is only His work. They are sanctified by Him and for Him. Nothing is due to them. The heart that is full of the LORD, "seeks the LORD" (verse 3b,4a) and "seeks His face" (verse 4b). God is the source of joy. His actions are a cause of joy.

The call to "seek the LORD and His strength" (verse 4) is the call to call on Him and His strength for help. He who seeks the LORD also seeks for "His strength" that has become manifest in his redemption. God has shown His power for his benefit. The consequence of this in turn is the desire to "seek His face continually", that is, to live continually in His presence. Asking help of the LORD is not just asking for something from a distance, it is

seeking His face, that is, He Himself comes to us with His strength (cf. Psa 23:4; 27:8-9; Phil 3:10; Eph 1:19-20).

The last thing God's people are called to here is to think "of His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth" (verse 5). The wonders He has done are each one worth thinking about and admiring. Wonders are events that provoke wonder. The psalmist mentions two aspects of them: His marvels and the judgments of His mouth.

These marvels are signs, that is, wonders with a meaning, with a message. In this case, the wonder implies that God was behind Moses' message. These marvels are an endorsement, a seal, for the message being brought (cf. Mk 16:20). These wonders are also judgments, that is, God wondrously defeats the enemies and their gods. With His mouth He has pronounced His judgments on the enemies. Therefore, His people have nothing to fear from them.

The call to all these activities is made to a people who are in a special relationship with Him. That relationship is given in two names, each with a different addition. They are the "seed of Abraham", to which is added "His servant" (verse 6a). With the patriarch Abraham begins the history of the people, a people set to serve God.

They are also "sons of Jacob", to which is added "His chosen ones" (verse 6b). With "sons of Jacob" the emphasis is on the weakness of their dedication to God and the wrong ways the people have gone. That is why it is so beautiful that the very addition "His chosen ones" appears after this name, which speaks of the fact that God chose them despite their weakness and wrong ways.

Psa 105:7-11 | The Covenant of God

7 He is the LORD our God;

His judgments are in all the earth.

8 He has remembered His covenant forever,

The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,

9 [The covenant] which He made with Abraham,

And His oath to Isaac.

10 Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,

*To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
11 Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the portion of your inheritance,"*

The psalmist points to "the LORD" as "our God" (verse 7). The LORD is the God of His people. He also has control over "all the earth", which He proves by passing His judgments on it. We see this further on in the psalm, where He passes His judgments on Egypt. These judgments are related to what Egypt has done to His people. His people are His covenant people.

He is always thinking of His covenant with His people, a covenant that is "forever" (verse 8; Lk 1:72). When God thinks of His covenant, it means that He fulfills it. In that covenant He has made promises that will be fulfilled "to a thousand generations" (cf. Deu 7:9). Many generations may pass and great changes may take place, but never will God forget His covenant. He remembers and fulfills every promise of it to the letter.

It is the covenant "which He made with Abraham" (verse 9; Gen 15:18-21). It is a covenant with Abraham personally, and in him with his posterity. He confirmed that covenant to Isaac with an oath (Gen 22:16; 26:2-5,23-24). Therefore, its fulfillment is not dependent on man.

He also confirmed His covenant "to Jacob for a statute" and "to Israel as an everlasting covenant" (verse 10; Gen 17:7; 28:13-15; 35:9-13). What God has established is fixed like a rock and cannot be undone by any man, including Jacob in his unfaithfulness. Jacob was made Israel or 'prince of God' by God. God's covenant with Jacob is for Jacob a confirmed statute and for Israel an everlasting covenant. No human being is able to change that.

It is, in short, about God's electing grace and unrepentant promises (Rom 11:29; Lev 26:42-45), all in view of the land of Canaan as their inheritance (verse 11). With so many blessings and assurances, the heart cannot remain unmoved and the mouth cannot remain silent.

God has spoken, which is emphasized by the word "saying". What God says, His words, is always true and reliable (Heb 6:13-18). God cannot lie. Therefore, we can be sure that He does what He says. He has said: "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance." His word is His guarantee. His promise He is fulfilling. This has been proven, for He has brought His people into Canaan.

Psa 105:12-15 | The Protection of the LORD

*12 When they were only a few men in number,
Very few, and strangers in it.*

*13 And they wandered about from nation to nation,
From [one] kingdom to another people.*

*14 He permitted no man to oppress them,
And He reprov'd kings for their sakes:*

*15 "Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm."*

From their earliest existence, "when they were only a few men in number", God has cared for them (verse 12). That they were truly with a few is underscored by the addition "very few". They were easy prey for malicious men and predatory gangs. Added to that, they were "strangers", people without any right to stay and protection (cf. Heb 11:9). But God protected them.

Thus they wandered "from nation to nation" and "from [one] kingdom to another people" (verse 13). Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31). He entered Canaan (Gen 12:4-6), he went to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20), and he lived as a stranger in Philistine Gerar (Gen 20:1).

But God was with them. He stood up for them and "permitted no man to oppress them" (verse 14). He even "reproved" kings for their sakes. No ordinary, mortal man and no ruler have been able to lift a finger against God's chosen people without Him reproving them.

This is what Pharaoh of Egypt and Abimelech of the Philistines experienced (Gen 12:17-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11). God said to them in clear and threatening language: "Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm" (verse 15). In this way He has protected them. He has seen to it that no harm has been done to those to whom He has made His promises.

God's anointed are those whom He has chosen for Himself, whom He has set apart to serve Him. They belonged to God as sanctified by Him. Abraham is called a prophet (Gen 20:7). Isaac and Jacob can also be called prophets. Isaac prophesied about Jacob (Gen 27:28-29) and Jacob prophesied about his sons (Gen 49:1).

Verses 12-15 describe the people's past, how weak and vulnerable they were. It shows how we too can feel in the world. Then the people are reminded how in those circumstances, when they seemed to be prey to hostile powers, God stood up for them.

Psa 105:16-22 | Joseph

*16 And He called for a famine upon the land;
He broke the whole staff of bread.*

*17 He sent a man before them,
Joseph, [who] was sold as a slave.*

*18 They afflicted his feet with fetters,
He himself was laid in irons;*

*19 Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.*

*20 The king sent and released him,
The ruler of peoples, and set him free.*

*21 He made him lord of his house
And ruler over all his possessions,*

*22 To imprison his princes at will,
That he might teach his elders wisdom.*

Then we read that God called for a famine upon the land where Jacob and His sons lived (verse 16). He was fully involved in their protection, but also in their tribulation. He "broke the whole staff of bread". That is, there was not one morsel of food that would give them strength to live. The supply of bread was taken away from them (Isa 3:1).

Why God did that is not mentioned here. We read about that in Genesis 41-44. There we read that God wanted to bring Joseph's brothers to repentance. That is also what He wants to do with the remnant in the future: bring them into tribulation to purify them (Mal 3:2-3). The point here is that God had already provided someone who could supply His people with food. God sends tribulation into the believer's life because He wants to work out plans of blessing in his life (Rom 8:28).

He had sent Joseph before them (verse 17), as Joseph himself later testifies (Gen 45:7-8; 50:20). The psalmist describes the way in which God did this.

It is a way of deep humiliation. It began with his sale as a slave. We know from the account in Genesis 37 that his brothers sold him (Gen 37:28). That is not mentioned here. It is about the way God had determined for the man who would provide His people with bread.

After Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, he ended up in Egypt and in prison. Here we are told what that meant: "They afflicted his feet with fetters, he himself was laid in irons" (verse 18). We don't read that in Genesis 39. There we read about his faithfulness to God that brought him in prison (Gen 39:7-20). They afflicted his feet with fetters as if he were a great criminal, so that he could not walk. That he himself came in the irons means that he suffered inwardly because of what was done to him.

God had set a limit to this severe trial. When His word came true – where we can think of the fulfillment of Pharaoh's dreams whose meaning God revealed to Joseph (Gen 41:14-44) – Joseph's captivity was over (verse 19). And how did Joseph endure this torment? God has been with him all this time with His word of promise. Through that promise, Joseph was "tested", or "refined" (cf. Job 23:10). Every trial in our lives God wants to use to purify us. To purify is to make us, or our faith, pure and clean, so that more and more we have only Him in mind and not ourselves or our interests (cf. 1Pet 1:7).

When God's work on Joseph was finished, "the king sent and released him" (verse 20). This act of release is given added emphasis by saying the same thing again in other words: "The ruler of peoples ... set him free." We know that it was God's work in the king and that God is in fact the Ruler of the peoples. He made Pharaoh dream a dream that none of all the king's wise men could explain. Only Joseph could do that because of the insight God had given him. Therefore, the king called Joseph to him (Gen 41:8,14-16).

After explaining it and the advice Joseph gave unsolicited, Pharaoh – who in the book of Genesis is a picture of God in his position as ruler of the world – appointed Joseph "lord of his house and ruler over all his possessions" (verse 21; Gen 41:38-40; Acts 7:10). Joseph became the most powerful man in the land after Pharaoh. He was given authority to "imprison" Pharaoh's princes "at will, that he might teach his [i.e. Pharaoh's] elders

wisdom" (verse 22). In Joseph we see the rare combination of power and wisdom. We see this in perfection only in the Lord Jesus, of Whom Joseph is a beautiful picture.

In God's dealings with Joseph to fulfill His promise lies an encouraging lesson for us. We can trust that God knows all our difficulties and that He has already prepared a solution for them in advance. He oversees everything and directs everything for the good of His own. The way in which He does this, we can often only see afterwards. At the moment itself we wonder how things will turn out.

We see this also with Joseph. Who could imagine that God sent Joseph to Egypt in this way, to be a blessing to his father and his brothers in their time of need? For Jacob and his sons, that blessing is first and foremost spiritual: they are restored to their relationship with Joseph. The blessing is also material: they receive food and are even allowed to come and live with Joseph in Egypt.

The deeper meaning of this section about Joseph is that he is a type of the Lord Jesus, Who as the Savior had to undergo a path of rejection and suffering before He could actually be the Savior. The Lord Jesus Himself expressed it this way: "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:26). The grace of God is expressed in this psalm because God Himself sent His Son into the world to save us.

Psa 105:23-36 | God's People in Egypt

23 *Israel also came into Egypt;
Thus Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.*
24 *And He caused His people to be very fruitful,
And made them stronger than their adversaries.*
25 *He turned their heart to hate His people,
To deal craftily with His servants.*
26 *He sent Moses His servant,
[And] Aaron, whom He had chosen.*
27 *They performed His wondrous acts among them,
And miracles in the land of Ham.*

28 He sent darkness and made [it] dark;
And they did not rebel against His words.
29 He turned their waters into blood
And caused their fish to die.
30 Their land swarmed with frogs
[Even] in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came a swarm of flies
[And] gnats in all their territory.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
[And] flaming fire in their land.
33 He struck down their vines also and their fig trees,
And shattered the trees of their territory.
34 He spoke, and locusts came,
And young locusts, even without number,
35 And ate up all vegetation in their land,
And ate up the fruit of their ground.
36 He also struck down all the firstborn in their land,
The first fruits of all their vigor.

Joseph had his father and brothers come to Egypt. The psalmist speaks that "Israel also came into Egypt" (verse 23). 'Israel' means 'prince of God' or 'warrior of God'. It is the name that points to the privileges of the people. The name 'Jacob' is also mentioned and it is in connection with the sojourning "in the land of Ham", which is Egypt. Jacob is the name that points to the weakness of the people.

God also takes care of the objects of His promise in Egypt. "He caused His people to be very fruitful" (verse 24; Exo 1:7). Thus He made the people "stronger than their adversaries" (Exo 1:9,12). God's people always grow against the tribulation. A people who suffer for Christ is a growing people.

Then we read that God turned the hearts of the Egyptians "to hate His people, to deal craftily with His servants" (verse 25; Exo 1:13). Up to that point, the Egyptians had been benevolent to God's people. When they began to pose a threat, their kindness turned to hatred. God had previously prevented people and kings from doing anything to His anointed ones (verse 15). The Egyptians began to oppress God's people and impose hard slave labor on them. We see the LORD directing the history of the people

in such a way that the people needed redemption. Here we are taught the truth that God's people are a people in need of redemption.

For this, God provided a deliverer. As He sent out Joseph before them, so now He sent out Moses and Aaron (verse 26; Exo 3:10; 4:14-16). Moses is the servant of God (Exo 14:31; verses 6,42), who represented God to the people; he spoke God's words to them. Aaron was chosen by God to be high priest; he represented the people to God. In Moses and Aaron together we see a picture of the Lord Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest (Heb 3:1). As the "servant" of God, Moses is a reference to Christ, the Servant of the LORD. He is also a type of the remnant of Israel in the future, the servants of the LORD.

Like Joseph in verse 17a, Moses and his brother Aaron were sent by the LORD to redeem Israel. They were sent by God to Egypt to perform "wondrous acts" there "which He had commanded" (cf. Exo 10:2), as well as the "miracles in the land of Ham" (verse 27; Jer 32:2; Mic 7:15). Egypt, in Hebrew *Mitsraim*, was one of the sons of Ham (Gen 10:6). The signs and wonders that Moses and Aaron did were signs and wonders that came directly from God. He commanded them. Moses and Aaron did nothing but carry out God's commands. These signs are wonders that were to make it clear to Pharaoh that Moses and Aaron had been sent by the LORD, the God of Israel.

The psalmist selects eight of the ten wonder plagues that were performed. He lists them in a different order than in which they are described in Exodus 7-11. These signs begin and end with the most important signs, the ninth and tenth signs: darkness and death. This is done to indicate that the moral condition of the world is darkness, without light, and that the end is death, separated from the living God.

A sign means something, it is a clue, it refers to something; a wonder is something supernatural, its origin is not man, but God. It is a sign of authenticity. Just as a director puts his signature under a letter written by his secretary, so through these wonders God puts a signature under the message of Moses.

Both signs and wonders are a testimony to God's people of His faithfulness, that He stands up for them. What were signs and wonders for God's

people were plagues for the Egyptians. Each time the psalmist, in mentioning the signs and wonders or the plagues, speaks of two things:

1. God causes the plagues. They come from Him. We always read in these verses about what "He" does. They describe His deeds and His wonders. The psalmist has called for singing about these in verses 1-2.
2. The plagues are about everything that belonged to the Egyptians. We can see this by the recurring "their", such as "their waters", "their fish". It concerned "their land", "all their territory".

The first plague the psalmist mentions is the ninth, that of darkness (verse 28; Exo 10:21-23a). God "sent" this plague – as He had previously sent Joseph and then Moses – "and made [it] dark" (cf. Isa 45:6-7). During this plague, all light is absent from Egypt and darkness prevails. This is the result of rejecting God, the source of light. "But all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Exo 10:23b).

Moses and Aaron "did not rebel against His words", but announced all the plagues in obedience to God's command. They were not deterred by the threats of the mighty and proud Pharaoh. As faithful messengers of God they fearlessly presented him with the revenge of heaven each time he refused to let God's people go.

The second plague mentioned by the psalmist is the first in Egypt. It is the sign of the change of water into blood (verse 29; Exo 7:15-25). What is supposed to mean life, water, turns into blood, signifying the death of all life in the water. The fish are particularly mentioned as the life that is killed because fish are a food source (Num 11:5a).

The frogs, the second plague in Egypt (Exo 8:1-7), are mentioned by the psalmist as the third (verse 30). He says that "their land swarmed with frogs". Frogs are considered sacred and treated with reverence by the Egyptians. Therefore, they are not to be killed. These idols, under the judging hand of God, now take the form of a plague.

The frogs are a picture of unclean spirits, especially sexual uncleanness (Rev 16:13-15). The love between husband and wife in marriage is a natural blessing that God has given to man. But that blessing has become a curse. We see this in society. Think, for example, of same-sex relation-

ships, extra-marital or premarital sexual relationships, pornography in magazines and through television and the Internet, sex shops, sex clubs. The frogs are everywhere, in all homes, even in the often well-protected "chambers of their kings", where we should also think of the princes of the various cities.

Then come the "flies" (verse 31), the fourth plague in Egypt (Exo 8:24). The flies come through the speaking of God. "He spoke" and they came. The flies, possibly a mixture of all kinds of vermin, carry all kinds of diseases. As a result, people's lives are defiled and corrupted.

As an application for our time, we can think of all kinds of irritations, jealousy, bullying, frustrating each other in every possible way. These things destroy the atmosphere between people and make life unbearable. Loud music at the neighbors' houses, misbehavior in traffic, bullying behavior in the store, and so many other things that annoys you very much.

The psalmist continues with the plague of the "gnats", the third plague in Egypt (Exo 8:16-19). They come through the same speaking of God. Gnats or mosquitoes are little animals that suck the blood, the life, out of man. Our complicated society is full of gnats. Countless people are anxious, confused, nervous, suspicious. The mental institutions are often full. Mental tensions are increasing hand over fist. Many are driven to suicide. Life has no meaning for them anymore, it offers no prospects. The gnats do their deadly work.

The next plague the psalmist mentions is that God "gave them hail for rain" or, "made their rain hail" (verse 32). The hail was accompanied by flashing fire in the midst of the hail. This is the seventh plague in Egypt (Exo 9:22-26). The judgments strike the entire land of Egypt in all their ferocity. "He", that is God, struck down with His hail "their vines also and their fig trees" (verse 33). "He", that is God, shattered with His hail "the trees of their territory".

God lets down from "the storehouses of the hail" the hail that He has kept therein "for the day of war and battle" (Job 38:22-23), the day that had come for Egypt. It is an example of the great hail by which the world will soon be ravaged when the church has been caught up (Rev 16:21).

God had to continue to show His will toward His people because Pharaoh would not let His people go. “He spoke, and locusts came, and young locusts, even without number, and ate up all vegetation in their land, and ate up the fruit of their ground” (verses 34-35). This is the eighth plague God brought on Egypt (Exo 10:12-15). A single grasshopper is insignificant, it represents nothing and can be trampled to death just like that. The Israelites in their unbelief felt this way in the face of the giants in Canaan (Num 13:33). In great numbers they are overwhelming and destructive (cf. Jdg 6:5; 7:12).

Finally, there is the last plague, the tenth in Egypt, which is also mentioned here last (verse 36; Exo 11:5; 12:29-30). The hour of judgment has come. It may take a long time, God is patient, but then there is no more delay. God also struck down “all the firstborn in their land, the first fruits of all their vigor”. This plague breaks all resistance. There is not a house in all of Egypt in which there is not a dead one. It is the final blow.

Psa 105:37-43 | Israel Brought Out of Egypt

*37 Then He brought them out with silver and gold,
And among His tribes there was not one who stumbled.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed,
For the dread of them had fallen upon them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to illumine by night.
40 They asked, and He brought quail,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
41 He opened the rock and water flowed out;
It ran in the dry places [like] a river.
42 For He remembered His holy word
[With] Abraham His servant;
43 And He brought forth His people with joy,
His chosen ones with a joyful shout.*

The unfolding of God’s power in and against Egypt broke Egypt’s strength. There was no longer any power to keep God’s people in bondage any longer, nor any desire to do so. The plagues were God’s way of bringing His people out of the house of bondage (verse 37).

It was not a carefully prepared escape or a fearful flight. Egypt led the people out and provided them with silver and gold (Gen 15:14; Exo 3:22; 11:2; 12:35-36). Normally, silver and gold are the spoils after a victory in a war. Here, however, the people did not have to fight, for the battle was the LORD's. The people of Israel only had to receive the spoils.

He also provided them with the necessary strength, for their strength had been used up under the hard yoke of slavery. As a result, "among His tribes there was not one who stumbled" (cf. Isa 5:27; Zec 12:8). He sustained them by His presence. What a wonderful God He is to His people!

"Egypt was glad" of their departure because it marked the end of the plagues (verse 38; Exo 12:33). Because of those plagues, "dread" of God's people had "fallen upon them" (cf. Gen 31:42; 35:5; Est 9:2). The land had been devastated by all the plagues. In all the homes there was sorrow over the death of the firstborn. It was dread of the God of this people. After all, He had brought His plagues upon Egypt, which are evidence of God's care for His people.

After their exodus from Egypt, God's care for His people had not stopped. God continued to care for His people. God's provisions for His people in their exodus from Egypt and their journey through the wilderness are all inextricably linked to the oath He swore to Abraham. For their journey through the wilderness, He provided a covering against the daytime heat by "a cloud" (verse 39). Through that cloud He also led them. During the night, that cloud became a pillar of fire to guide them (Exo 13:21-22; cf. Isa 4:5-6).

To their request for food, He answered by bringing "quail" and satisfied them with "bread of heaven", the manna (verse 40; Exo 16:13-16). To quench their thirst, He opened "the rock and water flowed out" (verse 41; Exo 17:1-7). "It ran in the dry places [like] a river", continually supplying them with fresh water (Isa 41:18; 48:21; 1Cor 10:4).

He has a reason for all these benefits, which we see from the word "for" (verse 42). He did all this because "He remembered His holy word [with] Abraham His servant". That He remembered it does not mean that He had forgotten it. When He remembers it, it means that He is going to work to

fulfill His made promise. His holy word is His absolutely reliable word. He does, what He has said (cf. Jos 23:14).

Here it is clear that the LORD's dealings with the people of Israel as painted in this psalm are based on the covenant He made with Abraham (Gen 15:2-21). It is a one-sided covenant, which therefore can also be called a promise.

"And He brought forth His people with joy" (verse 43). They are His people. Their deliverance by Him from the yoke of slavery has caused joy in them. How joyful they have been. They are "His chosen ones". For that reason alone He has dealt with them in this way. What grace, about which they have rejoiced. Thus Psalm 105 is an illustration of what the LORD is going to do in the future by virtue of the new covenant, a covenant that is better because of the power of the blood of the new covenant, by which all is grace.

Psa 105:44-45 | Israel in Canaan

*44 He gave them also the lands of the nations,
That they might take possession of [the fruit of] the peoples' labor,
45 So that they might keep His statutes
And observe His laws,
Praise the LORD!*

He finally gave them "the lands of the nations" (verse 44). It is a reference to what the LORD will do in the future (cf. Isa 54:3). At least seven nations lived in Canaan (Gen 15:19-21). God's people did not have to do anything but take possession of "the peoples' labor" (Deu 6:10-11).

He did it for the purpose that "they might keep His statutes and observe His laws" (verse 45). God wanted His people to be an obedient people. Should He expect anything else after all His benefits to His people? What a grateful people such a people must be who have been so richly blessed by God. What a desire they must have to obey that God with all the love of their hearts!

The psalm rightly ends with the exclamation "hallelujah!", i.e. "praise the Lord!"

Psalm 106

Introduction

This psalm is a contrast to the previous psalm. In Psalm 105 the psalmist speaks of the faithfulness of God to His promises. There he shows how God has always been with His people, protecting them, providing everything they needed, and bringing them into the land of promise.

The response He had reason to expect is in the last verse of the previous psalm (Psa 105:45). The response He received is in this psalm. Psalm 106 gives the story of taunting God, despising the land, forgetting God's promises. It is a story of unbelief, disobedience, rebellion, and idolatry.

That God continued with them in spite of these reactions of His people only makes His grace all the more admirable. He does have a righteous basis for this and that is the intercession of His Son, of which we see a picture in the intercession of Moses (verse 23).

Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 give us the history of Israel, not as an arid enumeration of facts, but as words of prayer and praise. The occasion is the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God on the one hand and the failure of the people on the other. Prophetically we find this already in Solomon's prayer to God in 1 Kings 8.

In Psalm 106 we find the history of the journey of the people of Israel, now not seen as under the grace of God, but under the law of Sinai. Without self-knowledge, they said to God three times: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" (Exo 19:8; 24:3,7). In response to this overconfident statement, the LORD gave His law: "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD" (Lev 18:5).

However, the law proved to be powerless to bless the people because the blessing depended on the ability of the flesh to do the will of God (Rom 8:3). We see the impossibility of this illustrated in this psalm.

Division of the psalm

Verses 1-5 Thanksgiving.

Verses 6-12 The failure in Egypt.

Verses 13-23 The failure in the wilderness.

Verses 24-33 The failure in conquering the land.

Verses 34-42 The failure in the promised land.

Verses 43-48 Conclusion and again thanksgiving.

Psa 106:1-5 | Thanksgiving and Prayer

1 Praise the LORD!

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

*2 Who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD,
Or can show forth all His praise?*

*3 How blessed are those who keep justice,
Who practice righteousness at all times!*

*4 Remember me, O LORD, in [Your] favor toward Your people;
Visit me with Your salvation,*

*5 That I may see the prosperity of Your chosen ones,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation,
That I may glory with Your inheritance.*

The psalmist begins with the exclamation “hallelujah!”, or “praise the LORD!” (verse 1). With this he also ends the psalm. It is an exhortation to others to join the psalmist in praising the LORD, as in Psalm 104, where this word appears the first time (Psa 104:35). This psalm is the first psalm to both begin and end with the call “hallelujah!”, or “praise the LORD!” This occurs from Psalm 111 to the end of the book in nine more psalms. The reason is that God’s lovingkindness, demonstrated in His goodness, is able to save Israel, despite its failures. The condition is that Israel first acknowledges its failure. That is what we find in Psalm 106.

It is not possible to discuss God’s history of salvation, viewed from any side, without giving thanks to Him for His great lovingkindness and faithfulness. The psalmist says “give thanks to the LORD”, after which

the occasion is then given: "For He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting." He is good, that is His Being. Therefore, His lovingkindness is forever, for He never changes. This will be seen and enjoyed publicly in the realm of peace.

The psalmist wonders where the people are "who can speak of the mighty deeds of the LORD" (verse 2). Are there even people who can and will do that? No one can do it according to its value and to the fullest. But many don't even want to begin to do so because they are busy with their own affairs, which they consider more important. And who is able to "show forth all His praises"? The showing forth of His praise can never be done to the fullest by believers, for He is exalted above all thanksgiving and praise (Neh 9:5). But who will not want to do it according to the measure of what is seen of it?

To speak of the mighty deeds and show forth the praises remains imperfect because of the limited understanding of them. The whole of it cannot be encompassed, let alone described. What can be done, and what God expects of His own, is that they keep to the law and do righteousness at all times (verse 3). The believing remnant can only do that by virtue of the LORD's lovingkindness and faithfulness, in contrast to what the people are by nature (verses 6-43). If they do, they are "blessed". To oppose or disregard this is not a matter of weakness, but of unwillingness.

After his thanksgiving, the psalmist utters a prayer (verse 4). He asks the LORD to think of him and to do so according to the good pleasure He has for His people. In doing so, he is asking that the LORD allows him to share in the blessing He has for His people in the realm of peace, when the Messiah reigns. This is evident in his asking if the LORD will visit him with His salvation, that is, will give him a share in it.

When the LORD does that, it means to him that he will receive much blessing. That blessing is first of all that he may "see the prosperity of Your chosen ones" (verse 5). God's people are the object of His election. Those who belong to it are especially privileged, for they are not worthy in themselves. This also applies to us as New Testament believers. We are also chosen, and also exclusively by grace, and in Christ.

The second blessing is that he may “rejoice in the gladness of Your nation”. When God’s people are in the blessing of the realm of peace, they will rejoice with gladness. When the psalmist sees that, it will also make him rejoice. To share in the salvation of the realm of peace is to share in the joy. The third blessing is that he may “glory with Your inheritance”. This includes the people of God, for they are the “own possession” or “special treasure” of the LORD (Deu 7:6). The psalmist looks forward to glorying with God’s people about the great privileges associated with being the inheritance of God. For us, what we personally possess, we may share together with all the saints (cf. Eph 3:16-18).

Psa 106:6-12 | Saved and Redeemed From Egypt

*6 We have sinned like our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have behaved wickedly.
7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders;
They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses,
But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.
8 Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name,
That He might make His power known.
9 Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up,
And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.
10 So He saved them from the hand of the one who hated [them],
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
11 The waters covered their adversaries;
Not one of them was left.
12 Then they believed His words;
They sang His praise.*

Psalm 105 begins with the history of Abraham, for the basis of God’s dealings in grace with the people of Israel is the one-sided covenant, God’s promise, with Abraham from Genesis 15 (Gen 15:2-21). In Psalm 106, Israel’s history is seen as under the law. Therefore, in this psalm, the history of God’s people does not begin with Abraham, but in Egypt.

In this history we see the blessings of the LORD as a result of His mighty acts (verse 2). However, the people failed to see the blessings of the LORD.

They fell very short of gratitude and as a result acted in unbelief and disobedience.

The psalmist confessed the sin of the people whose privileges he described in the previous verses (verse 6). He has asked the LORD to share in its blessings. Now he makes himself one with God's people, of whom he is a part, saying three times, "we have".

We can think of verse 6 as the title and summary of the content of this psalm, which describes the history of God's people as seen from their responsibility. It is a history of failure and unfaithfulness, in contrast to the faithfulness of God in verses 1-5. From verse 7, the real history of the people begins.

Without any condonation, he confesses that they have "sinned", "committed iniquity", and "behaved wickedly". He acknowledges that he and his people are no better than "our fathers". Such identification with the sins of the whole people, including those of the past, we also see with Daniel and Ezra (Dan 9:4-19; Ezra 9:6-7,10,15).

The 'Elijah service' of John the baptist (cf. Mal 4:5), which will soon be acknowledged by the remnant, is a call to repentance. John's baptism was the baptism of repentance as the first step to God. It involves turning around and returning to God. It is only the beginning, but absolutely necessary. This is how Joseph's brothers in prison in Egypt had to come to the acknowledgment of their sins (Gen 42:21). So will the remnant come to acknowledge the sins of the people during the great tribulation (cf. 1Kgs 8:46-47; Zec 12:10).

Then he begins to name the sins. It has already started in Egypt. The failure does not begin halfway through their history, their history begins with the failure, from the very beginning. They immediately abandoned their first love (cf. Rev 2:4). It is characteristic of all human history, in which we see each time the failure of man from the beginning. So it was with Adam, so it was with Noah, so it was with Israel, so it is with professing Christianity.

Already in Egypt, "our fathers ... did not understand Your wonders" (verse 7). All the plagues God brought upon Egypt for their deliverance have been 'signs and wonders' to His people. But they have been blind to them. It has not dawned on them how much God did this for them.

Nor did they “remember Your abundant kindnesses”. The people were not appealed by the numerous evidences of God’s love. It is already bad to ignore one token of God’s lovingkindness, to ignore one blessing as a result. How bad it must be, then, when an abundance of blessings is thoughtlessly ignored. It speaks of total indifference.

It did not remain in their memory because they thought only of themselves. What grief it must have caused God that His people so ignored His numerous acts of love. Is there anything more painful than an act of love or even numerous acts of love being met with indifference?

And it gets worse. Because they “did not understand” and “did not remember”, they “rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea”. This is an event immediately after the LORD redeemed them from Egypt. Right after they have experienced redemption from the yoke and are on their way to the promised land, the people show their disobedience. They reproach Moses for their redemption and indicate that they would rather serve the Egyptians than move on (Exo 14:10-12).

Instead of killing His people, the LORD saved them “for the sake of His name” (verse 8; cf. Isa 48:9). This is the first reason. He always upholds His Name. A second reason, connected to the first, is “to make His power known”. When He does that, He also makes known His Name as the Almighty (Exo 9:16).

The Red Sea seemed to be a hindrance to redemption, but God “rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up” (verse 9; Exo 14:21-22,29; Isa 50:2; Nah 1:4). In this we see a type of the redemption of the believing remnant in the end time. This is how He made His power known. The sea is subject to Him and listens to His command. He made a way for His people “through the deeps, as through the wilderness”. He made them pass through it so that they could make their way to the promised land (Isa 63:12-14).

So He saved them “from the hand of the one who hated [them]” and redeemed them “from the hand of the enemy” (verse 10; cf. Lk 1:71). The hater and enemy is Pharaoh. His hand could not seize them anymore because God had made a path for them through the sea by which they stayed out of his hands.

What was the way of redemption and deliverance for God's people was the way of judgment for the adversaries (verse 11). The waters covered them, "not one of them was left" (Exo 14:27-28; 15:5; cf. Dan 2:45). The judgment on their hater and enemy and all his soldiers was total and forever. There was no longer any threat from them, for they had all perished. After the unfolding of God's power in this wonder of their deliverance and of judgment on their enemies, "they believed His words" (verse 12; Exo 14:31). They saw with their own eyes that He had done what He had said. In response, they "sang His praise" in the song of deliverance (Exo 15:1-18).

Psa 106:13-23 | Rebellion in the Wilderness

*13 They quickly forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
14 But craved intensely in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
15 So He gave them their request,
But sent a wasting disease among them.
16 When they became envious of Moses in the camp,
And of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD,
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And engulfed the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire blazed up in their company;
The flame consumed the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb
And worshiped a molten image.
20 Thus they exchanged their glory
For the image of an ox that eats grass.
21 They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,
22 Wonders in the land of Ham
[And] awesome things by the Red Sea.
23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them,
Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him,
To turn away His wrath from destroying [them].*

Now here is a list of Israel's sins from their first steps in the wilderness that they had to pass through to get to the promised land. Israel's sins began back in Egypt. These sins in the wilderness are actually just a continuation of their earlier sins of unbelief. The sins in the wilderness begin with forgetting and impatience (verse 13). God's works on their behalf in their redemption from Egypt, their passage through the Red Sea, and the judgment on their enemies were forgotten by them "quickly" or "with haste". What tragedies follow from this. Let us not judge them harshly. How quickly do we forget all God's works for our benefit?

When we forget God's lovingkindness to us, we quickly become impatient and begin to grumble (Phil 2:14; 1Pet 4:9). We forget how many times He has already provided and complain about our circumstances. The people began to complain about lack of water and food (Exo 15:24; 16:2-3). They did not ask Him about it and could not muster the patience to wait for His counsel. They were not looking to Him, but to what they were lacking. There was lack. That was a reason for them to grumble.

The sins of the people we find each time in duplicate, at the beginning and at the end of the wilderness journey. It is so with the sin of grumbling: read Exodus 15-17 and Numbers 14-17. So is it with water from the rock; so is it with the craving for flesh: read Exodus 16 and Numbers 11. This indicates that these sins are characteristic of the entire wilderness journey. In Exodus 16 it is about lust for flesh, in Numbers 11 also about dissatisfaction with the manna.

When God gives them what they ask for, they are "craved intensely in the wilderness" (verse 14; Num 11:4,6,33; Psa 78:18,28-29; 1Cor 10:6). With their craving they "tempted God in the desert". They put Him to the test, whether He was able to give what they wanted. Well, God "gave them their request" (verse 15; Num 11:31-32). Because they kept nagging, God gave what they had asked for. He could have withheld it from them, but He wanted to teach them a lesson. That lesson is that a desire that comes from one's own will does not lead to health, but to a wasting disease. Unfortunately, the lesson was not learned, for they continued to sin.

The next sin is that of jealousy (verse 16). It concerns the jealousy of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Num 16:1-3). They became "envious of Moses in the

camp” as the leader of the people through whom God spoke to the people. They also became jealous “of Aaron, the holy one of the LORD”, that is, the priest set apart by the LORD for Himself to represent His people to Him.

Instead of the desire to serve, these people longed to take the first place in God’s people, just as Diotrephes wanted in the church (3Jn 1:9). The disciples also disputed among them as to “which one of them was regarded to be greatest” (Lk 22:24). Therefore, this is a serious warning to each of us.

The judgment on this jealousy was severely punished by the LORD (verse 17). For it was a frontal attack on His government of the people. It was a conspiracy against the LORD (Num 16:11). Korah and his followers wanted the position of Aaron while Dathan and Abiram wanted the position of Moses.

The punishment was consistent with this. The judgment He executed on Dathan and Abiram – Korah is not mentioned here (cf. Deu 11:6) – had not been executed before, it was “something new” (Num 16:30-33). The punishment of Dathan and Abiram was that they entered the kingdom of the dead alive. The same will happen to the two beasts (Rev 19:20). The judgment on Korah was fire from heaven, as on Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron (Lev 10:1-2).

There was also “a fire” that came from the LORD (Num 16:35a), which “blazed up in their company” (verse 18). The ferocity of the judgment is emphasized by adding that “a flame consumed the wicked”. Thus “two hundred and fifty men” were consumed (Num 16:35b). Here we see how horrible sinful, selfish jealousy is to God.

Then the psalmist mentions the sin of idolatry (verse 19; Deu 9:7-16). He refers to “a calf in Horeb” which they had made (Exo 32:1-4). This is a violation of the second commandment (Exo 20:4-6). They “worshiped a molten image”. In doing so, they had particularly grieved God Who had so clearly revealed Himself in His lovingkindness to them.

By this worship of a piece of dead matter they had “exchanged their glory for the image of an ox that eats grass” (verse 20). The addition “that eats grass” makes the absurdity of worshipping the animal all the greater. Their Glory was God Himself (Jer 2:11). How foolish can a man be to exchange Him for a mindless, grass-eating animal!

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 1, for this verse makes it clear what the result is when man exchanges the glory of the imperishable God for something resembling a perishable, transient man or animal. The result is that God gives him over to uncleanness in the lusts of his heart (Rom 1:23-24). If we are not blind, we see it all around us today.

In Exodus 32, the issue is that they have “a feast for the LORD” using an image (Exo 32:4-5). They believed that they had not forsaken the LORD. They had merely sought a tool of their own choosing to serve the LORD. Something similar is done by Nadab and Abihu later by offering an incense sacrifice with their own fire, something the LORD had not commanded (Lev 10:1).

This should also be a warning to us. No, serving another god, that is not what we want. Serving the Lord in our own way, the way we like it, yes, that is what we want. Many Christians seek church services where they feel at home (cf. Jdg 17:13). This is always a danger for every believer. We must always remember that we can only worship God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24). This history is a warning against it.

They not only forgot the works of God (verse 13), but “they forgot God their Savior” Himself (verse 21). God’s people fell into idolatry with all the debauchery that goes with it because they forgot Him, “Who had done great things in Egypt”. There He proved to be “their Savior”, that is, their Rescuer, their Deliverer, their Keeper.

To save them He had done “wonders in the land of Ham” and “awesome things by the Red Sea” (verse 22; Deu 10:21). These things should continue to capture the imagination. What God had done in Egypt and at the Red Sea should have constantly filled them with the utmost confidence in His omnipotence. But they had forgotten Him. This may well speak to our hearts and consciences, that we may never forget what He has done for us in our redemption.

To such forgetfulness among His people and the resulting idolatry, God could not respond other than with the threat to destroy them (verse 23). He was, to put it humanly, sick of His people. He would have carried out His intention “had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him” (cf. Eze 22:30).

Just as a soldier stands in the breach of a wall to prevent the enemy from passing through with the use of his life, so Moses lay before God to avert God's wrath. Because of Moses' passionate pleading, God did not destroy them and they were spared (Deu 9:25-29).

In this, Moses is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who is the great Intercessor and Advocate for His people on earth. Only through His intercession with God will a remnant of God's people cross the finish line and enter the blessing. This applies not only to God's earthly people, Israel, but also to God's heavenly people, the church (Rom 8:34).

Psa 106:24-33 | The Land Despised

24 *Then they despised the pleasant land;
 They did not believe in His word,
 25 But grumbled in their tents;
 They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.
 26 Therefore He swore to them
 That He would cast them down in the wilderness,
 27 And that He would cast their seed among the nations
 And scatter them in the lands.
 28 They joined themselves also to Baal-peor,
 And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.
 29 Thus they provoked [Him] to anger with their deeds,
 And the plague broke out among them.
 30 Then Phinehas stood up and interposed,
 And so the plague was stayed.
 31 And it was reckoned to him for righteousness,
 To all generations forever.
 32 They also provoked [Him] to wrath at the waters of Meribah,
 So that it went hard with Moses on their account;
 33 Because they were rebellious against His Spirit [footnote: or: his spirit],
 He spoke rashly with his lips.*

The previous sins were in connection with the wilderness; now follow two sins that relate to the promised land. The despising of "the pleasant land" (verse 24; Jer 3:19; cf. Eze 20:6) occurred after the spies had been there and reported their findings. The cause was unbelief. They believed the report of

ten unbelieving spies. They did not believe the word of God, His promise to give them the land, nor what Joshua and Caleb testified (Num 14:3-10). The result of their unbelief was that “they grumbled in their tents” (verse 25; Num 14:1-2; 1Cor 10:10). They were dissatisfied with God’s dealings with them. Over this they sat in their tents sulking and grumbling. They doubted God’s love and were disobedient (Deu 1:26-27). They influenced each other with their discontent, but had no ear for what the LORD had to say: “They did not listen to the voice of the LORD” (cf. Deu 1:32).

Therefore, He “swore to them”, He swore the solemn oath “that He would cast them down in the wilderness” (verse 26). None of this grumbling, disobedient generation would enter the land. Only Joshua and Caleb would get in (Num 14:29-30).

The same would happen to “their seed” (verse 27) because they revealed the same spirit of grumbling, unbelief and disobedience. God would “scatter them in the lands” (Lev 26:33; Eze 20:23). This happened when the Assyrians carried away the ten tribes realm and when the Babylonians carried away the two tribes realm.

Almost forty years later, they found themselves in the plains of Moab, on the border of the promised land. There they joined themselves to the idol Baal-peor, a local Moabite idol (verse 28; cf. 2Cor 6:14). Their horrible, adulterous union with the Moabites involved eating “sacrifices offered to the dead”, that is, the sacrifices to the dead idols (Num 25:1-2). Possibly they are also sacrifices for consulting the dead (Deu 18:11). That are also sacrifices that result in the death of the offeror. What a contrast to the living God Who committed Himself to them.

This abominable connection was a thorn in the LORD’s side. “They provoked” Him “to anger with their deeds” (verse 29). Their deeds were sinful acts, crimes. In doing so, they defied Him. Their defiant attitude and actions toward Him He answered with “the plague”, an epidemic, which “broke out among them” (Num 25:1,9).

Paul refers to this event in his first letter to the Corinthians to warn us not to fall into the same sin (1Cor 10:8,11). When we fall in love with persons who want nothing to do with God, we commit adultery in a spiritual sense. James does not beat about the bush about it when he clearly states:

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?” (Jam 4:4).

In this case, intercessory prayer by Moses is not the solution to make the plague stop, but the execution of the judgment on evil. That is what Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, did (verse 30). He killed the Israelite man who had defied God by bringing a Midianite woman into the camp. He also killed the woman. Then the plague stopped (Num 25:6-8).

What Phinehas did is an act of righteousness (verse 31), making atonement for Israel (Num 25:13). It is an act of dedication to the LORD, a standing up for His honor, the proof that he was a righteous man. God reckoned that act “for righteousness” to him (cf. Jam 2:21-25). It is a righteous act that will never be forgotten. In fact, his descendants “to all generations forever” will experience the blessing of it (Num 25:10-13).

With a little less than six months to go before Israel would enter the promised land, the people “also provoked [Him] to wrath at the waters of Meribah” [Meribah means strife, quarrel] (verse 32). The Israelites complained about water as if God were incapable of providing them with water. God told Moses to speak to the rock, but Moses struck the rock, twice (Num 20:8-11).

The striking of the rock was to take place only once (Exo 17:6). This is a picture of Christ dying under the striking hand of God, which took place only once (Heb 9:26-27). Next, Moses was to speak to the rock. The water would then come on the basis of the rock once struck. Similarly, Christ’s suffering and death took place only once, after which we can speak to Christ. This picture is damaged by the disobedience of Moses.

Moses is severely punished by the LORD for his disobedience: he is not allowed to bring the people into the land (Num 20:12). The fault lies with the people: “it went hard with Moses on their account”. The side of Moses’ disobedience is not highlighted here. Here it is the side of the people. *They* made Him very angry.

Time after time they had taunted Moses and time after time he had stood up for them before God. He had become the humblest man on earth in the school of God (Num 12:3). A lot had to happen for him to lose his temper. But the people finally caused it. They started arguing with Moses about

their lack of water (Num 20:2-5). Then Moses' patience ran out. He became so vexed in his spirit that "he spoke rashly with his lips" and came to a wrong deed (verse 33; Num 20:10-11).

Psa 106:34-43 | In the Land

*34 They did not destroy the peoples,
As the LORD commanded them,
35 But they mingled with the nations
And learned their practices,
36 And served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.
37 They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons,
38 And shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with the blood.
39 Thus they became unclean in their practices,
And played the harlot in their deeds.
40 Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people
And He abhorred His inheritance.
41 Then He gave them into the hand of the nations,
And those who hated them ruled over them.
42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were subdued under their power.
43 Many times He would deliver them;
They, however, were rebellious in their counsel,
And [so] sank down in their iniquity.*

When the people arrived in the land, their obedience and faith did not improve. Joshua had called them to faithfulness to the LORD (Jos 13:1-7; 23:9-11), but that was said to deaf ears. They continued on the path of disobedience and unbelief. The LORD had commanded them to destroy the peoples, but "they did not destroy the peoples" (verse 34; Deu 7:2,16). The book of Judges gives an account of their disobedience to this command of the LORD.

Instead of destroying the nations they mixed with them (verse 35; Deu 7:1-5; Jdg 3:5-6; Ezra 9:1-2). For us, the command is to keep ourselves unstained from the world (Jam 1:27b). If we do not, more and more of the habits of the world will come to cling to us, for bad company corrupts good morals (1Cor 15:33).

We see this with Israel: they “learned their practices” and thus flouted the commandment that they were not to imitate the customs of Canaan (Lev 18:3). Thereby, it were also nonsensical customs (Jer 10:2-3). The people did not care about what God had said because they just wanted to live like the nations around them. That appealed to them more than doing what God had commanded them, commandments that are for life.

Because of their mingling with the nations and learning their customs, they began to serve their idols (verse 36). They bid the LORD, Who had been so good to them, farewell, and knelt down before the idols of the nations. However, the idols did not produce prosperity, but “became a snare to them” into which they were caught and would die (Exo 23:33; Deu 7:16).

They were so caught in the snare that they not only served and worshiped idols, but “even sacrificed their sons and their daughters” to them (verse 37; 2Kgs 16:3; Eze 16:20; 20:31; Isa 57:5). Thus they also plunged their children into destruction. It says here that they offered their sons and daughters “to the demons”. That is what they actually did. Behind dead idols of wood and stone are demons (1Cor 10:20; Deu 32:17; Rev 9:20).

By their actions they “shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters” (verse 38; cf. Jer 19:4-5). They were blood-guilty murderers of their own children. Their sacrifices “to the idols of Canaan” had the effect of polluting “the land with the blood”. By their abominable practices they profaned the land that belonged to God, His property (cf. Num 35:33-34; Isa 24:5; Jer 3:1-2,9).

The people broke both the first tablet and the second tablet of the ten commandments: the first tablet by committing idolatry, the second by shedding innocent blood. It is comparable to the two sins of David: adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Thus the people of Israel both shed the blood of Christ and committed idolatry with the antichrist. The Lord Jesus put it this way: “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not

receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him" (Jn 5:43). In the first part of this verse He speaks of His rejection, in the second part of their acceptance of the antichrist.

They not only profaned God's land, but "they became unclean" themselves "in their practices [literally: works]" (verse 39). Paul puts it this way: "The immoral man sins against his own body" (1Cor 6:18b). Their works were all sin. How could God ever tolerate them in His presence in that condition? They "played the harlot in their deeds", that is, their way of life represented the grossest unfaithfulness to God. After all, God had taken Israel to be His wife (Jer 2:1-3). But by having intercourse with idols in unfaithfulness to Him, they committed blatant harlotry (cf. Isa 1:21; Hos 2:2-12).

God was deeply grieved by this. He could not let this go unpunished. "Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against His people" (verse 40). His land and His people were horribly polluted. He turned away from them with distaste, "He abhorred His inheritance". Their behavior caused Him loath. No mitigating circumstance can be imagined by which they could be declared less accountable.

The blood of the idolaters had to flow because of the blood guilt that they had brought upon themselves through their ritual murders. Therefore, He gave them "into the hand of the nations" (verse 41). These nations, who "hated them ruled over them". The nations were idol-worshippers. Through them God wanted to teach His people the harsh service of idolaters, so that thereby His people would come to their senses. All of this is consistent with the curse of the covenant in Leviticus 26 (Lev 26:17). Ultimately, this is with the intention of bringing them to repentance through which the LORD can restore and bring them back.

God's disobedient, rebellious people were oppressed by their enemies (verse 42), but it was actually the hand of God that pressed down on them. In this way "they were subdued under their power [literally: hand]". The oppressors invaded their land, destroyed their vineyards, took them captive and forced them into slave labor. They had to bow their necks under their rule.

Then when they cried out in their misery, He saved them (verse 43). He did this “many times” over a period of hundreds of years. That He did this many times shows His great longsuffering. It also means that the people kept turning away from Him and He had to give them again and again into the hand of the nations.

We see this in the book of Judges (Jdg 2:16,18). There, in the beginning, they cried out to the LORD in their misery (Jdg 3:9,15; 4:3; 6:6; 10:10). Later, for example in the time of Samson, there is no more crying out to the LORD for help. We also see this here in verse 44. It does say that they cried out in their distress, but it does not say that they cried out *to God* in their misery.

Even though He saved them many times, they continued to taunt Him “in their counsel”. They had their own opinions about serving God. God had said how He wanted to be served, but they did not bother. It is like a father who keeps telling his child how to do something, but the child always does it stubbornly in his own wrong way, so that everything always fails. How taunting that is for a father.

The result for the people is that they “sank down in their iniquity”. Sin is debilitating to one’s strength and wears one down. A person who perseveres in sin becomes depleted. They were weakened, their national strength was exhausted, there was no strength left to defend themselves. This was the punishment for their sins.

Psa 106:44-48 | The Greatness of God’s Lovingkindness

*44 Nevertheless He looked upon their distress
When He heard their cry;
45 And He remembered His covenant for their sake,
And relented according to the greatness of His lovingkindness.
46 He also made them [objects] of compassion
In the presence of all their captors.
47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the nations,
To give thanks to Your holy name
And glory in Your praise.*

*48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
And let all the people say, "Amen."
Praise the LORD!*

The closing verses of the psalm, like the beginning of the psalm, are a song of praise for the grace of God. He had responded to their distress and their crying out (verse 44). It had caught His attention. He had not turned away from them, but saw their distress and heard their cry. He had not lost sight of them. He had not closed His ear to them. The reason is that He had not removed them from His heart.

"He remembered" namely "His covenant" (verse 45) which He had made with the fathers. Therefore, He remembered "for their sake". He could not forget the covenant He had made with them, the promises He had made that made the covenant unconditional. Therefore, He could not completely destroy them (Lev 26:44-45). His covenant He fulfilled and all the promises attached to it He fulfilled.

That He "relented" is not regret over a wrong act or decision. God is never wrong and never needs to relent (1Sam 15:29). If He does relent, it is "according to the greatness of His lovingkindness". Relenting here means coming back from a certain path. It does not concern God's counsel, but God's governmental ways.

In this case, He stops His disciplining of His people because otherwise He would utterly destroy them (cf. Exo 32:14; Jdg 2:18; 2Sam 24:16). He can prove His lovingkindness because Christ has fulfilled all the conditions for the covenant. All who are joined to Him receive the promises and blessings of the covenant.

On the basis of the work of His Son, which He foresaw, He was able to show mercy to them (verse 46). That mercy He worked in the heart of all those who had carried away His people as captives. He had the people carried away into exile as a result of their disobedience. In their exile they repented and cried out to the LORD for help (verse 47). For this they appealed, not to their actions, but to the holy Name of the LORD their God (cf. Eze 36:20-23).

We see examples of the mercy the LORD worked on all those who had taken them away as captives by Cyrus, Evil-Merodach and Arthahsasta (Ezra 1:1-4; cf. 2Kgs 25:27-30; Neh 2:1-6). This shows the power of God over the heart of men, including kings (1Kgs 8:50; Pro 21:1; Dan 1:9).

These proofs of lovingkindness and mercy in the misery that has come upon the people through their own fault bring the psalmist to a prayer and a thanksgiving. His prayer is a prophetic prayer. It concerns the situation in which God's people will be in the end time, the time of the great tribulation. Then they will pray: "Save us, LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations." It is a prayer for the intervention of God for their deliverance from the power of the nations.

When God does, they will be able to "give thanks to" His "holy name" in the place where He dwells, in Jerusalem (cf. Mt 6:9b). They will boast in His praise, which is to say that there will be nothing else and higher for them than to give thanks to God for His mighty deeds.

The psalmist already makes a start, as it were, when he exults: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel" (verse 48). This jubilation will never cease, but will continue "from everlasting even to everlasting". God is worthy of worship in the realm of peace and for all eternity. The psalmist calls on "all the people" to join in with this with a resounding "amen" – meaning 'so it is'.

Then he ends the psalm as he began it, with a loud "hallelujah!", or "praise the LORD!" (verse 1). See at Psalm 105:35.

Verse 1 and verses 47-48 of this psalm also occur in 1 Chronicles 16 and as a contiguous section (1Chr 16:34-36). This underscores the special connection between the beginning and the end of the psalm. At verse 1 we have seen that the occasion for the call to praise God is His lovingkindness which is eternal. By connecting this with the prayer of verses 47-48, it becomes clear that trust in God's lovingkindness is the basis of the prayer for salvation.

Psalm 107

Introduction

With Psalm 107 begins the fifth and last book of Psalms. This last book – Psalms 107-150 – describes the ways of God with His people, that is the faithful remnant, along which He brings them back from exile into His land (verses 2-3). This is God’s answer to the prayer at the end of the fourth book (Psa 106:47). The so-called songs of ascent (Psalms 120-134) describe this. In them we hear the feelings of both the two and the ten tribes.

This fifth book can be compared to the book of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of Moses. In that book, the people are at the end of the wilderness journey and about to enter the promised land. Moses gives a review on Israel’s journey through the wilderness and a preview to the promised land.

We also see this in this fifth book of Psalms. Psalm 107, the first psalm of this book, describes the various events and circumstances the people went through before they entered the land. It is a description of trials and tribulations, in which they came to know the LORD, His word and His ways better and praise Him for it.

We find four examples of this in this psalm which at the same time form a division of the psalm:

1. The wilderness. In it they wandered (verses 4-9).
 2. The captivity. They have been captives of the nations (verses 10-16).
 3. Their transgressions. As a result, they were afflicted, near death (verses 17-22).
 4. The great tribulation and wrath through which they have passed, represented in the storm (verses 23-32).
1. The answer to their wandering in the wilderness (verses 4-9) is the city with foundations.
 2. The answer to their captivity (verses 10-16) is the return.
 3. The answer to their afflictions (verses 17-22) is the healing.

4. The answer to the storm (verses 23-32) is the desired haven of the realm of peace.

God has delivered the people again and again when they cried out to Him. Likewise, in the future, when they are in the great tribulation, He will listen to them when they cry out to Him. Each time, the remnant is exhorted to praise and give thanks to the LORD.

This is also the teaching found in the conclusion of this psalm (verses 33-42). Those who take this teaching to heart prove themselves to be wise (verse 43). The wise in the future – the *maskilim* – will learn the lesson by taking to heart the covenant faithfulness – Adonai, favors – of the LORD and trusting in Him.

Psa 107:1-3 | Song of Praise for Redemption

1 *Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*
2 *Let the redeemed of the LORD say [so],
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary*
3 *And gathered from the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.*

The psalm begins with the call to give thanks to the LORD, for He is good (verse 1). His goodness is evident in “His lovingkindness”, that is, He is eternally faithful to His new covenant as the foundation of all blessings (Psa 106:1; 108:4). Every believer can say it with David: “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life” (Psa 23:6a). His goodness abides forever and never fails because the new covenant is an eternal covenant because of the power of the blood of Christ as the foundation of all blessings (Heb 13:20).

“His lovingkindness is everlasting” is a refrain. It is and has been sung at every restoration of Israel that takes place through the lovingkindness of the LORD:

- a. At Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Psa 136:1-26).
- b. At the return of the ark (1Chr 16:34).

c. At the return from Babylon (Ezra 3:11).

d. At the future restoration of Israel (Jer 33:11).

His lovingkindness is evident in the deliverance of His people “from the hand of the adversaries” (verse 2). They were in the hand of the adversaries, that is, in their power. From this they have been redeemed by Him Who is stronger than the strongest enemy, so that they no longer have any danger to fear.

Prophetically, this applies to the faithful remnant that has been in the scattering. They prayed at the end of Psalm 106 to save them from the power of the nations (Psa 106:47). Here in Psalm 107 we hear a song of thanksgiving about the answer to this prayer (verses 2-3). They did not deserve that answer. After all, Psalm 106 speaks of the scattering as God’s judgment on their rebellion against the LORD (Psa 106:27). Their rebellion contrasts sharply with Psalm 105, where we read of their deliverance by the LORD from Egypt and that He gave them the lands of the nations (Psa 105:43-44). The quoted verses from these three psalms indicate that despite the fact that they belong to different books of Psalms (the fourth and fifth book) they form in a sense a triptych.

The issue in verse 2 is the redemption of the faithful remnant of the two tribes. The word for “redeemed” comes from the Hebrew word for “ransom” (Lev 25:48-49). This means that we are talking about people who have been ransomed from slavery by a powerful family member. It is not so much about deliverance through battle as it is about deliverance through buying back, where the one who ransoms has the right to buy back, while the other is obliged to sell, without any other option. The redeemed are the ransomed of the LORD (Isa 35:9-10).

Those who are redeemed by the LORD are exhorted to also say it aloud. It is not possible for a believer to remain silent (Psa 116:10). It must be expressed in words of thanksgiving, in songs of praise or sacrifices of praise. It is not only about *feelings* of gratitude, but also about *words* of gratitude. The redemption is a special redemption and therefore thanks should also be a special thanks. He redeemed us from our sins by buying us, not with silver or gold, but with His precious blood (1Pet 1:18-19).

In verse 3 it is about the remnant of the ten tribes returning to the land from the nations (Deu 30:1-4). God will gather all who are scattered in all directions from the lands to which they have been scattered. He will bring them back “from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south” to His land (Isa 11:11-12; 43:5-6; Mt 24:31).

This verse has not been fulfilled anywhere in the past. The return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon during the time of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-3) is only from one direction, from Babylon. Since not a title or an iota of God’s Word will fall to earth, this verse will still be fulfilled – and soon, we may assume. Then all of the twelve tribes still in the scattering will return to Israel from all directions.

We have seen this happen time and again since the late nineteenth century in the *aliyah*, the return of Jews from all parts of the world to Israel. Prophetically, it is about the time when the beast, the antichrist and the king of the North are eliminated. The ten tribes have returned from the scattering into the land and joined the two tribes there. The whole people are then back in the land, all twelve tribes, that is, a remnant from them.

For us Christians, the Lord Jesus died in order to gather us together into one, we who are scattered children of God (Jn 11:52; cf. 1Cor 12:13).

Psa 107:4-9 | Led by a Straight Way

*4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region;
They did not find a way to an inhabited city.*

*5 [They were] hungry and thirsty;
Their soul fainted within them.*

*6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He delivered them out of their distresses.*

*7 He led them also by a straight way,
To go to an inhabited city.*

*8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!*

*9 For He has satisfied the thirsty soul,
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.*

This section refers to wandering in a wilderness (verse 4). It refers to people who wander, who are lost, who have no safe city in which to live. The Hebrew word for “wander” here is not the same as “wander” in Numbers 32 (Num 32:13). In Numbers 32 they had not lost their way in the wilderness journey, for they were led by the pillar of cloud in their wandering with a purpose.

Those who comprise the remnant from the two tribes and the ten tribes have wandered in the wilderness of this world, “in a desert region”. It is reminiscent of the curse on Cain. As a result of his sin, the murder of his brother Abel, Cain became a wanderer on earth (Gen 4:12). So Israel murdered Christ and Israel also had to go wandering in the wilderness of the world. The world became for them ‘a burial place for strangers’, a piece of land purchased with the thirty pieces of silver at which they valued their Lord (Zec 11:12-13; Mt 27:9-10).

Nowhere did they find “a way to an inhabited city”. They were in the wilderness looking for a city to find rest and safety. They longed for it, but in a wilderness there is no rest anywhere. An inhabited city they would find in the promised land. That is Jerusalem, the city where the LORD dwells (Eze 48:35). Where He dwells, there is rest and safety.

Prophetically, the wilderness speaks of “the wilderness of the peoples” (Eze 20:35), to which the LORD scattered the Israelites because of their unfaithfulness (Psa 106:25-27; Deu 28:64). The return from there and their entry into the promised land is the final fulfillment. The return from exile in Babylon to the land of Israel is not the final fulfillment, but it is a pre-fulfillment. The LORD speaks of this in view of what He will do in the future: “Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert” (Isa 43:19).

In the wilderness they were “hungry and thirsty” (verse 5). About this they grumbled, for “their soul fainted within them”. The way was full of misery and sorrow. They were weary and weakened. This was the result of their unbelief, restlessness and discontent. They saw only the miserable circumstances and not the LORD Who so faithfully cared for them every day.

Then they do the only right thing a man can do when he is in trouble and to which God has also brought him in that trouble: “They cried out to the LORD in their trouble” (verse 6; cf. Hos 5:15; 6:1). God’s answer does not delay: “He delivered them out of their distresses.” This verse is repeated like a refrain throughout this psalm (verses 13,19,28). It is the main theme of the psalm: when the people of God are in trouble and they cry out to the LORD, He rescues and delivers.

At God’s covenant, His promise to Abraham, the LORD showed a smoking oven and a flaming torch as a sign that tribulation and distress were the means He would use to bring His people back to Him (Gen 15:17). The distress is the result of God’s work of plowing the hearts of the people (distress makes them pray) to prepare fertile ground in which to sow the Word. In that Word they can believe and be saved and redeemed by it (Isa 28:23-25). Plowing is a prerequisite to sowing.

After delivering them out of their distresses – as the answer to the need in verse 4 – God also took upon Himself the leadership of the people (verse 7). “He led them also by a straight way”, a way straight to His goal. That goal was the promised land. Under His leadership they went “to an inhabited city” (cf. verse 36). In the land were cities for all the people. To dwell in one of these cities meant the end of their wanderings through the wilderness.

The blessings of food and drink, guidance in the wilderness and a city to live in are a great contrast to wandering in the wilderness and grumbling about their lack. This is not the city of man, Babel, which is a city with a tower, but the city which has foundations, “whose architect and builder is God”, the city God showed Abraham (Heb 11:10).

The blessing received, against a backdrop of grumbling, must result in “giving thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men” (verse 8). The giving thanks of this verse is encapsulated in two answers to prayer: verse 7 in response to verse 4, and verse 9 in response to verse 5. The wonders, i.e. wonderful acts, for which they give thanks to the LORD here have to do with the return to the promised land, while the wonders in Psalm 105 and Psalm 106 refer to the Red Sea, what He did there.

He did not give them what they deserved, but out of the fullness of His lovingkindness. He is acting according to the covenant mentioned in Leviticus 26 (Lev 26:40-42): if the remnant would repent, then and only then could the LORD show His lovingkindness to them.

He has “satisfied the thirsty soul” (verse 9). He has done so by bringing them to an inhabited city. Thereby their thirst for God was satisfied (cf. Psa 42:1-2). The same is true of “the hungry soul”. He fills the hungry soul “with what is good” (Lk 1:53; Mt 5:6). He fills the soul with peace and joy. Hunger and thirst refer to spiritual hunger and thirst (cf. Isa 55:1-2). It is hunger for the Word of God (Deu 8:3; Mt 4:4). Satisfaction of this is the LORD’s response to the need of verse 5.

Psa 107:10-16 | Brought Out of Darkness

*10 There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains,
11 Because they had rebelled against the words of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.
12 Therefore He humbled their heart with labor;
They stumbled and there was none to help.
13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.
14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death
And broke their bands apart.
15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
16 For He has shattered gates of bronze
And cut bars of iron asunder.*

This section refers to the captivity among the nations and their deliverance from it. They “dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death” (verse 10; cf. Psa 23:4; Lk 1:79; Isa 9:2). To “dwell” in such a situation indicates a hopeless situation. That they, added to that, were “prisoners in misery and chains” made their situation utterly hopeless (cf. Psa 105:18). The Lord says in His end time address in Matthew 25 that this will be the portion “of these brothers of Mine, [even] the least [of them]”. By them He means the faithful remnant in the time of the great tribulation (Mt 25:39b-40).

There was darkness in their souls, “the shadow of death” surrounded them, they felt miserable, and they could not move because of the iron chains. The occasion of the captivity was their rebellion “against the words of God” (verse 11; cf. Lev 26:33-39; Neh 9:33-37). The people as a whole rebelled against what God has said, His law. Daniel acknowledges this in his confession (Dan 9:5-8). The words of God, His law, contain “the counsel of the Most High”. These are perfect counsels with the highest wisdom to live to His honor and their own good.

God’s words, His counsel, serve for good to the people (Deu 10:3). God never gives a command that is not a counsel and is not wise to obey. But His people have rejected His counsel. Yet it is still the counsel “of the Most High”. It is not only foolish to reject His counsel because of its content, but also impudent and presumptuous because of the loftiness of the Counselor. Who has ever “defied Him without harm” (Job 9:4b)?

If a man does not humble himself, God must humble him (Jam 4:10; 1Pet 5:6). He humbled the proud, haughty heart of His people in Babylon (verse 12). He did that “with labor”, through misery, tribulation, disappointment, sorrow (cf. Deu 26:7). That broke their strength, causing them to “stumble” and fall down.

There they lay, utterly humbled. Because they had rejected the counsel of the Most High, there was “none to help” them get back up. No man had mercy and God had to hand them over because of their rejection of Him. It shows again the hopelessness of their situation.

Then we hear again that “they cried out to the LORD in their trouble” (verse 13; verse 6). That is what God has been waiting for. He is ready to answer a cry out of trouble. Then He proceeds to act. He “saved them out of their distresses”. The words “trouble” and “distresses” indicate that they were in great oppression inwardly and outwardly, so they had no room to express their distress or to move. But the way up was open and they took advantage of that way. Wicked King Manasseh is an example of how the LORD acts when Israel would humble themselves (2Chr 33:12-13; cf. Lev 26:40-42; Deu 30:1-3).

God answered and saved. He “brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bands apart” (verse 14). Because they

had cried out to God, they were brought out by Him from the situation they had fallen into by rebellion against the words of God (verses 10-11). The bands of “misery and chains”, the symbols of their bondage, in which they had been trapped, He broke by sending His Servant, the Messiah (Isa 42:6; 49:9; 61:1).

For this unanticipated turn for the better, they are again called to give thanks to the LORD (verse 15). As with the first stanza (verses 4-9), this call is encapsulated between two answers to prayer: verse 14 is the answer to the prayer of verse 10a, and verse 16 is the answer to the prayer of verse 10b (cf. Psa 50:15).

Only through “His lovingkindness” were they saved from their misery. To Him be given all the glory for that. It is also God’s intention that they give thanks to Him “for His wonders [i.e. wonderful acts] to the sons of men”. It is a testimony to those around us when we give thanks to God for the wonder of redemption He has given us through His Son. Do we all actually give thanks to Him? Or must the Lord also ask us, as He did with the cleansing of the ten leprous men, where only one of whom returned to honor Him: “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?” (Lk 17:16-17).

As a reason to give thanks to the LORD, it is emphasized again what He has done for them (verse 16). He has “shattered gates of bronze” of the prison. Isn’t that an amazing thing? Those gates could only be broken open by the power of God.

Those prison gates were also closed with “bars of iron” (cf. verse 10; Psa 105:18). It was, so to speak, doubly impossible to redeem oneself from it. But even these iron bars were “cut ... asunder” by God. God has not merely opened the gates and loosened chains, but radically broken them, put them out of order. The breaking is so thorough that re-use is impossible.

Psa 107:17-22 | Delivered From Destructions

*17 Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.*

*18 Their soul abhorred all kinds of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.*

19 *Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
 He saved them out of their distresses.*
 20 *He sent His word and healed them,
 And delivered [them] from their destructions.*
 21 *Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
 And for His wonders to the sons of men!*
 22 *Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
 And tell of His works with joyful singing.*

This section describes the distress of the people just before the second coming of the Lord Jesus. The people of God are a people of fools (verse 17; cf. Deu 32:6a). They don't take God into account (Psa 53:1-6). The way of such people cannot but be a "rebellious way". In the lives of such people, "iniquities" pile up (cf. Isa 59:12).

The result cannot be other than that they "were afflicted" with all kinds of plagues and diseases (cf. Isa 38:1). They brought those plagues and diseases on themselves by their lifestyle without God. Certainly disease is not always a consequence of sin (Jn 9:1-3), but it can be, as it is here (cf. Jam 5:15). The afflictions they brought upon themselves resulted in "their soul abhorring all kinds of food" (verse 18). At the same time, we can also say of such sickness that it is a speaking from God to man (Job 33:14). Their abhorrence of food did not come from Him, but from their sickened lifestyle, which had made them sick. A sick person not only has no strength to take food, he also does not want it, he gags at the thought of it. It is a situation where they have come close to death, "to the gates" of it (Job 33:19-22).

For the third time, there is a situation where there is no prospect of improvement or salvation. For the third time, this situation of distress prompts them to cry out "to the LORD" (verse 19; verses 6,13). And again He responds by saving "them out of their distresses". The cry in distress implies the recognition that God has rightly allowed the distress to arise.

God saved them out of their distresses because of the deadly diseases by sending His word and healing them (verse 20; cf. Deu 32:39). What happened to Hezekiah is an illustration of this (Isa 38:1-22). We can see its fulfillment in the coming of the Son of God, the Word of God Who became flesh. The accounts we have of His life on earth in the Gospels testify to

this. We read that during His life on earth He healed people and delivered them “from their destructions”. These people were near death, but He took them from the gates of death so that they did not become prey to death (Mt 8:17; Mk 1:34; Acts 10:38).

These wondrous healings and deliverances are again the occasion to give thanks to the LORD (verse 21; verses 1,8,15,31; cf. Isa 38:20). Again, the exhortation to give thanks to the LORD is encapsulated by answering prayer (verse 20) and offering sacrifices of thanksgiving (verse 22) instead of a sinful walk.

They are the proofs of “His lovingkindness”. They are also “His wonders [i.e. wonderful acts] to the sons of men”. God shows time and again how good He is to people. We may thank God that He has not forgotten His guilty and suffering people and wish that all those around us see this.

They can show their gratitude for the experienced lovingkindness and wonders of healing by offering Him “sacrifices of thanksgiving” (verse 22). A sacrifice of thanksgiving is a form of the peace offering. It speaks of fellowship with the LORD and with the members of God’s people as a result of what He, Who has been so good to them, has done.

Next, He also wants them to “tell of His works with joyful singing”. True gratitude expresses itself first of all in giving thanks to God, and it will not stop there. A grateful heart also wants others to hear of it and to believe in that God. Therefore, they will testify with passionate joy to what God has done in their lives.

Psa 107:23-32 | The Storm Stilled

*23 Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters;
24 They have seen the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind,
Which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths;
Their soul melted away in [their] misery.
27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man,*

And were at their wits' end.

28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,

And He brought them out of their distresses.

29 He caused the storm to be still,

So that the waves of the sea were hushed.

30 Then they were glad because they were quiet,

So He guided them to their desired haven.

31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,

And for His wonders to the sons of men!

32 Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people,

And praise Him at the seat of the elders.

After the wandering in the wilderness of the nations in the first stanza (verses 4-9), being in captivity in the second stanza (verses 10-16), and suffering the deadly disease in the third stanza (verses 17-22), we now see the people “go down to the sea” (verse 23). The sea is a picture of the nations. In the past, Israel traded with the nations (cf. Gen 49:13). They have been “on great waters”: they have traded with great nations. Solomon was a trading man. He built a fleet. These were not pleasure craft, but merchant ships (1Kgs 9:26-28; 10:22).

It is noteworthy that the expressions “works” and “wonders” (verse 24) are also mentioned in verse 21 and verse 22, where they refer to works of redemption and wonders, i.e. wonderful acts, of healing in the past. By the works and wonders of the LORD here we may think of the storm wind and the deliverance out of the depths (verses 25,29; cf. Mt 8:23-27).

The sea is also threatening, full of dangers (verse 25). Storms at sea are much more violent than on land. God causes the storm to arise. For this He only needs to speak. It implies that the scattering of His people among the nations because of their rejection of the Messiah is the work of the LORD.

In the life of Jonah, we see “a stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea”. Jonah disobeyed a command of God. He fled and did so by ship. Then the LORD sent a storm, threatening to break the ship (Jona 1:1-4). The book of Jonah is read in Israel on the day of atonement because in Jonah they recognize the people of Israel, the people who are in the storm of the sea of nations today.

Through the waves, the ship and its crew “rose up to the heavens” (verse 26). A moment later they “went down to the depths”. The soul of the ship’s crew “melted away in [their] misery”. Faced with the violence of the sea, man is totally powerless. It is over and out with all his talk. He is confronted with a power that completely controls him and against which he has nothing to say.

The raging sea caused that the sailors “reeled and staggered like a drunken man” (verse 27). It deprives man of all his steadiness and orientation. The sea is completely in the hand of God (Job 38:10-11). Its turbulence is caused by Him and serves His purpose (Job 26:12; 41:31; Psa 148:8b). That purpose is that they are “at their wits’ end [literally: “all their wisdom was swallowed up]”. All their wisdom about shipping is inadequate in view of the circumstances in which they find themselves. They have run out of solutions; they don’t know what to do. A sailor’s grave is all that awaits them.

The awareness of being in a hopeless situation is the beginning of the way back. Thus, Joseph’s brothers in prison came to repentance and the prodigal son came to his senses as he sat with the swine. Thus, the faithful remnant will be brought to confession and purification through the great tribulation in order to be restored to their relationship with the LORD.

What we find described here – and see illustrated with Jonah in the storm on the sea and with the Lord’s disciples in the storm on the lake – is a picture of the situation in which the faithful remnant of Israel finds itself now that it is scattered among the nations. They are in constant distress. That distress will reach its highest when the great tribulation starts. Then all their wisdom will be gone. They will cry out to the LORD in their trouble and He will bring them out of their distresses (verse 28; verses 6,13,19; cf. Exo 3:10).

Those who are at their wits’ end do not have to be at their faith’s end. We see that here as well. The sailors cry out to Him Who sent the storm, because He Who sends the storm is also able to cause “the storm to be still” (verse 29). That is what He does. The wind dies down and “the waves of the sea” are “hushed”. The Lord Jesus stilled a storm and thereby provided one of the many proofs that He is God (Mt 8:26; Mk 4:39; cf. Jona 1:15).

A clearer proof can hardly be imagined. He can also quiet the storm in a human life and heart.

Prophetically, we recognize the silence after the storm, when the Lord Jesus has eliminated the antichrist and the king of the North, who have unleashed a storm of persecution. Just as the Lord made the soldiers who wanted to capture Him recoil with a single word and fall to the ground (Jn 18:5-6), so in the future the Lord will silence His enemies, the storm, with the sword from His mouth.

The silence after the storm is a cause of joy (verse 30). There is joy when a situation of distress comes to an end. Here the silence is directly connected to arriving at "their desired haven", which refers to the quiet and peace in the promised land. That is where God guided them (Deu 30:4-5). Those who are at sea for a long time and experience many storms begin to long for the haven more and more. God is on the way to His heavenly land with His people and with His own. Every believer longs for that land. As the storms increase in life, that longing will increase.

After being saved from great distress and entering the haven, there is the call to give thanks to the LORD (verse 31). Again, as with the first three stanzas, the call to give thanks to the LORD is encapsulated in the answer (verse 30) to their prayer (verse 28) and a call to publicly magnify the LORD in the presence of the people and their leaders (verse 32).

By His lovingkindness they have been kept and given rest. This applies not only to the dangers of the sea, but also to the dangers in which we find ourselves every day. The wonders of the deep in verse 24 have here become the wonders for His own sake. For this He deserves all the glory.

What He has done is worthy of all glory "in the congregation of the people" (verse 32). It is not merely a personal thankfulness, but a thankfulness shared with fellow believers (cf. Psa 111:1). Meetings of believers also serve to share with others experiences gained with the Lord, so that thanksgiving to God also increases (2Cor 1:10-11; Acts 15:3).

A special call is made to "the elders" to give thanks to Him. They, more than others, have had experiences of the LORD's deliverances from distress. That the psalmist speaks of "the seat of the elders" implies that these

are older believers who have a responsibility in the midst of God's people. That responsibility is also to lead the people in the glorification of God.

Psa 107:33-42 | The Supremacy of the LORD

*33 He changes rivers into a wilderness
And springs of water into a thirsty ground;
34 A fruitful land into a salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
35 He changes a wilderness into a pool of water
And a dry land into springs of water;
36 And there He makes the hungry to dwell,
So that they may establish an inhabited city,
37 And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And gather a fruitful harvest.
38 Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly,
And He does not let their cattle decrease.
39 When they are diminished and bowed down
Through oppression, misery and sorrow,
40 He pours contempt upon princes
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.
41 But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction,
And makes [his] families like a flock.
42 The upright see it and are glad;
But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.*

In the previous verses, four situations have made it clear that the LORD delivers from distress when His people cry out to Him. We have also seen these situations in Israel's history, with the ultimate result of arriving at their desired haven, which is the promised land in the realm of peace.

In the section that now follows, the situation of God's people is not viewed from the perspective of those who are in distress, but from the perspective of Him Who has everything in His hand and controls everything (Mt 28:18; Deu 32:39). He is not only the Savior, He is also the exalted, almighty God. He is mighty in redemption, whereby He is also mighty in bringing destruction upon the enemies of His people who seek to keep them in bondage. To deliver His people from the power of Egypt, He changed riv-

ers into a wilderness and springs of water into thirsty land (verse 33; Exo 14:21; cf. Isa 50:3).

Once the people were in the land, He did the opposite: He changed “fruitful land into a salt waste because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it” (verse 34). What He did to Sodom and Gomorrah is an example of this. It was a prosperous land (Gen 13:10), but the “the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD” (Gen 13:13). Therefore, God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole plain and made it a salt plain, making that area completely barren (Gen 18:20-21; 19:13,24-25).

Because of the people’s unfaithfulness – they violated the covenant and disobeyed the LORD – the fate of Sodom also became their fate. They have come into exile. That fate comes upon them as a result of the curse of the covenant (Deu 29:22-28).

For the faithful, He does the opposite (verse 35). For them “He changes a wilderness into a pool of water” and “a dry land into springs of water”. This will be seen in the realm of peace (Isa 35:6-7). Then there will not only be the fruitful rain from heaven, but fountains will spring up from the ground from which fresh water flows constantly.

The realm of peace is in every sense a time of refreshment (Acts 3:19). “The hungry” no longer wander hungrily and thirstily through a wilderness (verses 4-9), but “dwell” in the land of refreshment (verse 36). In a spiritual sense, “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” are satisfied here (Mt 5:6).

They also “establish an inhabited city” (cf. verse 7). They “establish” that city, that is, they made it habitable (cf. Isa 54:3). The cities were depopulated and turned into ruins by the unfaithfulness of God’s people. Now that the people are back with God, they can rebuild the cities and live there. To dwell means to enjoy the rest that has come after all the wanderings and hardships (cf. Isa 65:21-22).

Entering the realm of peace does not mean that there is no longer any need to work. It is a restoration of the situation in paradise, where there was also work. Work is a blessing. The curse has been removed from creation. Now the land can begin to give its full yield. To this end, they “sow fields and

plant vineyards" (verse 37). Their work will be blessed, they will "gather a fruitful harvest".

It is all due to the blessing of God. "He blesses them" (verse 38). Only because of this "they multiply greatly". This is the blessing He has promised (Gen 13:16; 22:17; 26:4; 32:12) and then gives. He also "does not let their cattle decrease". Previously He had to do so because of their unfaithfulness, but now they are faithful to Him. This is because He has given them a new heart and written in it His law. As a result, they keep His commandments and He blesses them (Deu 28:1-12).

However, the time of the realm of peace has not yet arrived. There are periods when God blesses His people. This is the case when there is a faithful judge or a faithful king who governs God's people according to His law. But then the people deviate again. Then "they are diminished and bowed down through oppression, misery and sorrow" (verse 39). Then God must send enemies to afflict them, or crop failures, so that they will cry out to Him again in their distress.

Especially "the princes" will He make feel how much they have deviated (verse 40). "He pours contempt" upon them (cf. Job 12:21a). They have been especially privileged by Him in position and wealth, in order to do good to others with it. But they have used those privileges only for themselves. We see this in the future in the false shepherds and especially the false chief shepherd, the antichrist (Eze 34:1-6; Zec 11:15-17).

Therefore, "He makes them wander in a pathless waste". They return to a state of emptiness, displacement and hopelessness. It seems to refer to the world beyond the grave, the land of eternal darkness. There is no path for them. This is the horror of hell and the fate of all who have rejected the Lord Jesus as the Way to God. Those who do not have Him have no way, not now and not ever. This is what awaits the antichrist and with him the apostate masses of Israel.

Opposite the noble is "the needy" (verse 41). He has nothing on which to boast. He is dependent on grace. That grace God gives him. He delivers him "from affliction" because he has cried out to Him and sets him "securely on high [literally: in an inaccessibly high place]". The poor, needy remnant He will deliver from their misery and set in a safe fortress. The

final and complete fulfillment of this will be enjoyed by the remnant in the realm of peace.

And He does not stop there, for He “makes [his] families like a flock”. Within that secure, inaccessibly high place, God provides a numerous offspring. A large family is a special blessing from God to which great pleasure is attached.

“The upright see” the blessing with which the LORD showered them “and are glad” (verse 42a). In them, as in “the needy” of the previous verse, we recognize the faithful remnant who will be blessed after the great tribulation. They owe all their blessings to the favor of God.

The blessing that God gives to His people silences the wicked (verse 42b). Iniquity has long held sway and sought to silence God by oppressing and killing His own. The perpetrators of iniquity have arrogated to themselves the rights of God and have thought they can take possession of God’s kingdom. The time will come when God confronts them with the truth. Then they will have no defense and will be silent (Mt 22:11-14).

Psa 107:43 | Who Is Wise?

*43 Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things,
And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.*

In all the events described we see both the failure and weakness of man and the work of God in forgiveness, deliverance and restoration. We see that God is above everything and accomplishes His work even where it seems that man makes it impossible for Him. It is precisely there that He shows how much He is exalted above man.

True wisdom is found where there is insight into the ways of God with His people and with man (cf. Hos 14:9; Deu 32:29; cf. Jam 3:13-17). He who is wise will “give heed to these things”, which are the things described in this psalm. Insight into the ways of the LORD comes through contemplation of those ways, especially by seeing events from a heavenly perspective (verses 33-42). The Lord Jesus addresses these wise men in His end time speech (Mt 24:15).

Whoever gives heed to this will perceive that God is a merciful God. No one can study the works of God without seeing that there are countless institutions and statutes in His creation that have no other purpose than to make man happy.

In all His dealings with man, His lovingkindness is manifested. Those who are wise will “consider” this and let it affect them. God’s lovingkindness is the basis of all the blessings that will be enjoyed by man in fullness during the realm of peace.

The psalm begins with a call to give thanks to the LORD because of His lovingkindness, His covenant faithfulness. The psalm ends with a call to pay attention to the favors – or covenant faithfulness, based on the blood of the new covenant, the same word as in verse 1 – of the LORD. If we have seen and taken in those favors in the ways of God, in His government in this world, we will be able to praise Him even more.

In Psalm 106 we see that the people of Israel did not consider the kindnesses of the LORD (Psa 106:7), so they failed to gain wisdom and remained foolish (Psa 107:17). In this sense, Psalm 107 is not just a psalm of praise, for the psalm ends as a wisdom psalm with teaching for the *maskilim*, that is, for those who are wise and want to become even wiser. This applies to the faithful remnant.

For us New Testament believers, this is true to a much greater degree. We are already blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3). When we are with the Lord Jesus in the Father’s house, we will come to know the full extent of this even more. There we will see everything as God has always seen it. That prospect will help us to go the way God now has for us on earth, with all the questions that go with it, to which He has the answer.

For us, too, pondering the Word of God regarding God’s ways and counsel will cause us to grow in wisdom and spiritual understanding (Eph 1:3-21; Col 1:9-29).

Psalm 108

Introduction

After the return from exile described in the previous psalm, the remnant will multiply greatly (Isa 49:19-21; cf. Eze 36:37-38). The distress in which the remnant has been in the great tribulation will be answered by the LORD by giving Israel the full inheritance as He promised it to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21). Verses 7b-9 in this psalm describe the expansion of Israel's borders to the river Euphrates to accommodate this population growth.

This psalm is composed of the end of Psalm 57 (verses 1-5; Psa 57:7-11) and the end of Psalm 60 (verses 6-13; Psa 60:5-12). The fact that the two parts are brought together here in one psalm means that there is a connection between the two parts. The first part is a song of praise to God for His lovingkindness and faithfulness (verse 4). In the second part, we hear God's response to it, which He gives in His sanctuary. He declares His dominion over all nations, a right He will claim through His people (verse 13). The result is that His glory will be above all the earth, which the remnant, His beloved, have asked for (verses 5-6).

Both Psalm 57 and Psalm 60, from which this 'mosaic' psalm is composed, are written by David. There is a difference, however: in Psalm 57 we read "Lord", Adonai (Psa 57:9), while Psalm 108 speaks of "LORD", Yahweh (verse 3).

Psalm 57 is in the second book of psalms. That book describes that the remnant has fled abroad and is in exile, as it were. Therefore, the name LORD, Yahweh, is missing. Psalm 108 is in the fifth book of psalms. In it we see the remnant who have returned to the promised land where the LORD is present. Therefore, it says here LORD, Yahweh, instead of Lord, Adonai.

Psalm 57 and Psalm 60 speak of the ways of God, with the first half of each psalm containing the exercises and trials, and the second half the results. Psalm 108 takes from both psalms only the second half because in this 'Deuteronomy-psalm' the experiences of the wilderness journey, the trials, are all over. The remnant is now looking forward to the realm of peace.

Psa 108:1-6 | Praise and Prayer

1 A Song, a Psalm of David.

My heart is steadfast, O God;

I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul.

2 Awake, harp and lyre;

I will awaken the dawn!

3 I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples,

And I will sing praises to You among the nations.

4 For Your lovingkindness is great above the heavens,

And Your truth [reaches] to the skies.

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,

And Your glory above all the earth.

6 That Your beloved may be delivered,

Save with Your right hand, and answer me!

For “a Song” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 65:1 and Psalm 92:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

This is the first psalm of the fifteen psalms in this fifth book of Psalms that have David’s name in the heading.

After contemplating the many lovingkindnesses of the LORD about which the psalmist wrote in the previous psalm (Psa 107:43), the heart has come to rest (verse 1b). His “heart is steadfast”, it is ready, it is able to sing, yes, singing praises to the glory of God. The glory [“my soul” is literally “my glory”] he has received from God as king over His people is not to his own glory, but is to the glory of God. It is the response to the exhortation in Psalm 107 to praise the LORD because of His lovingkindness and faithfulness. He proceeds to do so with a song of praise (verse 3) accompanied by harp and lyre (verse 2).

A new day or a new period has begun in his life (verse 2). Psalm 57 has two sections: one is about ‘going to sleep’ (Psa 57:2-7) and one is about ‘waking up’ (Psa 57:8-11). As mentioned, Psalm 108 only takes up the second part, which is the part about the dawn, a new day. The night of exile is over, “the sun of righteousness” has risen (Mal 4:2), the new day has arrived.

He wants to begin that new day, that new period, with a song accompanied by “harp and lyre”. He speaks to these instruments to awake, to break their silence. During the exile, the remnant hung their harps on the willows (Psa 137:2). But that time has passed, and now they can make their euphonious tones heard. With this, he wants to, as it were, “awaken the dawn”. It is a warm welcome to the shining morning light of the new day (Pro 4:18).

That new day dawns not only in his life and for his people, but also for the nations (verse 3; Mal 1:11). The thanksgiving to the LORD must also sound “among the peoples”. The praises he sings to the LORD must also be heard “among the nations” (cf. Eze 36:35-36). This will be so in the realm of peace.

The occasion for these expressions of joy – shown by the word “for” – are God’s “lovingkindness” and “truth” (verse 4). The lovingkindness of God is “great”, that is, extensive and high. It does not only go *to* the heavens, but “*above* the heavens”. The psalmist comes to this conclusion because he considered the lovingkindnesses of the LORD (Psa 107:43). Then he discovered that the LORD’s lovingkindness is so great that it is higher than the heavens. We see this lovingkindness in the Lord Jesus. He “ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things” (Eph 4:10).

Directly attached to His lovingkindness is again His truth. His lovingkindness always goes together with His truth, with faithfulness to His truth. His truth reaches to the skies or the clouds. The clouds are ruled by Him. They bring blessing where He wants and judgment where it is needed.

From the assurance of the exaltedness of God (Psa 99:2), the psalmist asks God to show His great lovingkindness and truth by delivering His people. In doing so, the world will see His exaltation (verse 3). The psalmist asks God to exalt Himself, that is, to act in accordance with it (verse 5). He asks this not primarily in view of his own need, although that aspect also plays a role, as the next verse indicates, but so that God’s honor or glory will be visible “above all the earth”.

The only real source of comfort is the awareness that the well-being of the universe and of His people depends on God. God’s lovingkindness and truth are more important to the universe and to us than the success of our plans, our health, our prosperity, or our lives. If that is our first thought,

we are then given the assurance that He cares about our fate on earth and will provide for deliverance and salvation, as we hear in the next verse.

When God's glory is over all the earth, it means the end of all enmity against God and His beloved (verse 6). The psalmist speaks to God of His people as "Your beloved" (cf. Deu 7:8; Jer 31:3). He appeals to God from the awareness that God loves His people. God will deliver His beloved when He exalts above the heavens in His lovingkindness and truth. Then His power, of which His right hand speaks, becomes manifest for the salvation of His people and the answer to the prayer of His own in their distress is given.

Psa 108:7-9 | God Has Spoken

7 God has spoken in His holiness [or: sanctuary]:

*"I will exult, I will portion out Shechem
And measure out the valley of Succoth.*

*8 "Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine;
Ephraim also is the helmet of My head;
Judah is My scepter.*

*9 "Moab is My washbowl;
Over Edom I shall throw My shoe;
Over Philistia I will shout aloud."*

David and his people asked God for an answer in verse 6. Now we hear that in response "God has spoken in His holiness" (verse 7a). It can also be translated as "God has spoken in His sanctuary". That means that what God says will sanctify His Name. What God says is at the same time what God does. When God wanted to create light, He only had to speak. He spoke and it was there: "God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light" (Gen 1:3). The LORD promised the land to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21). If the LORD did not fulfill His promise, His Name would be profaned. This is impossible, for the LORD speaks in His holiness and also fulfills this promise.

The point is that we come to know God's view of a situation only in the sanctuary, where God dwells. There He makes His thoughts known in response to our questions. When we know how God thinks about a matter,

we will exult for joy, as we read here that David does. Then despair and doubt disappear and certainty comes over the outcome of the battle.

Then we hear what God has spoken. First God speaks of His right to Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah (verses 7b-8). These areas are all in Israel. "Shechem" and "Succoth" point to the beginning of Jacob's return to the promised land (Gen 33:17-18). That God will "portion out" Shechem proves His right to it (verse 7b). He will give it to whom it belongs. "Measure out" the valley of Succoth has the same meaning. God will measure the whole area and give the precisely measured area to whom it belongs, no more and no less.

"Gilead" is at the other side of Jordan and "Manasseh" is partly in the land and partly at the other side of Jordan (verse 8). Of both Gilead and *the whole* of Manasseh God says: it is "Mine". "Ephraim" represents the ten tribes and "Judah" the two tribes. Together they make up the whole land of Israel. Of Ephraim God says that he is the helmet [literally: protection] of His head which means the main part or largest part of the land, which is the northern part. Of Judah God says he is His scepter, or lawgiver (cf. Gen 49:10; Num 21:18). From Judah His law will be taught and enforced everywhere. This will be the situation when the Messiah reigns.

Next, God proclaims that He also has ownership of all the territories outside of Israel. Of these, He names "Moab", "Edom", and "Philistia" by name (verse 9). These countries represent the hostile neighboring countries. We also find these countries in Jeremiah's prophecies of the end time (Jeremiah 47-49). God adds something to these names as well. Of Moab He says: "Moab is My washbowl." A washbowl or laver serves to clean feet. God will use Moab to cleanse there the part of His people who will flee from the land and find refuge in Moab (Isa 16:4).

After the battle, the soldiers take off their shoes, wash their feet in a washbowl and throw their shoes at the defeated enemies as a sign of victory and proclaim it jubilantly. In short, victory is overwhelming and absolute. After these countries are conquered, just as in the days of the conquest of Canaan under Joshua, the land is taken possession of. And so the promise of God to Abraham is fulfilled.

Of Edom He says that He shall throw His shoe over it. This means that He will subject this people to Himself (cf. Rth 4:7). God will rejoice over Philistia. This people have rejoiced at the victories they have won over God's people (cf. 2Sam 1:20). The roles will be reversed when the Messiah reigns (Isa 11:14).

Psa 108:10-13 | God Is the Only Helper

*10 Who will bring me into the besieged city?
Who will lead me to Edom?
11 Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us?
And will You not go forth with our armies, O God?
12 Oh give us help against the adversary,
For deliverance by man is in vain.
13 Through God we will do valiantly,
And it is He who shall tread down our adversaries.*

After God has announced His ownership of various places and areas inside and outside of Israel, David asks who will bring him "into the strong city" (verse 10, Darby Translation). The fortress of Petra, the capital of Edom, built in rocks, is that strong city. Because of its natural location, it is humanly impossible to conquer that city. Is there anyone, David wonders, who can lead him "to Edom", into its center?

He himself gives the answer to his question. It can be none other than God (verse 11). But God has rejected them. Prophetically, that is the time when Israel is under the rule of the antichrist. God has had to give His people over to it because of their unfaithfulness to Him. That David nevertheless says that God will lead him into Edom shows his faith. The God Who has rejected them is the Only One Who can help him and his army. Certainly, God did not go out with the armies of His people because His people had turned away from Him. That is why they were defeated. But that makes it immediately clear that the only way to overcome is for God to go out with them again.

Therefore, those who fear God can appeal to no one else in their distress but to Him alone (verse 12). God has brought them into that distress and therefore He is the Only One Who can lead them out of it as well. There-

fore, they cry out for His help. They acknowledge in what they have sinned in the past: "For deliverance by man is in vain" (cf. Isa 2:22).

We can also apply this spiritually. When a man is in spiritual distress about his sins, there is no man who can help him. The Only One Who can help is God. He alone can deliver him from the burden of his sins, no one else. For this He gave His Son. The same applies to the guidance in the life of the believer. Only God knows which way to go. Therefore, he must go to Him and not let himself be led by men. He has given His Word and His Spirit to guide him.

Only with God, with His help, God's people will do valiantly (verse 13). He provides His people with strength and courage to fight the enemies. This statement shows trust in God in the face of their own powerlessness. If He is with them, they will tread down their adversaries, which is tantamount to God treading them down (cf. Rom 16:20a).

Psalm 109

Introduction

In Psalm 109, as in the following, it is about Christ. Both are messianic psalms. In Psalm 109 we hear about the suffering of Christ and in Psalm 110 we hear about the glorification of Christ. In Psalm 109, Christ as the suffering Servant of the LORD prays for salvation; in Psalm 110, God answers Him by saving Him from death and exalting Him (cf. Heb 5:7-10).

Christ's suffering here is suffering because of the rejection by His own (cf. Jn 1:11), just as Joseph was rejected by Judah and his brothers. Prophetically, the same will happen to the faithful remnant which is rejected by the antichrist and his followers. We recognize the rejection in the false accusation by the wicked of the believers.

When we think about the suffering of Christ, we will always have to distinguish between the suffering (singular) of Christ to reconcile us to God, and the sufferings (plural) of Christ on the side of men. In the first suffering (singular) He is unique. No one shares in it with Him. In the second, the sufferings (plural), He is a perfect example for believers of all ages who have to suffer in this depraved world.

Because the suffering is caused by the enemies, this psalm also has the character of a prayer for justice. There is talk of judgment (verse 7).

Psa 109:1-5 | Love Repaid With Hate

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

O God of my praise,

Do not be silent!

2 For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me;

They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred,

And fought against me without cause.

4 In return for my love they act as my accusers;

But I am [in] prayer.

5 Thus they have repaid me evil for good
And hatred for my love.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

The psalm begins (verse 1b) and ends (verses 30-31) with praising God. The psalm begins with the God worthy of praise and ends with a jubilant song in a large congregation. This makes this psalm an ‘envelope psalm’. Although this psalm – like Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 – is about the suffering of Christ, victory is so certain that ‘the envelope’ of this psalm is not an envelope of mourning, but of praises.

David addresses God as the “God of my praise”. God is the object of his personal (“my”) praise. He has a personal relationship with God. In his dealings with his God, he has come to know God in many ways. In all the circumstances in which he has been, God has helped him and assisted him. As a result, God has become the God of his praise. We, too, have countless reasons to praise God, by which God can and will be the God of our praise for us personally.

To that God he cries out emphatically, “O God”, not to be silent. It indicates that David is in distress. It is because of the cruelty and unreasonableness of the enemy. Therefore, he cries out to God. But God is silent, He does not answer (yet). His answer comes in the first verse of Psalm 110 (Psa 110:1). In the following verses, David says why he cries out to God.

He desperately needs help, for “the wicked one” has opened his mouth, a “deceitful mouth” against him (verse 2). In “the wicked”, singular, we see the antichrist (cf. Psa 52:2-4), the mouthpiece of the devil, the father of lies. Those who follow the wicked one speak “with a lying tongue” against him (cf. Mt 26:59).

They not only speak deceitful, lying words against and with him, but also “with words of hatred” (verse 3). Verse 2 shows us the outside, words of wickedness, of deceit, and of lies. Verse 3 gives us a glimpse of the inside: hatred, and without cause. Hatred is their motive (verse 5b). They even “surrounded” him with words of hatred. It’s not just an occasional lie, but they do nothing else. And they do so even though there is no cause to do

so. David complains: "They ... fought against me without cause." More than of David, this is true of the Lord Jesus. We therefore hear the Spirit of Christ speaking in David (Acts 2:30-31).

That it is in fact about Christ, Christ Himself makes clear. He quotes this verse in His conversation with the disciples just before His going to the cross (Jn 15:24-25). He tells of the hatred the Jews harbor against Him. There is no reason for them to hate Him. After all, He has always been among them in love and grace and goodness. Yet they hated Him (Psa 38:19). It proves the wickedness of man's heart and the truth of God's Word.

The deep reason for the opposition of the wicked and his followers is, says the Lord Jesus, "My love" (verse 4). Here we also clearly hear the Lord Jesus speaking, Who experienced this truthfully in His life on earth. Also, the response to all false accusations and charges can only apply to Christ. Only He can say: "I am prayer." He places against all enmity His utter dependence on His God to Whom He entrusted Himself and all things (1Pet 2:23b).

His whole life was characterized by an attitude of prayer. The word '[in]' is not in the original Bible text. This added word weakens the power of what is written. 'Being prayer' is more than 'being in prayer'. There is only one Person Who can say He 'was prayer' in His life on earth and that is the Lord Jesus.

He has not merely been ignored, but the opposite of what He is and does is given to Him. He has done nothing but good (Acts 10:38), but instead of being grateful for it they repay Him "evil for good" (verse 5; Psa 35:12a; 38:20). The same is true of the greatest contradiction imaginable, that of love and hate. He proved only love to everyone with whom He came into contact. Instead of being attracted by His love, they hated Him and pushed Him away. How icy and hard as stone is the heart of the sinner!

Psa 109:6-15 | The Curse for the Traitor

6 *Appoint a wicked man over him,
And let an accuser stand at his right hand.*
7 *When he is judged, let him come forth guilty,*

And let his prayer become sin.

8 Let his days be few;

Let another take his office.

9 Let his children be fatherless

And his wife a widow.

10 Let his children wander about and beg;

And let them seek [sustenance] far from their ruined homes.

11 Let the creditor seize all that he has,

And let strangers plunder the product of his labor.

12 Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him,

Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children.

13 Let his posterity be cut off;

In a following generation let their name be blotted out.

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD,

And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out.

15 Let them be before the LORD continually,

That He may cut off their memory from the earth;

In this section, David, through the Spirit of Christ, pronounces a particularly penetrating and comprehensive curse on the wicked and his posterity. Verse 8b is quoted by Peter in Acts 1 (Acts 1:20). The context in which the quotation appears in Acts 1 (Acts 1:15-26) makes it clear that here in Psalm 109 it is prophetically about Judas, the betrayer of the Lord Jesus.

Of all the enemies, Judas is the enemy who has been closest to Him. Judas has known Him best and in spite of that has turned against Him, the Righteous One, in the greatest apostasy. A greater wickedness cannot be imagined. The curse called upon him is fully deserved. Here it is not about revenge for injustice suffered, but judgment for the greatest injustice ever done.

The curse begins with God appointing “a wicked man over him”, that is over Judas (verse 6). This “wicked man” is satan. Satan means ‘adversary’ or ‘accuser’. Satan also stands “at his right hand” to accuse him (cf. Zec 3:1; Rev 12:10). After Judas performed his repugnant act of betrayal under satan’s urging (Lk 22:3), the same satan drives Judas in his hopeless despair to the act of suicide (Mt 27:3-4).

Judas has done the work of satan, and satan 'rewards' him for it with the only reward he has to give: death. He who does the work of satan finds in him no defender, but a prosecutor who fills him with the utmost remorse. Satan does and can do nothing but steal and kill and destroy (Jn 10:10a).

Judas is judged and has come forth guilty (verse 7). He does not receive a sentence reduction and leaves this life as a guilty man. He has received the wages of sin, death (Rom 6:23). The prayer he utters: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Mt 27:4), is a prayer uttered against his better judgment. It is a prayer uttered only to be delivered from the consequences of sin. It is not sincere, it does not involve repentance for the sin committed. Such a prayer becomes sin. Sin literally means 'missing the goal', here it means that the prayer will have no result.

If a person serves God faithfully, the promise is that his days will be increased (Deu 6:1-2; Pro 3:1-2). That promise is not always fulfilled during a person's life on earth. We see this in the life of the Lord Jesus. He was killed in the midst of His days on earth (Psa 102:24a). But He receives His days after His resurrection and those days are without end. With Judas, the meaning of the word that "his days be few" (cf. Psa 37:35-36) is that they are limited to earthly life. After his heinous act of suicide, he has come into the place of pain to be consigned later to eternal fire by the Judge on the great white throne.

The second part of verse 8, as indicated above, is applied by Peter to Judas. Peter explicitly says that what is said here is "fulfilled" in what happened to Judas (Acts 1:16). This makes the whole psalm a prophetic testimony. "His office" is his apostleship. The "other" who takes his office is Matthias (Acts 1:26).

The Lord Jesus had chosen Judas to be an apostle (Jn 6:70-71), not to become His traitor. That He became the traitor was because of his greed. To that he gave in and became a thief. As a result, he opened himself to the devil.

In addition to judgment on himself, Judas' act also affects his children, his wife, his possessions, his environment, and his memory and the memory of his posterity. This is described in verses 9-15. A person who sins not only violates his own soul. He always drags others into his fall (Jos 22:20;

2Sam 3:29). As someone has said, the way away from God you don't go alone (cf. Exo 20:5).

Here it is about Judas as a type of the antichrist. Both Judas and the antichrist are called "the son of perdition" or "the son of destruction" (Jn 17:12; 2Thes 2:3). The followers of the antichrist are painted here as his family.

Through his suicide, Judas' "children" become "fatherless" and "his wife" becomes a "widow" (verse 9). Regardless of the reason for the death through suicide, a suicide always has a great impact on the lives of the family, friends and acquaintances left behind. It is a deed of selfishness that no longer considers the impact this deed has on others.

The consequence of his deed is also that "his children wander about and beg" and "seek [sustenance] far from their ruined homes" (verse 10; cf. Jer 18:21). Because the children have lost their father, they now have to make a living on their own. To do this, they must go begging. The place where they lived has become a desolate place. They no longer have a home.

Judas was a thief (Jn 12:6). After his death, "the creditor seizes all that he has" (verse 11; cf. 2Kgs 4:1). Also, "strangers plunder the product of his labor". This makes the situation of his descendants even more dramatic.

Because he himself has not shown lovingkindness, he will also have "none to extend lovingkindness to him" (verse 12). No one will be "gracious to his fatherless children". They are seen as most closely associated with this evil work of betrayal. Their father committed the greatest betrayal ever.

For the posterity of Judas, there is no future. The only thing waiting for them is to be "cut off" (verse 13). As a result, "their name" will "be blotted out" in a following generation. There will be no one left who will think of them. While "the memory of the righteous is blessed", "the memory" of the wicked "perishes from the earth" (Pro 10:7; Job 18:17).

"The iniquity of his fathers" is a reference to his ancestry and also we see a reference to original sin (verse 14). Judas, like every human being, comes from a family that has done iniquity. The expression "original sin" refers to the sinful nature of man. Sin entered the world through one man, Adam, causing all men to sin (Rom 5:12).

This is to be “remembered before the LORD continually” with respect to Judas, that is, there is no substitute for Judas. Children are not lost because of the iniquities of the parents, but because of their own iniquities. Those iniquities do come from a nature inherited from the ancestors.

Also the mentioning of “the sin of his mother” points to original sin. It is not about a specific deed of his mother, but about what she imparted to him in bringing Judas into the world. That can “not ... be blotted out”. By birth he has become a sinner, which is evident from his deeds.

All this does not mean that sinful deeds can never be blotted out. We are talking here about Judas as a type of the antichrist and his not repented deed and sinful life. From anyone who acknowledges that he has a corrupted nature and has lived according to that nature, sins can be blotted out. This happens when sins are sincerely confessed and it is acknowledged that they have come from a corrupted nature. Such a person may know that Christ has accomplished the necessary sacrifice to be reconciled to God, by which God no longer remembers sins because He has blotted them out.

The last verse of the curse speaks on the one hand of a “continual” remembrance and on the other hand of a “cut off ... from the earth” (verse 15). On the one hand, the LORD must continually keep in mind the iniquity and sin that has happened on earth. On the other hand, the earth must be cleansed of any memory of Judas, and of people like him. Their influence must not be present anywhere on earth in the realm of peace.

Psa 109:16-20 | The Reason for the Curse

*16 Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness,
But persecuted the afflicted and needy man,
And the despondent in heart, to put [them] to death.
17 He also loved cursing, so it came to him;
And he did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him.
18 But he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment,
And it entered into his body like water
And like oil into his bones.
19 Let it be to him as a garment with which he covers himself,*

And for a belt with which he constantly girds himself.

20 Let this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD,

And of those who speak evil against my soul.

The word “because” with which verse 16 begins indicates that now follows the reason for the curses pronounced above. The thought of showing “lovingkindness” was completely absent from Judas (cf. Mt 18:21-35). Instead of showing lovingkindness he “persecuted the afflicted and needy man and the despondent in heart”. Again, this blatantly refers to the Lord Jesus. Judas set out “to put to death” this afflicted and needy Man, the Despondent in heart.

Judas was not destined to be cursed, he chose to be cursed, for “he loved the curse” (verse 17). He found his joy in cursing others. Therefore, it is rightly requested that the curse be brought upon him. Also, God does not withhold the blessing from him, but he refuses it, because “he did not delight in blessing”. Therefore, it is right that the blessing “was far from him”. In both cases, this is a confirmation of Judas’ choice.

His choice shows that he is clothed with cursing “as with his garment” (verse 18; cf. Job 29:14). The curse is on him. But not only in his appearance, which ‘his garment’ indicates, is the curse visible. The curse has “entered into his body like water”. It is something that invigorates him. He lives and moves by it; it has entered “like oil into his bones”. It is like lubricant to his joints.

In other words, verse 19 reiterates what has already been said in verse 18. It shows how much he and the curse belong together. The curse does not rest on him, but he feels comfortable in it, he envelops himself in it. It is the strength of his life, of which the “belt” speaks “with which he constantly girds himself”.

The curse is “the reward”, something he has earned (verse 20). It is like “death”, which is “the wages of sin” (Rom 6:23; cf. Jam 1:13-15). However, this “reward” is not only for Judas, but for all “accusers” of the Lord Jesus. This opposition is evidenced by “evil speaking” against His soul. People who will not bow down to Him always speak evil of Him. To speak evil of Him Who is only and perfectly good is to blaspheme Him. It is the work of the devil. This work deserves no other than eternal death.

Psa 109:21-29 | Prayer for God's Help

*21 But You, O GOD, the Lord, deal [kindly] with me for Your name's sake;
Because Your lovingkindness is good, deliver me;
22 For I am afflicted and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
23 I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens;
I am shaken off like the locust.
24 My knees are weak from fasting,
And my flesh has grown lean, without fatness.
25 I also have become a reproach to them;
When they see me, they wag their head.
26 Help me, O LORD my God;
Save me according to Your lovingkindness.
27 And let them know that this is Your hand;
You, LORD, have done it.
28 Let them curse, but You bless;
When they arise, they shall be ashamed,
But Your servant shall be glad.
29 Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor,
And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe.*

Christ never defended Himself against all the injustice done to Him and all the evil spoken about Him. With the words “but You” He turned to “GOD, the Lord” and asked Him to deal kindly with Him (verse 21). The word “but” indicates the contrast between the dealings of Judas and that of His God to Whom He turns.

He appeals to the Name of GOD, the Lord, for He has always honored His Name and always done everything in that Name. The answer to prayer is to the glory of His Name. That is true of the prayer of Christ, it is also true of the prayer of the remnant. Therefore, He counts on God's lovingkindness which is good. He knows that lovingkindness like no other and He knows how good it is. He has always experienced it. That has been the strength of His life. Also now He knows that God's lovingkindness is there for Him.

He points God to His condition: He is “afflicted and needy” (verse 22; verse 16; Psa 40:17). He mentions it as a pleading ground before God, that God may help Him. He does not take the law into His own hands, for He had not come to earth to judge, but to do the will of God. This meant undergoing the greatest possible injustice and suffering. Inwardly He deeply suffered because of all that was said against and about Him. We hear this when He says: “My heart is wounded within me” (cf. Psa 22:14b; 69:20a).

He felt His life flowing away, which He describes meaningfully “like a shadow when it lengthens” (verse 23; cf. Psa 102:11). A shadow proves that there is a person, while the person himself is not seen. There is no power in it. A lengthening shadow indicates the setting of the sun and the falling of the night of death. By his surroundings he is “shaken off like the locust”. To them He is as a troublesome insect that you remove from your body with a shaking movement. No one gives a penny for his life anymore.

The strength to walk is gone because the “knees are weak from fasting” (verse 24; cf. Heb 12:12). We see this when the Lord Jesus had to carry the cross. He suffered so much from all the ill-treatments that His strength was pressed down on the road (Psa 102:23). That is why they seize Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross of Christ after Him (Lk 23:26). At the same time, zeal for God’s house consumed Him, so that His “flesh has grown lean, without fatness” (cf. Psa 22:17a).

Despite His pitiful condition as a result of His commitment to God and the people, He has become “a reproach to them” (verse 25; cf. Psa 69:19). They mocked Him. “They wagged their head” in disgust when they saw Him (Mt 27:39). This contempt for the perfect Man Whose deeds and words were full of mercy is an indescribable crime.

The Lord Jesus is deeply troubled by all this blasphemy and mistreatment. He lifts Himself up, not to strike down His opponents, but to cry out to the “LORD my God” to help Him (verse 26). He asks if His God in His faithfulness will save Him according to His lovingkindness from the great need in which He is. The need is so great that the Lord asks for help for the second time, in fact a repetition of verse 21.

If Christ is saved by His God, the adversaries will know that God’s hand has brought salvation (verse 27). Every evil power in the universe will

know that God has chosen Christ to be His King. This will happen when the realm of peace is established and the Lord Jesus sits on the throne of His glory. No one will be able to deny that the LORD did it.

The adversaries can curse all they want, they are meaningless, empty curses, for they hit no target (verse 28). All Christ cares about is the blessing of His God. They can also attack as often and whenever and wherever they want, but they shall be ashamed, while God's "servant shall be glad". For the believer who sees the hand of God in everything, the curse is always turned into blessing and the result is always joy.

For the adversaries, the reverse will be true. They rejoice over the misery of the Afflicted, but they will be "clothed with dishonor" (verse 29). Shame will be poured out on them because of their contempt for the Righteous. They will "cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe". Inwardly, they will be deeply ashamed of their falsehood and slander which they have spread about Him, Who is called Afflicted and Needy.

Psa 109:30-31 | Promise to Praise God

30 With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD;

And in the midst of many I will praise Him.

31 For He stands at the right hand of the needy,

To save him from those who judge his soul.

The psalm ends with the promise of a song of praise. In the assurance of the answer to His prayer, Christ says that He will give thanks abundantly to the LORD with His mouth in a loud voice (verse 30). He "will praise Him" in the midst of many (cf. Psa 22:22b; Heb 2:9-12). He will sing this song of praise when, as the Risen One, He is in the midst of His own, whom He has redeemed through His death.

Giving thanks is always done with the mouth. Therefore, it seems superfluous to mention it. That it is done here anyway is because this psalm begins with a deceitful mouth (verse 2). Through the help of the LORD, this psalm ends with a mouth that praises the LORD in a loud tone.

Christ knows that the LORD will "stand at the right hand of the needy" (verse 31; cf. verse 6). He is that Needy. The LORD stands at His right hand to acquit Him of every charge (Isa 50:9a). Thus He will be saved "from

those who judge his soul" (cf. 2Tim 4:16-17; Rom 8:33). In His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was justified, that is, declared righteous, in all that He did. As a result, every charge has not only been declared completely unfounded, but has been exhibited as a false charge.

Now that the suffering has been justly recompensed, the glory can be revealed. That's what Psalm 110 is about.

Psalm 110

Introduction

The Afflicted and Needy of Psalm 109 is the reigning King-Priest in Psalm 110. Between His suffering on earth and His public glorification on earth, which is the time in which we live, He sits on the Father's throne (Psa 110:1) awaiting His own throne (Rev 3:21). His suffering and the glory thereafter are the great theme of the prophets (1Pet 1:11).

We often find Christ in Psalms in connection with the remnant. In this psalm it is only about Him. He has emptied Himself and God has given Him a Name above every name (Phil 2:9-11).

Verse 1 of this psalm is quoted more than any other verse – as many as fourteen times – from the Old Testament into the New Testament:

1. The Lord Jesus quotes this verse to the Pharisees to prove that He, the Messiah, is not only the Son of David, but also the Lord of David because He is also the Son of God (Psa 2:7; Mt 22:41-44; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:42).

The verse is also quoted to state that Christ

2. as Son is exalted far above the angels (Heb 1:3,13);

3. as Lord has authority over all things and as Christ is the Man of God's pleasure (Acts 2:33-34);

4. has received an unchanging priesthood (Heb 7:17,20-21; 5:5-6);

5. awaits the moment of His public rule, when His enemies will be a footstool for His feet (Heb 10:13).

Verse 1 is quoted in Matthew 22 to *reproof*, to show that the Son of David is more than David. In Acts 2 it is quoted to *convince* the Jews of the fact of ascension. In Hebrews 1 it is quoted to *confirm* that Christ is more than the angels.

Psa 110:1 | Christ in Heaven

| 1 A Psalm of David.

The LORD says to my Lord:

“Sit at My right hand

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

This psalm, as confirmed by the Lord Jesus Himself, is “of David”. However, it is not about David, but in the Spirit he prophesied about the great Son of David, the Christ of God in the glory of heaven. In Psalms, David is mostly a type of Christ. As a prophet, he then speaks in the Spirit. In this psalm, which is about the glorification of Christ, he cannot be a type. Psalm 110 is the only psalm where David is very clearly distinguished from Christ. Therefore, this verse is used by the Lord Jesus to show His glory as the Lord and the Son (Mt 22:43).

“The LORD” (verse 1b) informed David by the Spirit that He “says to my Lord” and what He says. This is the answer to David’s prayer in Psalm 109 (Psa 109:1). Psalm 109 is the past, the suffering of the Lord Jesus on earth. Psalm 110:1 is the present; almost 2000 years the Lord has been seated at God’s right hand. Beginning with Psalm 110:2, it is the future, when the Savior will appear as the King-Priest, as the Conqueror, Who will sit on His own throne. In summary:

Psalm 109 Christ’s suffering.

Psalm 110:1 Christ’s sitting.

Psalm 110:2-6 Christ’s reign.

“Says” is literally ‘oracle, a speaking of God’, an expression often found in the prophetic books. This psalm is indeed prophetic, as Matthew 22 makes clear (Mt 22:43).

David speaks of “my Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler. The Lord Jesus is the Son of David as Man, but He is also the Lord of David because He is also the Son of God. To Him the LORD, Yahweh, has said to sit at His right hand.

The right hand is the place of honor (cf. 1Kgs 2:19) and of power. That place was given to the Lord Jesus by God. It refers to the glorification of the Lord Jesus after He accomplished the work on the cross, His death and

His resurrection. He occupies that place since and from His ascension until He appears in glory.

Peter refers to this verse in his speech on the day of Pentecost and says that God has made the Lord Jesus “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:34-36). He attributes everything to God to show how much God values and has accepted the work of His Son. On earth people may have despised and rejected Him, as Psalm 109 shows, but Psalm 110 shows that to God He is the perfectly Delightful One, Whom He joyfully gives the highest and most glorious place in heaven.

The contrast between the place God gives Him and man gives Him is enormous. Man has betrayed, rejected, mistreated and murdered Him as an unworthy. But God has made Him Lord, the Sovereign Who has all power in heaven and on earth. God has also made Him Christ, the Bearer and Dispenser of all His promises.

Peter’s reference to this verse proves that it is not about David, but about the Lord Jesus. David is speaking here of the glorification of the Lord Jesus as an act of Yahweh, that is God. The Lord Jesus has been exalted by the right hand of God and God has given Him the place of honor at His right hand. That place belongs to Him, He has deserved that place. The suffering of Christ by the hands of the people and the glorification of Christ as God’s response to it is the recurring theme of the apostles’ preaching to the Jewish people in the book of Acts.

There is an “until” attached to that place of honor at God’s right hand. For there will come a time when the Lord Jesus leaves that place to return to earth. He will then judge the enemies of His people, that is the faithful remnant –the enemies of His people are also His enemies. Those enemies are both within the people – they are the antichrist and his followers, the unbelieving part of Israel – and outside the people – they are the Assyrians led by the king of the North.

Christ will lay all those who have refused to repent and have continually turned against Him and His people full of hatred as vanquished enemies under His feet, so that He will rest on them. A footstool symbolizes total submission (cf. Jos 10:24). Until that time, He remains in glory.

It is important to notice that the truth of the connection between Christ and the church is not mentioned. This psalm shows Christ in glory with immediately following the subduing of His enemies under His feet by God. The psalm is God's dual response to Christ's humiliation: first His glorification in heaven and then His glorification on earth (Mt 6:10).

Psa 110:2-3 | The King

2 The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, [saying],

"Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

3 Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;

In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,

Your youth are to You [as] the dew.

In verse 2 we see Christ in His glorification on earth. This happens when He appears in the world for the second time. Then "the LORD", Yahweh, gives Him the dominion He has deserved through His work on the cross (Rev 5:1-14). Christ stretches forth His "strong scepter from Zion". This is the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by Balaam (Num 21:17; cf. Psa 2:8-9; 72:8). The scepter is a symbol of authority, which is further emphasized by speaking of a "strong scepter". Zion is the center of His government that extends over the whole earth. He rules in the midst of His enemies. All enmity has come to an end.

He also rules over His people, who "will volunteer freely in the day of Your power" (verse 3; cf. Song 6:12). When the Lord Jesus has appeared in glory, the remnant will bow down to Him and make themselves available to Him. The remnant then exhibits the features of the Lord Jesus. It is with them as with the followers of David who, as weary and burdened, sought refuge with him in the cave of Adullam, and were changed by Him into heroes (1Sam 22:1-2). The Lord Jesus "volunteered freely" to do the will of His Father (Jn 4:34). So it is with the remnant: they "volunteer freely".

Now that the believing remnant's own strength and self-will are broken, it is willing to do God's will (Psa 119:60). Jacob, who learned in the school of God, is a wonderful example of this. When his hip is dislocated and his strength is broken in the encounter with the Angel of the LORD, the God

of Jacob declares that his name will henceforth be “Israel”, which means “prince of God” (Gen 32:24-28).

Jacob experienced a rebirth, as it were. In this he is a type of the faithful remnant who have been made a very willing people by the God of Jacob.

There is no reluctance at all, but great willingness to serve Him and to confirm Him in His kingship (cf. 1Chr 11:10). They match Him, for they are clothed “in holy array”, meaning they are holy as He is holy. They are clothed in white garments, as priests, the garment washed in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14). The appearance of so many people clothed in a white robe, resembles the dew, pure and fresh, priestly and powerful. It is truthfully a kingdom of priests.

They come forth “from the womb of the dawn”. This is a beautiful, poetic description of the new period that will begin when the Messiah begins to reign (cf. Song 6:10). The new period is like a new birth. The Lord Jesus therefore speaks of that time as the “regeneration”, which is the time when He will reign and His disciples reign with Him (Mt 19:28). The regeneration is that of the earth, when it is freed from the curse of sin that lies upon it (Rom 8:19-21). Then the earthly kingdom is regenerated, renewed, reborn (Psa 104:30b).

To this, “the youth ... [as] the dew” ties in closely. The willing people and the regeneration of creation belong to the Messiah as dew belongs to the dawning of a new day. Dew speaks of refreshment, invigoration. It is the freshness of a new day. Dew is described several times in the Old Testament as a blessing from heaven for the land of God (Deu 33:13,28; Num 11:9). The new generation that will enter the realm of peace in imitation of the Messiah will be a refreshment for the Messiah and will bear fruit for Him in their life. They will serve the Lord with joy.

Psa 110:4 | The Priest

*4 The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,
“You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”*

Now that His kingship has been established, we hear that “the LORD has sworn”. He has sworn an oath of which He says, as an additional endorse-

ment, that He “will not change His mind”. In Psalm 109, at the suffering of Christ, the LORD has remained silent (Psa 109:1; cf. Zep 3:17). In Psalm 110, the LORD spoke an oracle, a speaking of God (verse 1), and swore (verse 4).

The oath implies that Christ will not only be King, but that at the same time He will be “a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:17,21). In today’s world, power must be divided (the so-called trias politica). With the Lord Jesus, it is different. He can say that ALL power in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Mt 28:18). In today’s world, church and state must be separated. Even with the people of Israel, the priest must be of the tribe of Levi, descendant of Aaron, and the king must be of the tribe of Judah. A combination was not possible. King Uzziah experienced to his detriment that as king he could not take the position of priest on his own (2Chr 26:16-20).

So not with the Lord Jesus, for He is a King and a Priest in one Person. Except here in Psalm 110:4, we find this truth one more time in the Old Testament and that is in Zechariah 6 (Zec 6:13). The only one who could be a type of this was Melchizedek, the mysterious king of Jerusalem (Heb 7:2-3). Melchizedek was king of Salem and a priest of God Most High (Gen 14:18; Heb 7:1-2). He is a picture of Christ as King-Priest on His throne (Zec 6:12-13). The time of blessing cannot come until the Lord Jesus has also appeared as Priest to bring that blessing. All blessing depends on Him as Priest.

“The order of Melchizedek” – according to the order of Aaron, the Lord Jesus could not be a priest (Heb 7:14) – is an order of blessing. According to that order, the Lord Jesus is King-Priest Who brings blessing from God for God’s people on earth. This will find its full fulfillment in the millennial realm of peace. We see this in picture in the meeting between Melchizedek and Abraham (Gen 14:18-20).

Melchizedek blesses Abraham from God and praises God for what He has done for Abraham. After Abraham’s battle, Melchizedek meets him with bread and wine and blesses him. Bread and wine speak of Christ as food and joy for the heart.

This is the blessing of the realm of peace, where Christ is the source of all power and joy (Isa 12:3). Just as Melchizedek, the king-priest, appears to bless with bread and wine after the victory has been won (Gen 14:18-20), so Christ will appear as King-Priest to give the blessing after the victory has been won and all enemies have been set as a footstool for His feet.

What is further striking is that He is called *Priest* according to the order of Melchizedek and not *High Priest* according to the order of Melchizedek. There is a beautiful explanation for this. A high priest presupposes other priests, but as Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, the Lord Jesus is alone.

The priesthood of Melchizedek is mentioned in the Old Testament only in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110. This priesthood exists before that of Aaron and will continue even when that of Aaron is no longer needed. The priesthood of Aaron is now exercised by the Lord Jesus in heaven for the church, and it is exercised in view of the weaknesses of the members of the church (Heb 4:15-16). When the church is caught up, that priesthood will no longer be necessary, for then there will be no weakness anymore. He will exercise the priestly service of Melchizedek at His return in view of His earthly people who will enjoy His blessing in the realm of peace.

The letter to the Hebrews describes in detail the differences between the priesthood according to the order of Aaron and the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-19). The main difference, however, is that the priesthood of Aaron is exercised by mortal men, while the priesthood of Melchizedek is exercised by One Who is a Priest “according to the power of an indestructible life” (Heb 7:16). Christ has no successor, like Aaron, but is “a priest forever” (Heb 7:17). This last verse is the quotation of verse 4 from Psalm 110.

Psa 110:5-6 | The Warrior

5 *The Lord is at Your right hand;
He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.*
6 *He will judge among the nations,
He will fill [them] with corpses,
He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.*

Then the day of His wrath is announced (verse 5). “The Lord”, that is Christ, “is at Your right hand”, that is the right hand of Yahweh, the place of honor Yahweh has given Him according to verse 1 (Heb 8:1; 10:12). When the day of His wrath comes (cf. Rev 6:17), Christ will shatter kings (Rev 16:16; 19:13-15; Joel 3:2,11-14).

It is the LORD, Yahweh, Who makes the enemies a footstool of Christ (verse 1) and at the same time Christ Himself will shatter the hostile kings (verse 5). He is the Stone that will appear without the intervention of human hands to shatter the image of man, the world’s ruling power. When He establishes His kingdom, it will mean the end of all worldly kingdoms (Dan 2:44). The day of His wrath is the day of the LORD. It is another indication that the Lord Jesus, Adonai, is none other than Yahweh Himself.

When the Lord Jesus comes to the earth for the second time, He will judge “among the nations” (verse 6). God has given Him that power because He is the Son of Man (Jn 5:22,27). He will sit on the throne of His glory and execute judgment on the nations (Mt 25:31-32). With the sword that comes from His mouth, He will kill His enemies and “fill” the battlefield “with corpses” (Isa 66:16; Zep 1:17-18; Eze 35:8; Rev 19:17).

By “the chief men over a broad country” we can think of the crushing of Gog, the prince of God-hating Great Russia (Eze 39:11-12). This wicked power is the last rebellious power to be judged. After this, the realm of peace is established in all its glory and then there will be perfect harmony on earth, without any threat of organized revolt. Christ reigns.

Psalm 110:7 | The Humble Man

*7 He will drink from the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He will lift up [His] head.*

Christ drank refreshing water “from the brook by the wayside” (cf. 1Chr 11:17; Jdg 7:6). He gratefully enjoyed all the refreshment the Father gave Him during His path of humiliation – of which the brook speaks – on earth. It shows His complete dependence on His Father.

He drinks from the brook when He speaks to a poor Samaritan woman. It is a great refreshment to Him that He can make Himself known to her as the Savior of the world. Mary also refreshed His soul by her understand-

ing of His suffering and death, which she expressed by anointing Him (Jn 12:3). A similar refreshment the Savior experienced from Mary Magdalene. The consequence (“therefore”) of His utter dependence on His Father is that He went His way with His head lifted up. There is a complete interaction between Him and His Father. He lives by what the Father gives Him and therefore He always lifts up His head to His Father. In His way as Man on earth from the beginning to the end there is complete fellowship between Him and His Father.

Psalm 111

Introduction

The revelation of Christ in His sufferings (Psalm 109) and in His glorification (Psalm 110) works among the remnant three songs of praise (Psalms 111-113). Psalms 111-112 are written in the form of an acrostic, that is, each of its twenty-two lines begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, from *aleph* to *tav*. This succession of letters refers to the ways and government of God.

The third song of praise (Psalm 113) is also the first of a series of songs of praise called hallel-psalms. They are sung by the Jews on the evening of the Passover, at the beginning (Psalms 113-114) and following (Psalms 115-118) the Passover meal. The Lord Jesus also sang this song of praise with His disciples on the last night of His life on earth before the cross, after He had instituted the Supper and before He departed with them to the Mount of Olives (Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26).

The first time we encounter the word “hallelujah”, i.e. “praise the LORD” in the New Testament is only in Revelation 19. That is when the Lord Jesus has judged Babylon the great and accepts and begins to exercise His public kingship (Rev 19:1,3,4,6). It is the same here. After the enemies are defeated in Psalm 110, we find the songs of praise and the hallel-psalms.

Psalm 111 is a song of praise for the great deeds of the LORD (verses 2-3): the redemption and the covenant. The redemption here is the redemption from Egypt as a type of the redemption from the power of the enemy. The covenant here is the covenant of Sinai as a type of the new, everlasting covenant. Psalm 112 is then a song of praise of the glory and features of Christ that are visible in the remnant. They are the features of the righteous described in Psalm 1 (Psa 1:1-3).

Psa 111:1 | Give Thanks to the LORD

1 Praise the LORD!

I will give thanks to the LORD with all [my] heart,

| *In the company of the upright and in the assembly.*

The psalm connects to the previous one and therefore begins with “hallelujah”, that is “praise the LORD”. It is a response to Who the LORD is and to His deeds, as presented in the previous psalm. The psalmist says he will give thanks to the LORD with all his heart, so much is he impressed with Him Who is at God’s right hand. His whole heart is taken up with it, leaving no room for anything else (Psa 86:12). Thanks is given without reserve, without holding anything back.

He also includes others in his thanksgiving. He gives thanks to the LORD “in the company of the upright and in the assembly”. “The upright” are all those who do what is right in the sight of the LORD (Exo 15:26; Psa 33:1). The Messiah is the center of the “assembly”. They have Him as their common object of their thanksgiving. Their love for the Messiah binds them together (cf. 1Cor 1:9). Only to them does God make His thoughts known in His secret dealings with them (Psa 25:14). Only by them God’s thoughts are received and appreciated.

Psa 111:2-6 | The Works of the LORD

| *2 Great are the works of the LORD;
[They are] studied by all who delight in them.
3 Splendid and majestic is His work,
And His righteousness endures forever.
4 He has made His wonders to be remembered;
The LORD is gracious and compassionate.
5 He has given food to those who fear Him;
He will remember His covenant forever.
6 He has made known to His people the power of His works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.*

By “the works of the LORD” (verse 2) is meant all that He has done. It refers to the redemption of His people. All those works are “great”, that is, numerous, marvelous, and awe-inspiring. They entice one to study them. Not that they can be fully fathomed or counted (Job 5:9). This study is done “by all who delight in them”. To be occupied with God’s works gives joy, because God made His works with joy and delights in them.

Those who study God's "work" see that it is "splendid and majestic" (verse 3). The word "work" indicates action, the performance of an act for a purpose. All of God's actions are characterized by majesty or greatness, exaltation and glory, splendor. His work reflect this (cf. Rom 1:19-20). Someone who does not see this is willfully blind.

His work originates in His righteousness. His work is characterized by righteousness, that is, it is always in accordance with the covenant He made with the people. Never does He do anything that is contrary to His righteousness. His righteousness is manifest in His redemption of His people. On the basis of Christ's suffering (Psalm 109), God raised Him up and can save the believing remnant in righteousness. Because His righteousness endures forever, His work also endure forever. Therefore, the realm of peace, a kingdom based on righteousness, endures forever.

Many of His works are "wonders" i.e. wonderful acts (verse 4). Wonders are acts of which the origin is supernatural. He has made them "to be remembered", literally "a memorial". Here we can think of the feasts of the LORD, by which the memory of wonders is kept alive. For example, the deliverance of His people from Egypt is a wonder. For this He gave the institution of the Passover as "a memorial" (Exo 12:14). For us, who are saved by the wonder of the cross, the Lord Jesus instituted His Supper as a meal of remembrance (Lk 22:19).

Wonders, in addition to the power of God, show in a special way that God is "gracious and compassionate". In celebrating the Passover, God's people remember that in His grace and compassion He saved them from slavery in Egypt. When we remember the Lord Jesus in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we remember that in His grace and compassion He gave Himself for us in the death.

A special proof of His grace and compassion was seen by God's earthly people in the "food" that "He has given ... to those who fear Him" (verse 5). We can think of the manna He gave to His people for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness. He gave it to them by virtue of His covenant, which He remembers "forever". Therefore, He will never give up or forsake His people. He remains faithful to the promises He has made to them.

Another clear evidence of “the power of His works” that He “made known to His people” is that He has given them “the heritage of the nations” (verse 6). In order to give His people the land promised to them, He drove the nations out of the land before them. He gave them the land as a heritage. This is not only a proof of His power but also a proof of grace and compassion, for they did not deserve it.

Psa 111:7-9 | Trustworthiness of the Works

7 The works of His hands are truth and justice;

All His precepts are sure.

8 They are upheld forever and ever;

They are performed in truth and uprightness.

9 He has sent redemption to His people;

He has ordained His covenant forever;

Holy and awesome is His name.

In all “the works of His hands” there is nothing twisted or devious, but they “are truth and justice” (verse 7; Pro 8:8). His works are accomplished by His speaking. What He commands, happens (Psa 33:6,9). His words are truth and therefore “all His precepts are sure”. Given the parallel between the first and second line of the verse, we can also think of “the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God” (Exo 31:18) which as such can be seen as “works of His hands”.

He not only brings works into being, but “they are” also “upheld” by Him “forever and ever” (verse 8). He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb 1:3), which is to say that He carries all things and brings them to the purpose determined by Him. This happens precisely because “they are performed in truth and uprightness”. His works are in accordance with Who He Himself is.

Works performed in truth are works done from the right view on things, with each work given its proper place in relation to every other work. They have been done in a way that truth is maintained and passed on. The uprightness in which the works are done means that they are the best works; there are no better ones; neither can they be improved. God can say of each of His works that it is very good (Gen 1:31).

One work in particular that He sustains “forever and ever” is the “redemption”, or ransom (Isa 50:1-2), which He has “sent ... to His people” (verse 9). That redemption He has sent by virtue of “His covenant” which He has “ordained ... forever”. The people owe their redemption to Him only because He has kept His covenant. It proves the complete trustworthiness of God.

“His covenant” points to the eternal covenant, which is based on the blood shed by the Lord Jesus (Heb 13:20). Since the covenant at Sinai is not forever (Heb 7:19; 8:6-9), this is prophetically about the new covenant. The key to the new covenant is the Mediator and the blood He shed. Both are revealed only in the New Testament (or: New Covenant). In Hebrew, *brit chadasha*, meaning “new covenant”, is the name for the New Testament.

This dealing in faithfulness to His covenant impresses upon the psalmist that God’s Name is “holy and awesome”. This is the essence of the covenant and the redemption that flows from it. He said at the beginning that the works of the LORD are great. He has mentioned a number of works. From those works His Name has become manifest, for every work bears His Name. Those who look closely at His works cannot help but bow before that Name in holy reverence and awe.

Psa 111:10 | The Fear of the LORD

*10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do [His commandments];
His praise endures forever.*

The knowledge of Divine things cannot be obtained without the fear of the LORD (Job 28:28; Pro 1:7; 9:10; 15:33). Only those who have reverence and awe for the LORD gain wisdom to make the right, God-pleasing choices in life. Whether a person is wise is shown by his actions. All who take God into account in their actions have “a good understanding” of the things of this life (Pro 3:4; 13:15; 2Chr 30:22). Without the awareness of His presence, knowledge of Divine things is not possible. For those who are aware of His presence, everything is different (Rom 8:28).

He who is wise and has a good understanding stands on a foundation that always gives reason to praise. This foundation is unshakable, it “endures

forever”, because this foundation is “the fear of the LORD”. The awe and reverence for Him never cease, but continue forever. With this valuable praise we may already begin on earth.

Then we sing: I have believed and therefore I sing. It is impossible to be silent in the presence of Him. The heart begins to burn (Lk 24:32) and the songs of praise come naturally. After all, He is enthroned upon the praises of Israel (Psa 22:3b). Singing is a foretaste of eternity. You experience that you are a new creation and, like Enoch, you walk with God. The transition to heaven is then very small.

Psalm 112

Introduction

Psalm 112 forms a unity with Psalm 111. We see this in the structure and length of both psalms. They are identical in structure, both are an ‘acrostic’, a special stylistic form in poetry. In this, the first word of each verse, part of a part or group of verses begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

In Psalm 111, the LORD is praised in His works and wonders. Psalm 112 describes the features of those who fear the LORD and their blessings. These features are those of the remnant, formed in the school of God, through which they now show the features of Christ. The life of Jacob is an illustration of this.

Psalm 111 is about God – compare the first tablet of stone; Psalm 112 is about man – compare the second tablet of stone.

Psa 112:1-3 | Great Delight in God’s Commandments

1 Praise the LORD!

*How blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
Who greatly delights in His commandments.*

*2 His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.*

*3 Wealth and riches are in his house,
And his righteousness endures forever.*

Like the previous psalm, this psalm begins with the exclamation “praise the LORD”, or “hallelujah”, which is at the same time a call (verse 1). The last verse of the previous psalm states that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psa 111:10). This psalm follows on from that and continues with it, for here the psalmist begins by pronouncing “blessed” on “the man who fears the LORD”. This is another indication that the two psalms belong together (see Introduction to this psalm). The Man Who

fears the LORD is true of the Lord Jesus in an absolute sense, but it also applies to all who possess His features and live by them.

Psalm 1 also begins with “blessed is the man”, a description that is perfectly answered by Christ. Here in Psalm 112 we find the remnant adorned with the features of Christ. It is with them as with Rebecca who is adorned with the jewels of Isaac. This applies to us to the degree that Christ is taking shape in us.

Next, the psalmist speaks of what characterizes that man who fears the LORD. His fear of the LORD is evident in the “great delight” he finds “in His commandments”. Fear is not anxiety, but awe. Connected to this fear is delight, even great delight, which makes it clear that there is no anxiety in this fear.

It is impossible to say that someone fears the LORD when His commandments mean nothing to him. Here these commandments are those of the law. The Old Testament believer who lives in a living relationship with God loves to read in God’s law, because there the will of God is written, in it he gets to know God better. The joy in God’s commandments consists not only in studying, but also in living by them.

We, New Testament believers, are not under law, but under grace. If we understand somewhat what grace is, our desire to know God’s will for our lives will be great. The expression of that desire is not to try to keep the law, but that we are willing to be led by the Spirit of God Who dwells in us. The Spirit teaches us to know God’s Word and gives the power to do what God’s Word teaches us.

The man who fears the LORD and finds great delight in His commandments will be richly blessed (verse 2). The blessings mentioned are typically Jewish and not typically Christian. That “his descendants will be mighty on earth” is a specifically Jewish blessing (Deu 28:1-4). Now Israel is not yet mighty on earth, but will be in the realm of peace. This blessing will be enjoyed in the peace kingdom.

This also applies to the blessing with which “the generation of the upright will be blessed”. The remnant consists of those who fear the LORD. They are called here “the upright” (Psa 111:1). They do what is right or just in the sight of the LORD (Exo 15:26).

The blessing of the man who fears the LORD and delights in His commandments also concerns “his house” (verse 3). In it will be “wealth and riches”. He will have abundance of all earthly blessings (cf. Deu 28:1-14). To us who belong to the church, God’s heavenly people, applies that God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ” (Eph 1:3).

Job was a blessed man, but lost everything. This was done by satan, but under the permission of God because He had a purpose for it. This will not happen in the realm of peace because satan will be bound.

In addition to earthly possessions, the righteous also has a spiritual feature and that is “his righteousness”. This points to his righteous actions. The Hebrew word for “give alms” is related to the word “righteous”. In some New Testament manuscripts, we find two Greek expressions in the first two verses of Matthew 6, namely, “to do righteousness” and “to do benevolence” or “to give alms” (Mt 6:1-2). Both expressions may be a translation of one and the same Hebrew expression, namely *tsadik*. Its meaning is to do righteousness and to give alms. See verse 9 where these terms are used.

The righteous shows in his life that he knows God by dealing with his children and his possessions in the way that God desires. This acting has not only temporary value, but “endures forever”. The previous psalm says this of God (Psa 111:3). What is true of God is also true of the righteous.

Psa 112:4-5 | Features of the Upright

*4 Light arises in the darkness for the upright;
[He is] gracious and compassionate and righteous.
5 It is well with the man who is gracious and lends;
He will maintain his cause in judgment.*

The time of the realm of peace has not yet arrived. That the man who fears the LORD is blessed does not mean that there will not be dark days in his life (verse 4). We recognize this in the saying: ‘God has not promised us an easy journey, but He has promised us a safe arrival.’

Darkness means that setbacks are coming. But when darkness comes, at the same time “the light arises in the darkness” (cf. 2Pet 1:19). This is the light of God’s presence. And if the upright is killed because of his faith-

fulness to God, he will still have a share in the day when the Sun of righteousness arises.

The upright possesses the Divine nature (2Pet 1:3-4) and therefore has the attributes of God. He walks in the light, making it clear that he is “gracious and compassionate and righteous” (cf. Isa 58:10). These attributes of God become visible in his relationship with others. One who sees himself in the light of God acknowledges that God has been “gracious and compassionate and righteous” toward him. Therefore, he will be so toward others (Lk 6:36).

The features of God are especially manifested in the upright as a “man who is gracious and lends” (verse 5; cf. Deu 15:8; Lev 25:35). This is true wealth and the use of wealth in the right way (cf. 1Tim 6:17-19). Things are not going badly for that man, but “well” because of his compassion for someone in need. That he is gracious toward his neighbor is shown by the fact that he lends him money. He thereby proves that he loves his neighbor. “He will maintain his cause in judgment.” He knows the law because he delights in God’s commandments (verse 1). As a result, he acts in accordance with Who God is.

Psa 112:6-9 | The Upright Endures Forever

*6 For he will never be shaken;
The righteous will be remembered forever.
7 He will not fear evil tidings;
His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
8 His heart is upheld, he will not fear,
Until he looks [with satisfaction] on his adversaries.
9 He has given freely to the poor,
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted in honor.*

Because the wise man finds his delight in the commandments of God, it is certain that “he will never be shaken” (verse 6). This refers both to his life with its trials and tribulations and to the realm of peace in which every Old Testament believer will receive all the promised blessings. Because of his steadfast walk, “the righteous will be remembered forever”. He will be

remembered with thankfulness (cf. Pro 10:7a; Acts 9:39). This is especially true of the Lord Jesus, the Just or Righteous (1Pet 3:18).

That the realm of peace is not yet seen as having arrived here is also evident from the fact that “evil tidings” may be spread about the righteous (verse 7). But this evil tidings that circulates about him does not frighten him. This is not because of great self-confidence, but because “his heart is steadfast”, for it is “trusting in the LORD”. He who trusts in the Lord knows himself to be hidden in Him and does not become afraid of what people say about him or do to him.

His heart is steadfast because of his trust in the LORD, and by his trust in the LORD his heart is upheld (verse 8). Therefore, “he will not fear” no matter what comes his way, whether it is bad news that is told to him, or whether there are opponents who want to kill him. His opponents will not have the last word, but the LORD. It is a matter of time, but the time will come that “he looks [with satisfaction] on his adversaries”. Until that time, he must go his way quietly trusting in the LORD.

As he, surrounded by opponents, continues his way, he gives “freely to the poor” (verse 9). “He has given freely to the poor” is literally “he has scattered, he has given to the poor”. “Scattering” and “giving to the poor” are the pre-eminent features of the righteous. He is not concerned with himself and his own circumstances, but with the poor. This is “his righteousness”, his just action, which involves giving others what they need. ‘Alms’ in Hebrew is the feminine form of ‘righteous’, *tsedeka* and *tsedek* respectively. Its value “endures forever”.

Paul quotes these two lines of this verse in connection with the believers’ giving to those who are poor (2Cor 9:9). There he speaks of scattering abroad and giving to the poor and makes it clear that scattering abroad and giving is not a loss, but a righteous act of which the value lasts forever. The harvest of it is seen forever.

Paul places ‘scattering’ and ‘giving freely’ in the light of God as the great Giver (2Cor 9:15). God has freely given the greatest gift ever given. An absolutely incomparable gift. God could give no greater evidence of being a Giver than in the gift of His Son. This is His own, only, beloved Son.

The “horn”, the symbol of strength, of the giver “will be exalted in honor”. It takes a great deal of spiritual strength to think not of oneself, but of the needs of others, in the face of all one’s own distress and prevailing selfishness. The way of self-denial is the way of victory over all opposition. The glory that is connected to it, comes. The Lord Jesus sees what has been done to others in His Name as done to Him (Mt 25:34-40). For this He will openly express His appreciation and reward it with a position of honor in His kingdom. He who gives, can rule.

Psa 112:10 | The Portion of the Wicked

*10 The wicked will see it and be vexed,
He will gnash his teeth and melt away;
The desire of the wicked will perish.*

The psalmist ends the psalm with the response of the wicked to the actions of the righteous and what will happen to the wicked. God will cause the wicked to see that He honors the righteous (cf. Est 6:6-11). This will make the wicked “vexed”.

Because he cannot express his vexation, he will “gnash his teeth and melt away”. He will forever, in never ending powerlessness, gnash his teeth (Mt 8:12). Thus, he will continually melt away without having any support anywhere. Of “the desire of the wicked”, nothing is fulfilled. All his plans will perish.

This ending is a great contrast to the ending of Psalm 111 (Psa 111:10) which sings of the fate of the righteous.

Psalm 113

Introduction

Psalm 111 is a song of praise about the deeds of God in redemption. Psalm 112 is a song of praise about the blessing of God upon the God-fearing. Psalm 113 is a song of praise about the glory of the LORD toward afflicted people.

Psalm 113 is the first of a series of psalms (Psalms 113-118) called hallel-psalms or thanksgiving psalms. They are sung at the great feasts – Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Booths (Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26).

In Psalm 113, the LORD is sung about in His incomparable greatness and exaltation (verses 1-4) and in the deep condescension of His love to the afflicted (verses 5-9). We find this in the praise of Hannah (1Sam 2:1-10) and in the praise of Mary (Lk 1:46-55). In Hannah we see the barren (verse 9) and in Mary the poor and needy (verse 7).

The middle, the center, is the question posed in verse 5: “Who is like the LORD, our God?” This is the theme of this psalm.

We as creatures know limits, we are limited in time and space. We know length, breadth, height and depth. The LORD cannot be measured, His glory knows no bounds:

His length: to eternity (verse 2).

His breadth: from the rising of the sun to its setting (verse 3).

His height: high above all nations ... above the heavens (verse 4).

His depth: looking far below in the heavens and on the earth (verses 6-9).

It brings to mind what we read in the letter to the Ephesians: “That you ... may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:17b-19). This can only be followed by everlasting worship: “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or

think, according to the power that works within us, to Him [be] the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).

Psa 113:1-3 | Encouragement to Praise the LORD

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forever.

3 From the rising of the sun to its setting

The name of the LORD is to be praised.

The psalm begins with the exclamation "praise the LORD", or "hallelujah", which is at the same time a call to praise Him (verse 1). The "servants of the LORD" are particularly encouraged to praise the LORD. By this is meant the whole people (Exo 19:6) and in particular the Levites and the priests.

After the suffering of the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah 53, we also find in Isaiah 54-66 mention of the servants of the LORD as an indication of the faithful remnant of Israel, those who fear the LORD. These servants of the LORD are the results of the LORD's deeds in Psalm 111. In Psalm 112 we find the blessings of the LORD upon these servants of the LORD. And now here in Psalm 113 we find the glory of the LORD upon these servants of the LORD.

The first task that servants are to perform is to praise "the Name of the LORD". His Name implies all that He is. That Name is to be praised, not just now and then, on certain occasions, but always, "from this time forth and forever" (verse 2) and everywhere, "from the rising of the sun to its setting" (verse 3).

It means it has to happen through all generations and that the now living generation must begin to do so. They can begin doing so because they are now cleansed and have a new heart (Eze 36:25-26). There must be continuity in praise through the ages. Each generation must live in awe of that

Name. If that awe is there, if He is acknowledged in His majesty and exaltation, His Name will be praised.

That Name must be praised, not only here and there in Israel, but everywhere on earth, “from the rising of the sun to its setting” (Zep 2:11b; Mal 1:11). There must be continuity in praise throughout the earth (Psa 50:1). The praise must run with the sun. It also means that we praise Him all day long, from sunrise to sunset.

“The name of the LORD”, an expression mentioned here three times, is to be hallowed and praised. The name “LORD” indicates that this is particularly about His covenant relationship with His people. This should give God’s people, as His servants, extra encouragement to praise (Exo 3:16).

Psa 113:4-9 | The Majesty of the LORD

*4 The LORD is high above all nations;
His glory is above the heavens.
5 Who is like the LORD our God,
Who is enthroned on high,
6 Who humbles Himself to behold
[The things that are] in heaven and in the earth?
7 He raises the poor from the dust
And lifts the needy from the ash heap,
8 To make [them] sit with princes,
With the princes of His people.
9 He makes the barren woman abide in the house
[As] a joyful mother of children.
Praise the LORD!*

The reason to praise the LORD forever and everywhere is because “the LORD is high above all nations” (verse 4). The nations presume to be powerful. They strive for world dominion. Also, many of them have done great harm to God’s people. But in the end, none of the nations have anything to argue against God. They are to Him “like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales” (Isa 40:15). He is not merely “above” them, but “high above” them, that is, exalted high above them.

His glory knows no bounds: it is not limited to one or a few peoples and not limited to the created heavens.

Not only is He high above the nations of the earth, He is also “above the heavens”. The heavens were created by Him, as was the earth. He is not confined in His creation, but is above it. He oversees everything on earth and in heaven. “His glory” transcends the splendor of heaven. Everything in the universe reflects His glory.

With the high and exalted God nothing and no one can be compared (verse 5; Isa 40:18,25; 46:5; Jer 10:6-7; 49:19; 50:44; Mic 7:18). This is the core message of this psalm. It is the center and focal point of this psalm. The message is reinforced by posing it as a rhetorical question: “Who is like the LORD our God?”

All the gods of men are, in their imaginations, unassailably high above them. How very different is the God of Israel (1Kgs 8:23; Isa 57:15). He “is enthroned on high”. His very high dwelling place does not prevent Him from humbling Himself to behold all beneath Him to perceive and be involved in what is happening there (verse 6a).

His glory is universal, above all creation, above heaven and earth. The mention of “in heaven and in the earth” connects to verse 5a. The sentence runs like this: “Who is like the LORD our God” (verse 5a) ... “in heaven and in the earth?” (verse 6b). The phrases “Who is enthroned on high (verse 5b), Who humbles Himself to behold (verse 6a)” form an interlude.

His glory, however, concerns not only His power, but also His love. He, Who is enthroned on high, is at the same time He, Who humbles Himself to behold. The psalmist and the remnant, as well as we, see that we are objects of His great love. Wonder and adoration come naturally when we see such a glory. This thought is further developed in verses 7-9.

Elihu testifies: “Behold, God is mighty but does not despise [any]” (Job 36:5a). God bows down to the very lowest people and blesses them (cf. Exo 3:8). These people have no ability or means to work their way up out of the rubbish of life. If they are then blessed, it is proof that the blessing comes from Him, through His power and through His love.

He chooses the weak and despised to shame the strong and to destroy the wisdom of the wise. He acts in this way so that no flesh will boast before Him. If it were otherwise, the blessings would not be blessings from Him. He is great above the universe and He is great in His blessings of afflicted people.

In verses 7-9, the psalmist gives two examples of God acting in mercy and condescending goodness. These two examples are two sides of the same coin. They are about the outward condition, which is in the dust and dirt, and the inward condition, which is barren.

The first example is about “the poor” and “the needy” (verse 7). The poor lives in “the dust”, the needy on “the ash heap”. He can be found at the refuse dumps outside the city to see if there is anything edible left. God takes him from the bottom of society and makes him “sit with princes, with the princes of His people” (verse 8; cf. Job 36:7; 2Sam 9:13). He places the poor and needy on the same level as the princes whom He has given a governing role in the people He has made His own. That God allows them to “sit” means that He gives them a place of rest and authority. It is sitting on a throne.

The application for us is that we were dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). Then we see what God has done with us: “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:4-6). What grace!

“The princes” are the God-fearing leaders of His people (Isa 32:8). It is clearly an act of His grace. He was able to perform that act because He laid His Son “in the dust of death” (Psa 22:15c) by laying the dirt of our sins on Him (2Cor 8:9).

The second example is “the barren woman” whom God “makes ... abide in the house” as “a joyful mother of children” (verse 9). In Israel’s history, several barren women have had a child or children, such as Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah. We can add to this Elisabeth in the New Testament. In all these cases of barrenness, it is clear that God in His grace gives children.

The psalm concludes with the exclamation with which it began: "Hallelujah!", i.e. "praise the LORD". There is all the more reason for this, now that the psalmist has presented God's sovereignty and His loving care.

Each psalm gives a new reason to praise the LORD. In this psalm, it is the *grace* of the LORD. As the first of the hallel-psalms, this psalm gives the foundation of Israel's redemption. This will be worked out in the hallel-psalms to come.

Psalm 114

Introduction

The grace of the LORD (Psalm 113) is evident in the redemption and restoration of the people of Israel. The return and restoration of the two tribes and the ten tribes in the future is prophetically illustrated by Israel's exodus from Egypt (Eze 20:34-36).

In Psalm 114 we see the outward restoration.

In Psalm 115 we see the inward restoration. Compare Isaiah 36-37 the outward restoration and Isaiah 38 the inward restoration.

In Psalm 116 we see Israel's vow and sacrifice of thanksgiving.

In Psalm 117 we hear the call to the nations to praise the LORD.

In Psalm 118 we have the Feast of Booths as a picture of the realm of peace. It is a summary of the ways of the LORD in the redemption of His people.

Psalm 114 describes Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt as an example of Israel's deliverance in the end time from the great tribulation. The psalm has no introduction and no conclusion. It is the elaboration of the previous psalm. It begins and ends abruptly, without Hallelujah, without the Name of the LORD.

Nature is personified and responds to the coming of the LORD in glory. The story is told in a brilliantly poetic way. The two parallel halves of each verse collectively have only one verb. This enhances the splendor of the language used to represent the glory of God's grace.

Psa 114:1-6 | From Exodus to Entry

*1 When Israel went forth from Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
2 Judah became His sanctuary,
Israel, His dominion.
3 The sea looked and fled;
The Jordan turned back.*

4 *The mountains skipped like rams,*

The hills, like lambs.

5 *What ails you, O sea, that you flee?*

O Jordan, that you turn back?

6 *O mountains, that you skip like rams?*

O hills, like lambs?

The history of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their journey through the wilderness is one in which God demonstrates His awesome power on behalf of His people from beginning to end. It is an unprecedented event that a great people, held in bondage for centuries, goes forth from the land of slavery (verse 1).

There is reference here to "Israel" and to "the house of Jacob". The name Israel is used. That is the name of privilege and blessing. Jacob is the name of weakness and failure. We see that Israel left Egypt with its head held high, as it were. Egypt was "a people of strange language". This means that in the midst of the Egyptians they did not feel at home. They were strangers there, which presupposes oppression and distress.

God had a plan for them that He started to carry out with their deliverance from Egypt. He fulfilled that plan when He brought them into the land promised to them (verse 2). He wanted to bring them there to dwell with them. He chose the tribe of "Judah" to build "His sanctuary", the temple, there. The entire land "Israel" became "His dominion". The names Judah and Israel underscore the fact that it includes the ten tribes realm. This means that it is again one people and that He is King of His people and they are His subjects. Sanctuary and kingdom form a unity (cf. Exo 15:17-18). The Lord Jesus is King-Priest on His throne (Zec 6:13).

Then the psalmist describes two highlights of the journey from Egypt to Canaan: what happened to the Red Sea and what happened to the Jordan (verse 3). These events are a type of the restoration of Israel in the future (Isa 51:10-11). These two highlights illustrate the power of God. When the people have come forth from Egypt at the Red Sea, it seems as if their deliverance will end here. They feel the hot breath of the Egyptians who are pursuing them to enslave them again.

Then the sea sees it. What does the sea see? Not the people, but Moses with his staff and behind Moses the LORD Himself. When the sea sees that, it flees (verse 3a). There is no thought of it forming an invincible barrier to the deliverance of the people. It clears a path for Israel in her midst, opening the door to freedom.

This is repeated at the Jordan (verse 3b). The people have come to the border of the land, and there the Jordan seems to be a barrier blocking access to the land. But what happens? The Jordan recedes. The Jordan sees the ark appear, the symbol of the LORD's presence, and it steps back. Just as God had opened the gates of Egypt to let His people out, He opened the gates to Canaan to let them in. In both cases, He did so by sending the waters away.

In between these two interventions in nature, there is another reaction of nature to God's presence (verse 4). "The mountains skipped like rams, the hills, like lambs" is what we see happening when God descended on Sinai to give the law (Exo 19:18; Psa 68:7-8).

In verses 5-6, questions are asked of the sea, the Jordan, the mountains and the hills, why they reacted as they did. It is as if the psalmist is calling them to witness to what has happened to them. They are asked what role they played when God led His people out to bring them to His sanctuary and His kingdom in Israel and found them in His way.

There may also be questions in our minds about certain natural phenomena, noting that they are different from normal. In poetic language, we ask why this is so. It brings to light our weakness in understanding why something happens. We know that God has everything in His hand, but we often don't know why things go the way they do.

Psa 114:7-8 | Tremble, O Earth

*7 Tremble, O earth, before the Lord,
Before the God of Jacob,
8 Who turned the rock into a pool of water,
The flint into a fountain of water.*

In these verses follows the answer to the questions of the previous verses: these wondrous natural phenomena are signs of the appearance of the LORD. It also evokes awe about God's omnipotence, without always un-

derstanding why certain things happen. We see something similar in the life of Job. He does not understand why he has to suffer so much. He has many questions about that. He gets the answer at the end of the book. The answer is: God rules. When we don't understand why certain things happen in our lives, God wants us to trust Him, without Him giving a direct answer to our questions. He Himself is the answer.

In connection with what happened to the Red Sea, the Jordan, and the mountains and hills, it should become clear that God wants to be acknowledged not only by these four natural elements, but by the whole earth. The earth, that is, the inhabitants thereon, are called to tremble "before the Lord" (verse 7). The Lord is the sovereign Ruler, the Commander and Governor. He is so not only of Israel, but of the universe. How would the earth remain unmoved in His presence? He is none other than "the God of Jacob".

While the earth trembles before Him, He cares for His people and refreshes them with water (verse 8). That is, the purpose of the appearance of the LORD's power is to give life to the people. This happens because the rock, a picture of Christ (1Cor 10:4) is struck, making Him a fountain of living water. The book of Numbers makes it clear that on the basis of the one-time event in the past – the striking of the rock – we can speak to the Rock each time thereafter. The Lord then gives us the refreshment of the living water each time (cf. Isa 12:1-3).

He changed "the rock" at Horeb "into a pool of water" (Exo 17:6) and at Kadesh "flint into a fountain of water" (Num 20:11). That is, by His power He brings forth refreshment and life from what seems to man an insurmountable obstacle. That is how God will do it in the end time, when there seems to be no outcome from affliction. This is also how God does it in our lives when we find ourselves in a hopeless situation.

These events speak of Christ, Who has unlocked a fountain of living water for all who thirst (1Cor 10:4; Jn 4:13-14; 7:37-39).

Psalm 115

Introduction

As for the inner restoration of Israel, the people must confess two sins: murder and adultery (cf. Jn 5:43). The murder is that of Christ (Psalm 109). The adultery is their idolatry with the antichrist. This second we find in this psalm (Psalm 115). The first sin is the transgression against which is warned on the second tablet of the law and the second sin is the transgression, mentioned on the first tablet of the law.

Israel eradicated idolatry after the exile (Hos 3:4). However, because the house is empty, swept and ordered, a new occupant can take up residence there. That occupant will come in enhanced numbers in the end time (Mt 12:43-45). There will be no more idolatry of images, but the idolatry of man, the antichrist (2Thes 2:3-4).

In Psalm 115, and also in Psalm 135, we find a description of idolatry in the past as the reason for the exile. This idolatry is a type of the idolatry with the antichrist in the future. From this, Israel must be cleansed. This is prophetically also the subject of Isaiah 40-48.

Psa 115:1-3 | All Glory to the LORD Alone

*1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
But to Your name give glory
Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.*

*2 Why should the nations say,
"Where, now, is their God?"*

*3 But our God is in the heavens;
He does whatever He pleases.*

The previous psalm recalls the deliverance from Egypt and the entry into the promised land. For this, and for all that God has given His people, in no way does any man deserve any credit (verse 1). That is why it says "not to us" twice. The Only One to whom glory is due is the LORD. His Name

must be glorified, for He has done everything for the benefit of His people. He will not give His glory to another (Isa 42:8; 48:11).

The antichrist is a man. He is the coming false king of Israel, the beast from the earth (Rev 13:11-18). He is going to present himself as God in the new temple in Jerusalem. Satan's lie that man will be like God (Gen 3:5) now seems to have come true. The image of man demanding worship (Dan 3:1-7) is becoming a reality (Rev 13:15). This is the abomination of destruction, which is the abomination that causes destruction (Mt 24:15). As a result, the measure of man's sin becomes full and the LORD begins to intervene (cf. Acts 12:21-23).

We must also be aware that all that we have, we have received from Him (1Cor 4:7), for which He deserves all glory. It is theft if we boast of what He has given us and let ourselves be glorified for it as if it were our merit. Everything we do, we should do to His glory (1Cor 10:31).

To Him all glory is due "because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth". 'Lovingkindness' means that the LORD acts according to His covenant and His promise. 'Truth' means that God is reliable in this. These two attributes of God are the reason for glorifying the LORD in this psalm.

They have not deserved any of His benefits and blessings that they have received. But He has acted in lovingkindness toward them. Also for His truth He is worthy of being honored. His faithfulness to His promises has brought Him to this act in lovingkindness.

The opponents, the nations, who are idolaters, by asking where their God may be anyway when they are so distressed, want to cast doubt on the presence of God (verse 2; cf. Psa 42:3,10; 79:10; Joel 2:17; Mic 7:10). After all, His place has been taken by a man, the antichrist. The nations also make their mocking remarks about the absence of God (Isa 36:15,18-20; 37:10-13; Joel 2:17).

What the psalmist and in him the remnant says to the LORD about this is an expression of their boldness toward God. Surely, He will reveal Himself and put an end to such unfounded questions, wouldn't He? Moses also said something similar (Num 14:13-16). The nations have often said it, but they will be silenced when God has taken care of His people, redeemed them and brought them into the blessing of the realm of peace.

As boldly as they speak to God to act against the nations because of their mocking question, as boldly they also speak to the people who ask the question. It is not a question to them. Their answer is that their God is in heaven (verse 3), exalted far above man and his blasphemies.

They confess Him as “our God”. It may seem that He is absent, but He is there and He is there for them. That is what faith knows. Faith also knows that He is supreme, that “He does whatever He pleases”. It means that He will send the Son in Whom He has found all His pleasure. We see a type of this in Cyrus, the man of His counsel from a far country, who will deliver His people from their exile (Isa 46:10-11). He acts righteous toward all and in doing so in love toward His people.

Psa 115:4-8 | The Worthlessness of the Idols

*4 Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of man's hands.
5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
They have eyes, but they cannot see;
6 They have ears, but they cannot hear;
They have noses, but they cannot smell;
7 They have hands, but they cannot feel;
They have feet, but they cannot walk;
They cannot make a sound with their throat.
8 Those who make them will become like them,
Everyone who trusts in them.*

Opposed to the trust in the exalted, almighty God, they now mock in these verses the idols of the nations (Psa 135:15-18; cf. 1Kgs 18:25-29; Isa 44:9-20; 46:6-7; Jer 10:1-9; Hab 2:18-19). Prophetically, we see this in what happens to Herod, who is a type of the antichrist: God judges him by having worms eat him alive (Acts 12:18-23). Normally corpses are eaten by worms only after someone's death. God also mocks the antichrist by casting him alive into the lake of fire in the future, without first killing him (Rev 19:20).

The people eventually learned that idols are nothing. Those idols may be worth something in terms of the material they are made of, but they are merely “the work of man's hands” (verse 4). By definition, that means they

are worthless in terms of their ability to do anything at all. They look human, but are totally inhuman.

They do have a mouth because the maker of the image engraved it himself (verse 5). But these mute images cannot get their lips to part. Not a word comes out of them, neither to comfort nor to judge. The maker has been able to give the images eyes, but no light in their eyes. There is no vision of the present or of the future. They notice nothing of any human being approaching them. The images are blind as a bat (cf. Gen 16:13; 2Chr 16:9).

And look at their ears (verse 6) They are firmly attached to their head. Sure, they are artfully shaped by human hands. But there is no working eardrum in them. They are stone deaf. You can talk or even shout all you want, but there is no response (cf. Psa 116:2; 65:2; 120:1). There is also a nose put on the head of the image. But whatever incense they bring to the image, it doesn't sniff it and certainly doesn't get intoxicated by it.

They also have hands, but they cannot reach them out to help someone (verse 7; cf. Psa 18:17; Jn 10:28). They can't even feel with them to find something to hold on to. The hands remain motionless at the place where the maker placed them. The same is true of their feet. They cannot move a step to go ahead of someone on a certain path. They remain motionless where the maker has placed them (Isa 46:1-7). They can't even clear their throats; not a sound comes out.

It cannot be otherwise that those who have made them become equal to these idols (verse 8). Thus Israel, the failing servant of the LORD, became deaf and dumb, just like the deaf and dumb idols they have come to serve (Isa 42:18-19; cf. Mt 12:22-27). Idols are the product of the foolishness of the makers and therefore the makers become fools.

He who relies on images becomes a prisoner of his own foolish, impure, wicked thoughts. He follows his own foolish insights and lapses into greater and greater absurdities. False worship is not harmless, but demoralizes. The worshiper thereby works his own destruction. The end of those who worship dead idols is eternal death.

Psa 115:9-11 | The LORD Is a Help and a Shield

| *9 O Israel, trust in the LORD;*

He is their help and their shield.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD;

He is their help and their shield.

11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD;

He is their help and their shield.

In these verses there is a threefold call to trust in the LORD. There is a call to

1. the covenant people (verse 9),
2. the chosen priests (verse 10) and
3. the faithful few who make up the remnant (verse 11).

This call also comes to us.

These three groups are mentioned again in verses 12-13, there as objects of the LORD's blessing.

You cannot trust idols because they cannot do anything at all. It is extremely stupid and also a great sin against God (cf. Hos 4:17). Moses prophesied that if the people disobeyed, they would be taken out of the land and serve idols in foreign lands (Deu 4:25-28).

Opposite the dead idols is the living God. He has revealed Himself as the God Who lives and is present for His people. Moses prophesied that they would seek the LORD in foreign lands and find Him (Deu 4:29). In Him you can trust fully (verse 9). This is then also said to Israel (cf. Hos 14:8a). That He is "their help" means that He supports them and helps them to go their way. He is also "their shield", meaning that He protects them while He helps them. What more does a needy, powerless people need? It has everything in Him.

Next, the "house of Aaron" is called to trust in the LORD (verse 10). The call comes to them because they too have fallen into idolatry (cf. Exo 32:1-5; Eze 22:26). They are the priests and lead Israel in their worship of the LORD. They, too, have in the LORD "their help and their shield". True priestly service can only happen with the support and protection of the LORD.

Finally, each "who fears the LORD" (cf. Psa 112:1) is called to trust in the LORD (verse 11). Here it is each individually, whereas in verse 9 it is Israel

as a people and in verse 10 the priestly family (cf. Psa 118:2-4; 135:19-20). Fearing the LORD is a characteristic that must be present in every member of God's people and every member of the priestly family.

Belonging to a privileged people and family is never enough. There must be a personal relationship with God (cf. Jn 1:12). Each one then personally experiences that the LORD is his help and his shield. "You who fear the LORD" also applies to all outside Israel who fear the LORD. They may know that the LORD is "their help and their shield".

Psa 115:12-15 | The LORD Blesses

12 The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless [us];

He will bless the house of Israel;

He will bless the house of Aaron.

13 He will bless those who fear the LORD,

The small together with the great.

14 May the LORD give you increase,

You and your children.

15 May you be blessed of the LORD,

Maker of heaven and earth.

In these verses we hear a wonderful addition and encouragement to the threefold call for the three groups to trust the LORD and the threefold pledge that He is their help and their shield in the previous verses. To the same three groups it is said here that the LORD "will bless" (verse 12-15a).

The psalmist begins by saying that "the LORD has been mindful of us" (verse 12). It is a great comfort to know that God is mindful of His own, of us, of me. And His thoughts about His people are to bless them. This is the assurance of faith. God is always working to do good to His people. There may be trials, but He is always mindful of the covenant He has made with them (Isa 49:14-15), in virtue of which He will bless them.

His blessing comes upon "the house of Israel" as a whole, all twelve tribes, not just a few specially favored tribes. His blessing also comes upon the whole "house of Aaron", not just a few special members of it.

His blessing also comes upon "those who fear the LORD, the small together with the great" (verse 13; cf. Jer 31:34; Rev 19:5). In dispensing blessing,

God makes no distinction between the small and the great. The standard is whether they fear the LORD. The small are those who are not in esteem, the poor. The great are those who have a high position in society.

The blessing of the LORD is not a one-time thing; it is not limited to one blessing. No, when He blesses, a door is thereby opened through which blessing continues to flow (verse 14). The blessing continually increases; it becomes more and more. This does not only refer to the size, the area of the blessing that keeps increasing, but also to the generations to come. It is a blessing for “you and your children”.

To all groups it is said: “May you be blessed by the LORD” (verse 15). This puts the emphasis on Him Who blesses. “The LORD” blesses, not an idol. And Who is He? He is the “Maker of heaven and earth”. Idols are purely connected to the earth. None other than the Creator of heaven and earth, God Most High, blesses those who fear Him. He does this on the basis of the work that His Son accomplished on the cross.

In the mockery of the idols in Isaiah 40-48, the LORD is called “the First and the Last”, meaning the One and Only. The LORD is not only greater than the idols, but He is also the Only One, as we hear it in the confession Moses makes to Israel: “The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (Deu 6:4). There is no one else, no one is comparable to Him.

Psa 115:16-18 | The Living Praise the LORD

*16 The heavens are the heavens of the LORD,
But the earth He has given to the sons of men.
17 The dead do not praise the LORD,
Nor [do] any who go down into silence;
18 But as for us, we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and forever.
Praise the LORD!*

He Who made heaven and earth (verse 15) has given a purpose to both (verse 16). He creates and rules sovereignly over what He has made. By mentioning “the heavens” twice, it is emphatically stated that the heavens are His. That is where He is enthroned. The earth, of course, also belongs to Him, “but the earth He has given to the sons of men” (verse 16). That

is where they belong, that is where they live and work and that is where their future lies.

That the LORD “has given the earth to the sons of men” makes it clear that we are here on Jewish ground. The Jewish people are an earthly people and have specific earthly blessings. For us Christians, it is exactly the other way around. God has come to dwell on earth in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; Eph 2:22) and we, humans, He has placed in Christ in heaven (Eph 1:3; 2:6). He has not given us specific earthly blessings and the earth. He has given us heaven and specific heavenly blessings (Eph 1:3).

For an Old Testament believer applies that he cannot praise the LORD when he has died (verse 17; Isa 38:18-19). They do not know that the believers who have died live in the presence of the Lord Jesus (Lk 23:43). For them, praising the LORD is connected to life on earth. Their expectation is, however, that one day they will rise and enjoy the blessing of fellowship with the LORD (Job 19:25-27; Psa 17:15). “The dead” are those who are killed in the great tribulation. All “who go down into silence” are all those who have died in faith.

The “we” in verse 18 are the living redeemed. In connection with the previous verse, we can also think of those who have risen. Praising the LORD is done by those who have risen from the dead. This applies to those who will rise from the dead at the coming of the Lord Jesus. It already applies to all who are spiritually resurrected, who have new life. Therefore, it can be said that praising the LORD happens “from this time forth”, that is from the moment of final redemption, “and forever”. The psalmist concludes the psalm with “hallelujah”, “praise the LORD!”

As noted above, as New Testament believers, that is as members of the church, we are not connected to earth but to heaven. Yet our life on earth should also already have this great feature, namely, that it is a continual praise of the glory of the Lord Jesus (Heb 13:15; 1Pet 2:5). We may begin on earth with something that we will continue to all eternity, and that is to “worship the Father in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23).

Psalm 116

Introduction

Psalm 116 sings of the salvation of the faithful who have been on the verge of death. An example is Hezekiah who was near death because of an illness, but was healed (2Kgs 20:1-11).

Prophetically, the psalm describes the history of the remnant in the end time. We hear the Spirit of Christ speaking in it. This psalm is a votive offering (verses 14,18) and a sacrifice of thanksgiving (verse 17) because of the answer to the prayers of the remnant of Israel (verses 1-2). The sacrifice is offered in the temple in Jerusalem (verse 19) in the presence of all Israel, all twelve tribes (verses 14,18).

Psa 116:1-4 | Loving the LORD

*1 I love the LORD, because He hears
My voice [and] my supplications.
2 Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I shall call [upon Him] as long as I live.
3 The cords of death encompassed me
And the terrors of Sheol came upon me;
I found distress and sorrow.
4 Then I called upon the name of the LORD:
"O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!"*

The psalm begins with a passionate declaration of love by the psalmist for the LORD (verse 1). Literally the verse reads, "I love, for the LORD hears my voice [and] my supplications". The first words "I love" has no object, just as in 1 John 4: "We love" (1Jn 4:19). It is with it as with Mary Magdalene's statement when she asks where the body of the Lord Jesus lies: "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away" (Jn 20:15b). Mary believes that the person to whom she is speaking is the gardener. She loves the Lord so much that she speaks of "Him", assuming that everyone will know of Whom she is speaking. So it

is also in this psalm: “I love.” The psalmist supposes that everyone would know of Whom he is speaking.

The psalmist is deeply impressed by the LORD’s salvation from death. He cannot help but respond in this way, “because”, so he explains his declaration of love, “He hears my voice [and] my supplications” (cf. Jona 2:1-3). What a God He is, Who listens and saves in this way! That can have no other consequence than that you love that God. Every answer and rescue from need is a new reason to love Him.

With another “because” he indicates why he loves the LORD: “He has inclined His ear to me” (verse 2). This goes even further than God hearing his voice. It means that God is listening with great attention, turning His head toward him to come with His ear to the mouth of the psalmist so as not to miss a word of his complaint. That is how God is, how inviting He is to listen. “Therefore” he shall call upon Him as long as he lives on earth and is in the land of the living.

The psalmist tells of the distress that compelled him to call upon the LORD (verse 3; cf. Psa 18:5-7). He stood before the gate of death. He was encompassed by “cords of death”. That is, he was in the grip of death from which it was impossible for him to extricate himself. Inside, inwardly, “terrors of Sheol” had come upon him. He “found distress and sorrow”. Death and Sheol – Sheol is the realm of the dead – are represented as hunters who catch and kill their prey with a snare. The psalmist felt like powerless prey in the hands of powerful hostile hunters.

In this great distress he “called upon the Name of the LORD” and pleaded, “O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!” (verse 4). He had no recourse other than “the name of the LORD”, which is His Being, all that He is. If the LORD did not intervene to save him, it would be over with him. Therefore, he pleads with Him to save his soul, that is, to release him from his mortal danger and keep him alive.

Psa 116:5-11 | Believing and Speaking

5 *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;*

Yes, our God is compassionate.

6 *The LORD preserves the simple;*

*I was brought low, and He saved me.
 7 Return to your rest, O my soul,
 For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
 8 For You have rescued my soul from death,
 My eyes from tears,
 My feet from stumbling.
 9 I shall walk before the LORD
 In the land of the living.
 10 I believed when I said,
 "I am greatly afflicted."
 11 I said in my alarm,
 "All men are liars."*

He is delivered from the cords of death and the terrors of Sheol because the LORD is "gracious ..., and righteous" (verse 5). These two attributes of God are part of His nature. They seem to be in opposition to each other, but they are always in harmony (cf. Jn 1:17b). God can show grace and forgive sins because His Son met all the requirements of God's righteousness on the cross. Even the sins of Old Testament believers could be forgiven on the basis of the blood Christ would shed (Rom 3:25). Grace reigns through righteousness (Rom 5:21). This also means that God will never change what He has promised in grace.

That God "is compassionate". In connection with this, the psalmist speaks of God as "our God". Literally it says: "Our God relieves." That means: because He is gracious and righteous, He takes care of the afflicted. Next, the psalmist describes himself as the afflicted: he belongs to the simple and those who are brought low.

Here he connects with all who, like him, are in a living relationship with Him and, like him, have been in mortal danger. Here we clearly hear the Spirit of Christ in the remnant. In the time of the great tribulation they have come to know that God is compassionate.

We also see the faithful remnant in "the simple", which are the little ones, preserved by the LORD during the great tribulation (verse 6). The simple are those who do not have a high opinion of themselves. They are upright and God-fearing. They have a 'clear or simple eye' (Mt 6:22) that is, they

pay attention only to the LORD and His will and have a simple and unshakable trust in God and in His Word.

Next, the psalmist again uses the I-form. He is speaking of himself and also expresses the feelings that the remnant also has, saying: "I was brought low, and He saved me." It does indicate clearly how bad off he was. One who is brought low has absolutely no reserve left to do anything. However, the LORD did not let him perish, but saved him from his great need.

Now that he has been saved, his soul can also return to the rest he had before the tribulation came upon him (verse 7). The outward distress may have been resolved, but sometimes more time is needed for the soul to come to rest. For example, the soul of Elisha, saddened by the unequal yoke of King Jehoshaphat, needed time to come to rest and prophesy (2Kgs 3:15). The psalmist reminds his soul that the LORD has dealt bountifully with him. The thought of the Lord's goodness helps the soul to come to rest. It is also good for our peace of mind to remind ourselves again and again how good God is to us again and again.

Then the psalmist turns to the LORD in gratitude (verse 8). After all, it is He Who has "rescued" his "soul from death". He has experienced the compassion and redemption of the LORD from physical and spiritual pain, for his "eyes", which were wet with tears, have been rescued "from tears". He can also come to rest regarding his walk, for the LORD has rescued his "feet from stumbling". He was brought low, but has been able to continue on his way.

Salvation is described here in threefold:

1. His soul/life is rescued from death.
2. His eyes are rescued from tears.
3. His feet are rescued from stumbling.

The result is that he can "walk" with his feet (verse 9). He can do that "before the LORD", as it were, face to face with Him. He can do that "in the land of the living", for he has been rescued from death. That he is still in the land of the living is a special blessing to him. It means that he can still praise God and enjoy God's blessing. Death is still for him "the king of

terror" (Job 18:14), who takes him away from the land of light and blessing and brings him to the land of darkness and silence.

In the tribulation, the psalmist learned the lesson of true faith (verse 10). He put his trust in the LORD during the tribulation of verse 3, which is why he spoke what he said in verses 1-2. In verse 10 he looks back. The psalmist explains why he cried out to the LORD in his distress, namely because of his faith. Therefore, he prayed, supplicated, cried out to the LORD.

He spoke in the presence of the LORD. He has believed just when he was "greatly afflicted". That is what he is speaking about now. Paul quotes this verse in the second letter to the Corinthians (2Cor 4:13). The context in which he does so makes it clear that this is about the testimony given by Christ. Again, this is about speaking in the presence of God. The difference is that the psalmist spoke of his life, while the apostle spoke of "the life of Jesus" that it would be manifest in his body (2Cor 4:10).

Paul speaks of the dangers of death into which he has repeatedly come because of his preaching. The threat of death did not silence him, for he knows in Whom he believes. Therefore, he had to speak. The spirit of faith that Paul possesses is the same spirit that the Old Testament believer possesses. He who believes will speak to God when he is in distress because he believes that God is able to rescue from distress.

And if the opposition results in his being killed, then that is not the end. Paul then points to the Lord Jesus (2Cor 4:14). Christ paid for His testimony with death. But God raised Him up. Paul mentions this to encourage the believers. The encouragement is that as surely as God raised up Christ, He will also raise up every one who has to pay for his testimony with death. This is secured in the power of God. The psalm is therefore broadly applicable to the suffering that Christians may undergo.

Verse 10 of this psalm is translated in different ways. In our opinion, the best translation and consistent with the content of this psalm, as also the Septuagint translates, is: "I believed, therefore I spoke." That is, the psalmist's faith was the reason he spoke to God while he was still in mortal danger. It is not about speaking after he had been rescued from this mortal danger.

That the psalmist says something “in his alarm” is not a confession of sin, as if he had been too quick with his mouth to say anything (verse 11). The Hebrew word for ‘alarm’ literally means “to terrify”. The word is better translated ‘fear’ (cf. Psa 31:22).

He says in his alarm that he is convinced that “all men are liars”. He quickly learned in his tribulation that God alone is true and trustworthy. Those in need quickly find out that people cannot help and that their promises to help are lies. God helps everyone who calls out to Him in his distress.

The hostile people who persecute the psalmist use the lie to snare him with cords of death (verse 3). We see an example with Jeremiah, who was deceived by his fellow villagers and even family (Jer 11:15-19; 12:6). The lie is pre-eminently the mark of the devil (Jn 8:44) and is therefore also the mark of those under his power. The lie is the misrepresentation of Who God is (Gen 3:1-7).

Psa 116:12-19 | Thanksgiving

*12 What shall I render to the LORD
For all His benefits toward me?
13 I shall lift up the cup of salvation
And call upon the name of the LORD.
14 I shall pay my vows to the LORD,
Oh [may it be] in the presence of all His people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of His godly ones.
16 O LORD, surely I am Your servant,
I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid,
You have loosed my bonds.
17 To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
18 I shall pay my vows to the LORD,
Oh [may it be] in the presence of all His people,
19 In the courts of the LORD's house,
In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!*

The psalmist is now overflowing with gratitude. He struggles with the question of how to express his gratitude for such a great proof of grace (verse 12). Fortunately, in the law the LORD gave the Israelites the option of expressing gratitude through sacrifice of thanksgiving and through a votive offering (Lev 7:11-21). A sacrifice of peace offerings or of thanksgiving is a sacrifice brought out of gratitude. A votive offering is a sacrifice promised by the offeror as a vow in his distress, and is thus a mandatory sacrifice.

The psalmist does not speak of one benefit, but of “benefits”, which presupposes a multitude of benefits. God has delivered him not only from death, but also from fears, distress, grief, tears and stumbling. He preserved him and took care of him.

But how could He repay all these benefits? After all, that is impossible. There is no quid pro quo that could serve somewhat as compensation. Yet there is a way in which God can be thanked for what He has done. That is by lifting up “the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD” (verse 13).

Verses 13-14 parallel verses 17-18. The cup of salvation of verse 13 runs parallel to the sacrifice of thanksgiving of verse 17. A cup is all about the content. The content here is the salvation that has been experienced. The lifting up of the cup is a symbolic act that expresses gratitude for salvation (cf. 1Cor 10:16a). This is a drink offering that is to accompany an offering by fire, such as a sacrifice of thanksgiving and a votive offering (verses 14,17-18). The drink offering is poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt offering in the presence of all the people.

It is like a heave offering: gratitude is lifted up, above everything, and offered to God. At the same time, the name of the LORD is invoked, now not to ask Him for His help, but to worship and praise Him for what He has done. New Testament believers do this during the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

In his distress, the psalmist made vows (verse 14). These he now wants to fulfill (cf. Psa 66:13-14). His vows he has made personally to God. He wants to fulfill them by bringing the votive offering with its accompanying drink offering in public, “in the presence of all His people”, to God. The

whole people of God need to hear of His help and the blessing He has given, so that they can share in the joy of all the benefits of God. Then they can join to give Him the praise due for it.

The psalmist is rescued from death. But there are faithful ones who do die. It may seem that their prayers have not been answered. The psalmist then points out, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that their death is “precious in the sight of the LORD” (verse 15). The enemies have dealt with people they like to get rid of, but to God they are “His godly ones”. They are in His special favor.

The death of the wicked is no joy to the LORD (Eze 18:23; 33:11). The death of His godly ones – Hebrew *chasad*, that is those who are faithful to the covenant – is. The word “precious” has the meaning of “rare”. The LORD has shown this by delivering the psalmist, who has been in “cords of death” and in “terrors of Sheol” (verse 3), from them (verse 8). This will be said by God’s godly ones, the remnant who will enter the realm of peace.

We can apply this prophetically in another sense, namely, to the second group of martyrs in the book of Revelation (Rev 13:7). [The first group is mentioned in Revelation 6 (Rev 6:9-11).] About them a voice from heaven says: ““Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them”” (Rev 14:13). Paul compares his own martyrdom to the pouring out of the drink offering over the burnt offering (Phil 2:17).

The death of God’s godly ones is not beyond God’s will. Their death does not put an end to God’s plans for them, but rather helps bring about His high plans for them. They will have part in the resurrection of the righteous. Then He will reward their faithfulness unto death with “the crown of life” (Rev 2:10b) and “then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father” (Mt 13:43a).

After this interlude about the death of God’s godly ones, the psalmist goes on in verse 16 to describe his own situation. He solemnly and with great gratitude declares to the LORD that he is His servant. He does so in the awareness of all the benefits the LORD has given him. We too will desire to serve the Lord when we are aware of how many benefits we have received from Him through His work on the cross.

In his great gratitude for what the LORD has done for him, he also mentions the role his mother played in his upbringing (cf. Psa 86:16). That the psalmist calls her “Your servant” means that she has been a God-fearing woman who has served God. She will have taught him in the things of God (cf. 2Tim 1:5).

If we are to do anything for the Lord, it is good to remember to whom we owe much for our spiritual upbringing. That may be our parents, it may also be mature believers who have helped us in our spiritual growth (cf. 1Thes 2:7,11). It prevents us from boasting about our qualities and activities. The Lord has prepared everything to make us His servant and to do the work He has had in mind for us (Eph 2:10).

That freedom to serve Him is *His* work. He has loosened the bonds with which the psalmist was imprisoned. The psalmist experienced his deliverance as a release from prison. Thus, we were imprisoned in the bonds of sin. The Lord Jesus has freed us from those bonds (Rom 6:17) and now we may live for Him and serve Him in our lives.

Verses 17-18, except for the opening phrase, are similar to verses 13-14. In verse 17 it is about the sacrifice of thanksgiving, in verse 18 about the votive offering. The deliverance from prison, the loosening of the bonds, is cause to offer God “a sacrifice of thanksgiving” (verse 17). A sacrifice of thanksgiving is offered when a vow has been made (Lev 7:16). Others may eat of such a sacrifice. It is a meal offering. This is reflected in the next verse.

In his captivity, the psalmist made vows (verse 18; cf. Psa 56:12-13; Jona 2:9). These he now wants to fulfill. He made his vows personally to God. He wants to fulfill them publicly, “in the presence of all His people”. The whole people of God need to hear of the deliverance He has given, so that they can share in his joy of all the benefits of God (cf. Psa 107:10-18).

He says this for the second time (verses 14,18), which emphasizes it and underscores its importance. This second time makes it clear that he can only do so in the place the LORD has chosen to establish His name there for His dwelling (Deu 12:5-14), namely the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, where the LORD Himself now dwells.

The place where the praise happens and where the meal is held is “in the courts of the LORD’s house” (verse 19). It is a feast in the presence of the LORD. He is the Host, it is about Him. He has turned everything around for the better and He is worthy of all thanks.

Then the psalmist spontaneously addresses the word to Jerusalem, where the house of the LORD stands, saying: “In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.” The heart of the God-fearing Jew is intimately bound up with the city of Jerusalem, the city of the great King, where God dwells. No greater joy can be imagined for him than to be in the midst of that city, because there he can experience fellowship with God in the most intimate way. He ends, therefore, with another “hallelujah!”, “praise the LORD!”.

In Psalm 115, the first hallel-psalm after the Passover meal, the praise is because of the omnipotence of the LORD. In Psalm 116, the praise is because of the LORD’s grace (verse 5), because of His righteousness and compassion.

Psalm 117

Introduction

In the parable told by the Lord Jesus in Luke 15, we see joy in the shepherd that he has his lost sheep back, in the woman that she has her lost coin back, and in the father that he has his lost son back. They are so happy about this that they invite others to share in their joy (Lk 15:6,9,22-24,32). We see this same thing in this psalm. The faithful remnant has become so filled with reasons to praise and worship the LORD in the previous hallel-psalms that they invite all those around them to join them in praising the LORD. This invitation is made in Psalm 117.

This is also why Psalm 150 ends with the invitation: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Hallelujah!” (Psa 150:6). With that, the book of Psalms ends.

Psalm 117 is admittedly the shortest chapter in the Bible. However, that is more than compensated for by a wide view to the horizon. The LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth, is not only the God of Israel, He is the God for all people (Rom 3:29).

Psa 117:1-2 | All Nations, Praise the LORD!

*1 Praise the LORD, all nations;
Laud Him, all peoples!*
*2 For His lovingkindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.
Praise the LORD!*

This shortest psalm and the shortest chapter in the Bible has a huge span. The invitation goes out to “all nations” to praise the LORD, and to “all peoples” to laud Him (verse 1). This is about the time when the LORD is King of all the earth. Israel never made such an invitation in its history under the law. But now that they have been led into the blessing of the realm of peace, they can make that invitation.

From the beginning, it is the LORD's purpose that His blessing should come through Abraham, and thus through Israel, to all the generations of the earth (Gen 12:1). The purpose of the service of the Servant of the LORD is also to be "a light of the nations" (Isa 49:6). As a result of the sacrifice of the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah 53, the house of the LORD, the temple, will be called "a house of prayer for all the peoples" (Isa 56:6-7). The nations will also go to the house of the LORD to receive instruction (Isa 2:3). Thus, together with the people of Israel, the nations will praise the LORD (Psa 117:1).

On top of that, God has a right to the praise of all the nations. Israel has no exclusive right to praise God. The people were made by God His people so that through them He might make His Name known to the nations and they too might glorify Him for Who He is. He is not only the God of the Jews, but also of the nations (Rom 3:29).

Paul quotes verse 1 of this psalm in Romans 15 to indicate that God intended blessing for the nations also in the Old Testament (Rom 15:11; cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8). He does so in connection with the Lord Jesus Who became a Servant of the circumcision "for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy" (Rom 15:8-9a). Here Paul makes it clear that the coming of the Lord Jesus means blessing not only for Israel, but also for the nations.

It is in God's heart that the Lord Jesus restores Israel. But that is not the only thing. For God, the work of His Son is so great that He does not want to limit its effects to Israel. He wants all nations to share in the mercy that has come to people through Christ. The result is that God is glorified and magnified.

Mercy to the nations is not something new that was only revealed in the New Testament. Note: it is not about the church. In the Old Testament that indeed is a mystery. What we are talking about here is that in the Old Testament God's heart also went out to the nations outside of Israel. It is true that they have a different place there. Israel is and remains God's chosen people and has a special place in the history of salvation, but God has not rejected the other nations with that.

The heart of God always goes out to the nations as well. However, there is a distinction between two eras (cf. Rom 11:11-15):

1. The era of the rejection of Israel as a people, which is the time in which we live now, the time when God's blessing comes to the nations *apart from* Israel.
2. The era of Israel's acceptance, which is the near future, the time when God's blessing will come to the nations *through* Israel.

This psalm is about the second era, after the church is caught up (1Thes 4:15-18). The remnant of Israel will then be grafted back into the original noble olive tree (Rom 11:23-25).

In the end time, the nations will come to know the LORD through the ways He has gone with Israel. They will come to know Him as the kind and faithful God. This is what God's people testify to when they say: "For His lovingkindness is great toward us" (verse 2). That lovingkindness – Adonai, covenant love, based on the blood of the new covenant – "is great" because it has put an end to the power of sin and to the power of hostile nations. The latter is consistent with the blessing of the covenant. From these powers the people could not deliver themselves, but He did it.

This also revealed "the truth of the LORD" to His covenant. His truth confirms the immutability of His covenant, His promise. The sins of the people and the enmity of the nations do not destroy His faithfulness to His covenant. That faithfulness has no end; it is "everlasting", that is, here, during the entire period of the realm of peace. Therefore, the "hallelujah", praise the LORD, with which this psalm ends, will sound unceasingly during the duration of the realm of peace.

Psalm 118

Introduction

Psalm 118 is the last psalm of the hallel-psalms (Psalms 113-118). This makes this psalm the last song that, as far as we know, the Savior sang on the night He was being betrayed and delivered into the hands of men (Mt 26:30). He knew that a few hours later the fulfillment would come.

In verse 27 we recognize one of the feasts of the LORD from Leviticus 23. The Talmud says that this is the Feast of Booths celebrated when the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt by Nehemiah (Neh 8:14-18). The connection with the other psalms also indicates that this is the Feast of Booths, which points prophetically to the blessings of the realm of peace (Zec 14:16-19).

Psa 118:1-4 | The LORD Is Good

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

2 Oh let Israel say,

"His lovingkindness is everlasting."

3 Oh let the house of Aaron say,

"His lovingkindness is everlasting."

4 Oh let those who fear the LORD say,

"His lovingkindness is everlasting."

The psalmist in this psalm represents the faithful remnant. In him we hear the remnant speaking. The psalm begins with the exclamation and call that we hear so often: "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting" (verse 1; Psa 106:1; Psa 107:1; Psa 136:1-26). The first time we encounter this expression is in the song of praise recorded of David in 1 Chronicles 16 (1Chr 16:34).

It is the confession that all the people's victories and their prosperity are due not to their own strength or ability, but to the goodness of the LORD, to His faithfulness to His covenant.

Again and again, we are reminded by this

1. Who the LORD is: "He is good",
2. what He does: He proves "His lovingkindness", which is His covenant love,
3. and that this is endlessly so: "everlasting", for He is the Eternal and never changes.

Again and again when the believer notices this or is reminded of it, he cannot help but give thanks to Him for it. In Psalm 136 we hear this at length in an impressive way. Every action, every evidence of it, elicits this exclamation and call from the believing heart.

After the psalmist's exclamation, he urges three groups to say the same thing: "His lovingkindness is everlasting" (verses 2-4). In Psalm 115, these same three groups are called to trust in the LORD (Psa 115:9-11) and are told that the LORD will bless them (Psa 115:12-14).

"Israel" (verse 2) is the whole people, "the house of Aaron" (verse 3) is the priestly family, and "those who fear the LORD" (verse 4), are all the individual God-fearers of the people. God's lovingkindness binds the people together, makes them a priestly people, while each individual believer bears witness to God's lovingkindness. We can even say that because in Psalm 117 the nations are called to praise the LORD, the call to those who fear the LORD applies not only to the people of Israel, but all individuals who fear the LORD, including those among the nations.

Then in the following verses (verses 5-14) we see the practice and life of an individual Israelite who fears the LORD. The language of this section is the language of the book of Exodus, the redemption from Egypt. The content is prophetic, namely the redemption of the remnant of Israel in the end time, here the redemption from the hand of the nations (verse 10).

Psa 118:5-9 | The LORD Is For Me

*5 From [my] distress I called upon the LORD;
The LORD answered me [and set me] in a large place.
6 The LORD is for me; I will not fear;
What can man do to me?*

7 *The LORD is for me among those who help me;
Therefore I will look [with satisfaction] on those who hate me.*
8 *It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in man.*
9 *It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in princes.*

The psalmist tells why he calls to praise the LORD for His lovingkindness. He has from his “distress ... called upon the LORD” and “the LORD” has “answered” him and set him “in a large place” (verse 5; cf. Psa 4:2; 18:20). He testified that by virtue of the covenant, by virtue of the LORD’s lovingkindness, He heard the psalmist’s cry for help and redeemed him. “[Set] in a large place” means “redeemed”; it is so rendered in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

The psalmist here represents the people, that is, the faithful remnant, who have been in distress and in their distress have cried out to the LORD. The LORD has answered the cry. Out of a narrow place the remnant cried out and the LORD answered with a large place. He has led out of the distress and set in the large place of freedom.

The LORD has not put the remnant, which is His people, in a large space only to leave them to themselves. He is for His people (verse 6; Heb 13:6). The people are aware of this and express it. This gives utter peace to the earlier so anxious heart. Now there is no more fear. The remnant even says with great confidence: “What can man do to me?” (cf. Psa 56:11; Rom 8:31).

Trusting the LORD drives out fear, just as in trusting the LORD and His word (Psa 56:10-11; cf. 1Jn 4:18). “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline” (2Tim 1:7). The wise King Solomon once said: “Fear of man [someone] lays a trap, but those who rely on the LORD are put in a safe fortress” (Pro 29:25).

Once again the psalmist says the LORD is for him (verse 7). There are others for him, for the LORD is “among those who help me”. He is in a similar position with others and has support from the others. However, they could never help him if the LORD were not for them. The LORD is the only, true support. Because He is in the midst of them, victory over his

haters is certain. He can look on them with satisfaction because they are all lie defeated around him (cf. Exo 14:30-31).

The remnant, through the great distress because of the LORD's discipline of them by the king of the North, learned to put their trust in the LORD. For this they have always resorted to the help of men, sometimes to Egypt (Isa 31:1), sometimes to Assyria (Hos 5:13; 7:11). They have experienced the futility of that and in contrast have experienced the help of the LORD.

Therefore, they twice confess that it is "better to take refuge in the LORD, than to trust in man", even if they were "princes" (verses 8-9; cf. Psa 146:3). Ordinary man (verse 8) and princes (verse 9) are similar to "the small" and "the great" in Psalm 115 (Psa 115:13). The help of men, whether they hold a low or a high position, avails nothing. Only the LORD is able to deliver from need. This is a lesson we must learn again and again.

Psa 118:10-14 | The Enemies Cut Off

*10 All nations surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
11 They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
12 They surrounded me like bees;
They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
13 You pushed me violently so that I was falling,
But the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.*

In the time of distress, the remnant is surrounded by "all nations" (verse 10; Psa 83:3-8; Zec 12:2-3; 14:2). In verses 5-9, the remnant has said that the LORD is for them and is their refuge. Therefore, they can say that "in the name of the LORD" they "will surely cut them off" (cf. 1Sam 17:45; Mic 5:4-5). They say this three times in verses 10-12.

In verse 11, they once again pronounce that the nations had surrounded them. They even say it twice, preceding the second time by an empowering "yes". Being surrounded by their enemies felt to them like a suffocating

stranglehold. But they freed themselves from it by invoking “the name of the LORD”, the God Who is for them by virtue of the covenant with them. The nations had “surrounded” them “like bees” (verse 12; cf. Deu 1:44; Isa 7:18). A cloud of bees coming at people causes them to flee in panic. In the case of the remnant, the danger of the bees is “extinguished as a fire of thorns”. The remnant has taken refuge “in the name of the LORD”. The fire of His judgment has burned the nations like a fire of thorns, that is, very quickly, as quickly as thorns burn (cf. Isa 33:12). As a result, the danger of the nations disappeared.

We are also surrounded by nations, by people who do not know God and do not want to know God. They want to impose their will on us and that we submit to them. We see this in anti-godly legislation. Only the Name of the Lord Jesus, fellowship with Him, can deliver us from the stranglehold by which we are otherwise stifled in our witnessing for Him. To avoid being strangled, we must put on the armor that God has made available to us (Eph 6:10-18). Thereby we must remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

The psalmist says: “You pushed me violently so that I was falling, but the LORD helped me” (verse 13). This is about the Assyrian, the discipling rod of God, who did everything possible to wipe out the faithful remnant. He failed, because the remnant fought in the name of the LORD.

They give credit to the LORD for the victory when they say, “The LORD is my strength and my song” (verse 14). This is what Moses sang after the people were delivered from the pursuing Egyptians who perished in the Red Sea (Exo 15:2). Here the final deliverance of the people in the end time from the great tribulation is connected to the first deliverance of the people, the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. We also see this connection between the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rev 15:3).

Psa 118:15-18 | The LORD Does Valiantly

*15 The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.*

*16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.*

*17 I will not die, but live,
 And tell of the works of the LORD.
 18 The LORD has disciplined me severely,
 But He has not given me over to death.*

The greater the danger, the greater the deliverance from it. The greater the deliverance, the greater the joy. The joy of the psalmist is no longer personal joy, but is shared by others. The song of joy because of deliverance fills “the tents of the righteous” (verse 15). In the tents is “the sound of joyful shouting and salvation”.

The content of the song is “the right hand of the LORD” (verses 15c-16; cf. Exo 15:6,12). Its threefold repetition indicates the exuberance of joy. Twice it is sung with joy that that hand “does valiantly” and once that that hand “is exalted”. By “the right hand of the LORD” we can think of the Lord Jesus, Who is exalted at God’s right hand (Psa 110:1). Through Him, God does valiantly.

Attached to the joy of the LORD’s powerful deeds, for the psalmist or the remnant, is the assurance that they will “not die, but live” (verse 17; cf. 2Cor 6:9b). At the same time, they also mention what the purpose of their lives is: it is to “tell of the works of the LORD”.

Also, they are aware that they have no right to life. They have been “disciplined ... severely” by the LORD because of their sins (verse 18). Therewith, they acknowledge His justice. Discipline, however, is not intended to cause them to perish, but to cleanse them (Heb 12:5-11). Discipline is not an end goal, but a means. They have understood this. That is why they add with gratitude: “But He has not given me over to death.” Everything speaks of the LORD’s lovingkindness.

Psa 118:19-21 | The Triumphal Entry

*19 Open to me the gates of righteousness;
 I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD.
 20 This is the gate of the LORD;
 The righteous will enter through it.
 21 I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me,
 And You have become my salvation.*

And this lovingkindness does not end with their joy about the deliverance. When the remnant is restored to their relationship with God on the basis of the work of His Son, they will boldly ask that “the gates of righteousness” be opened to them (verse 19). These are the gates that give access to righteousness. They are the gates of Jerusalem, which is now “the city of righteousness”, “a faithful city” (Isa 1:26).

The psalmist enters, followed by the righteous (verse 20) who have first given thanks to the LORD in their tents (verse 15). Only the righteous may enter (Psa 24:3-6). There they will “give thanks to the LORD” for all the benefits He has proven to them.

The gates of righteousness lead to “the gate of the LORD” that is the gate of the temple. That is where the LORD dwells. The gates and the gate are a picture of Christ. The righteous must enter through Him, just as Christ is the door for the sheep in the New Testament (Jn 10:7-9).

Each of the twelve gates of the city (Eze 48:30-35a) leads to Him Who is the center of the city. The name of the city in the realm of peace is therefore “The LORD is there” (Eze 48:35b). The remnant – they “all ... [will be] righteous” (Isa 60:21) – will enter through that gate.

In the city, in the temple, the remnant will give thanks to Him because He has heard them, for He has become their salvation (verse 21). He has redeemed them from affliction and brought them into the salvation of the realm of peace. For this He deserves all praise and thanks.

Psa 118:22-26 | The Day That the LORD Has Made

*22 The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief corner [stone].*

*23 This is the LORD's doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.*

*24 This is the day which the LORD has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

*25 O LORD, do save, we beseech You;
O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!*

*26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.*

The Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is “the stone which the builders rejected” (verse 22). This is clear from what He Himself says about it to the corrupt “builders”, the religious leaders of God’s people during His life on earth (Mt 21:33-46). He was made the chief corner stone by God by raising Him from the dead and glorifying Him at His right hand (Acts 4:11). There God made Him the chief corner stone of the church (Eph 2:20).

But here He is the chief corner stone on which restored Israel will be built (Isa 28:16). A chief corner stone is either a large stone on the foundation that holds two or more rows of stones together, or the last stone of an arch or of a building (Mk 12:10).

Earlier, Israel stumbled over that stone. Christ is the touchstone for every human being. It is accept or fall. Unbelieving Israel stumbled and fell over Him. What is most precious to the believer is most hateful to the unbeliever. Peter points out in his first letter that God’s Word foretold that the unbelieving Jews would stumble over Him (1Pet 2:7-8; Isa 8:14; Rom 9:31-33).

When Christ returns, He will scatter all who have fallen over Him and despised Him (Mt 21:42-44; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17-18; Dan 2:34-35,44-45). Then He will set up His kingdom. When the remnant sees it, they will say with admiration: “This is the LORD’s doing”, and then express their amazement at it: “It is marvelous in our eyes” (verse 23).

They will immediately add that this is the day that “the LORD has made” (verse 24). It is a new day, the day of the realm of peace, which comes from God’s hand and where everything is in perfect accord with God’s thoughts. His intentions for heaven and earth will have been fulfilled. For His people and all who share in that glorious time of blessing, this is cause for joy and gladness. This will be the case throughout the time of the realm of peace.

Along with this assurance is a prayer to the LORD: “O LORD, do save” and “do send prosperity” (verse 25). “Do save” is the translation of the word “hosanna” (Mt 21:9; Mk 11:9-10; Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13). This prayer shows that the remnant is aware that the continuance and enjoyment of that glorious situation depends entirely and only on the LORD. He has given the blessing, but must also maintain it. This attitude of dependence is characteristic of all who know their blessings and enjoy them in fellowship with God.

When it can be said “blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; we have blessed you from the house of the LORD”, the time of the rejection of God’s people and the Christ of God is over (verse 26). Based on this verse, the Jews give the Messiah the title *baruch ha-ba* or ‘blessed He Who comes’. We hear this in the question to the Lord Jesus in Matthew 11: “Are You the Expected One?” (Mt 11:3a).

The crowds shouted this when the Lord Jesus went to Jerusalem for the last time during His life on earth before His death and resurrection (Lk 19:38). It was the day of their “visitation”, of His visiting them (Lk 19:44). However, it did not become a day of salvation for them because they did not recognize the Savior.

It will be different at the second coming of the Lord Jesus to earth. The people will have repented and welcome the Messiah, for it is He and no one else Who comes in the Name of the LORD (Mt 23:39). They are in the house of the LORD to sacrifice to the LORD and wish Him all good. He is worthy, for He has turned everything for the better for them.

Psa 118:27-29 | Voluntary Sacrifices

27 *The LORD is God, and He has given us light;
Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.*
28 *You are my God, and I give thanks to You;
[You are] my God, I extol You.*
29 *Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

The remnant confesses wholeheartedly and with their whole heart: “The LORD is God” (verse 27; cf. 1Kgs 18:39). There is no longer any thought of idols that they used to worship. He has, in accordance with the priestly blessing (Num 6:25), “given” them “light”. This is the light of the day He has made, the day in which they rejoice and are glad (verse 24; cf. Est 8:16).

The salvation by the LORD and introduction into the realm of peace is cause for great celebration. It is a feast for and with the LORD. That includes a sacrifice. They call one another to offer a sacrifice, “the festival sacrifice”, to Him (cf. Exo 10:9; 12:14). This sacrifice is to be brought “with cords to the horns of the altar”. The cords indicate the close connection

between the sacrifice and the altar. The altar is the place where the slaughtered sacrificial animal was burned as an offering by fire to God. The horns of the altar speak of the power of the sacrifice.

The sacrifice is a picture of Christ. Only through His sacrifice there is blessing for God's people. In the realm of peace, sacrifices will be offered again. They are then memorial sacrifices in remembrance of Christ's once accomplished work of which the value and power remain forever.

The LORD Who is God (verse 27) is also the God of each individual, "my God" (verse 28). Twice this personal relationship with God is mentioned. Experiencing it causes to "give thanks" to Him and to "extol" Him. The remnant as a whole and each individual give thanks to Him and extol Him for Who He is and what He has done.

The psalm ends with the same call and expression of appreciation to the LORD with which it began (verse 29; verse 1). Everything said in between gives an abundance of reasons to give thanks to the LORD. It is a succession of testimonies that He is good and that His lovingkindness is everlasting. That thanksgiving will sound forever.

Psalm 119

Introduction

The book of Psalms is the heart of the Bible. Psalm 119 is the heart of the fifth book of Psalms. We hear in this psalm the heartbeat of the faithful remnant of Israel. This psalm points to the Word and prophetically it points to the time when the remnant will return to the LORD and to His Word.

The hallmark of the psalm is that through the Spirit's ministry the law is written in the heart of the remnant (2Cor 3:8; cf. Psa 40:8; Eze 36:27). This is by virtue of the blood of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34). The law is mentioned in almost every verse, using names other than 'law' as well. Only in verses 84,121,122,132 there is no reference to the law.

Synonyms are also used for the term 'law'. The Jews speak of eight different synonyms for 'law', which shows the richness of the law and of the Word of God as a whole. This allows the psalmist to elaborate on the versatility of the Word, and it helps us to see and appreciate more of the multicolored nature of the Word of God. Five of these eight synonyms are already used in the description of God's Word in Psalm 19 (Psa 19:7-10).

The eight words used by the psalmist are:

1. Law (*Torah*, 25 times) = teaching, instruction – the law as the teaching of the will of the LORD, Yahweh: "He who keeps the law (teaching) is a discerning son" (Pro 28:7a). Furthermore, the law also means:

- 'the whole of the Old Testament',

- 'the five books of Moses'

- 'the requirements of the old covenant necessary to receive life' (see, for example, the letter to the Romans and the letter to the Galatians).

2. Word (*Dabar*, 24 times) = orderly exposition in a speech – the form or means by which Yahweh communicates His will. It is every word that goes out through the mouth of God.

3. Promise (*Imrah*, 19 times) = proverb, saying, statement – expression of the will of Yahweh in what He says.
4. Commandment (*Mitzvah*, 22 times) – precept that demands obedience; imposed duty or responsibility. It emphasizes God’s right to determine the basis of our relationship with Him
5. Statute, institution (*Chukkim*, 21 times) = engraving, chiseling – the permanent testimony of the will of Yahweh, as if engraved in stone and therefore indelible. It represents the binding and continuing power of God’s law.
6. Precepts (*Piqqudim*, 21 times) = to commission – meticulous regulations that closely examine our lives and accurately define or describe them.
7. Judgment (*Mishpat*, 22 times) = law, court, administer justice – the will of Yahweh as Judge in legal matters. They are also the rules God has given to govern relationships between people.
8. Testimony (*Edut*, 23 times) – testifies to the relationship (covenant) with Yahweh and the responsibility attached to it; the word is derived from repeat, testify or say something emphatically; the law is also called ‘the testimony’ (Exo 25:16,21). These are practical principles that govern the behavior. The Word of God gives ‘testimony’ of righteousness and against our sinfulness.

The number ‘eight’ also ties in well with the whole of Psalm 119, in which each letter of the Hebrew alphabet appears eight times at the beginning of a verse. The number ‘eight’ in Hebrew is *shmonah*, which is derived from *shaman* meaning to make fat, abundant. Seven is enough, eight is ‘more than enough’. Seven is a complete whole, eight is a new beginning. ‘Eight’ in this psalm points to the new covenant, through which the law is written in the hearts of the born-again believing remnant (Heb 8:8-10).

This psalm is an acrostic, that is, each verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, as is the case with Psalms 9, 10, 34, 37, 111, 112, 145. The difference is that these psalms show a singular acrostic – and are not always complete either, for a letter is sometimes missing – while in Psalm 119 we have an eightfold acrostic.

Psalm 119 has twenty-two stanzas of eight verses each. Each verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight verses of the stanza begins with the letter of the verse. For example, each verse of the first stanza begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *aleph*; each verse of the second stanza begins with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *beth*; and so on.

An acrostic functions as a mnemonic device; it is a tool for remembering a text. Psalm 119 has both an acrostic and a rhythm for remembering the text, in the head and in the heart (cf. verse 11).

Each letter of the Hebrew *alephbeth* – to us: alphabet – is a pictogram with a meaning. Each letter also has a name with a backstory. [Those interested we refer to, for example, Gesenius, *Lexicon of Hebrew*.] Both aspects are woven into the message of the Word of God. The message and the letters as bearers of the message are closely intertwined. The word *alephbeth* is a composite of the first and second letters of the Hebrew alphabet – *aleph* and *beth* – which represent the word ‘father’. This underscores the importance of the concept of ‘father’ in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus is called “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In Hebrew, these are the *aleph* and the *tav*. It speaks of the Lord Jesus as the Word, the speaking from God to men (Heb 1:1).

This psalm is the longest of all the psalms and of all the chapters in the Bible. It is a song of praise about the Word of God. A portion of God’s Word that uses all the letters of human language to present us a topic, determines us by the value of the topic of that portion. Here it is about the Word of God which has an immeasurable value. By using all the letters of the alphabet, it is presented to us in a complete way.

This does not mean that we know the inexhaustible value of the Word of God if we have understood the psalm correctly. Using a variant of what Spurgeon once said, after years of studying the Word, we want to put it this way: A long life is just enough to stand on the beach with our feet in the water of the endless ocean of the Word, which, as we go further and further into the water, becomes more and more endless.

This psalm is about the Word of God as the only means of getting to know God Himself better. The psalmist values the Word because it comes from Him. With the exception of verses 1,2,3,9 he speaks in all verses to the "LORD", the God of the covenant with His people. He speaks to Him of "Your precepts", "Your ordinances", "Your statutes", and so on. The psalmist is not glorifying the Book, but the God Who reveals Himself in and through this Book and with Whom he has a personal relationship.

The psalm shows the richness of God's Word. It is impossible to describe its richness in a single sentence or a few phrases. Even the alphabet is not long enough. The psalmist goes through the alphabet eight times without repeating a single thing. Each time we see a new aspect of the richness of God's Word. As mentioned, the number eight indicates a new beginning. The Word of God works a new beginning.

Being busy with God's Word is an activity that gives true happiness, true blessing. The first word of the psalm is "blessed" (verse 1). It truly blesses one in the sense that it gives one a peaceful heart and a joyful spirit. We hear something similar from the mouth of the Lord Jesus in the 'beatitudes' in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3-12). The true servant of God will not be satisfied with a cursory reading of God's Word. His desire is that it governs his whole life.

A division of the psalm, which describes the Word of God as written in the heart (Jer 31:33), is the following:

1. 1st-7th stanza – the letters *aleph-zayin*: focused on yourself;
2. 8th-14th stanza – the letters *heth-nun*: focused on your fellow man;
3. 15th-21st stanza – the letters *samekh-shin*: focused on God;
4. 22nd stanza – the letter *tav*: summary.

Psa 119:1-8 | /aleph/ The Beginning

1 How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.

2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek Him with all [their] heart.

3 They also do no unrighteousness;

They walk in His ways.

*4 You have ordained Your precepts,
That we should keep [them] diligently.*

*5 Oh that my ways may be established
To keep Your statutes!*

*6 Then I shall not be ashamed
When I look upon all Your commandments.*

*7 I shall give thanks to You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.*

*8 I shall keep Your statutes;
Do not forsake me utterly!*

The *aleph* is the first letter. We can say that this letter speaks of God as the origin of all things. This letter was originally depicted as (the head of) a bull or an ox, the largest sacrificial animal for the burnt offering (Lev 1:1-5). The burnt offering speaks of Christ's offering to glorify God as the basis of God's speaking to man.

A bull also speaks of strength, power and of service. This too applies to Christ, Who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). His life of service and His death are immediately revealed by this first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which also represents the numerical value one.

In this *aleph* stanza about the Word of God, it becomes clear that the center of the Word is the Person of God Himself (verse 2). The Word is about Him. The Word is about Him Who revealed Himself in Jesus: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev 19:10).

A division of this stanza is:

Verses 1-3 the teaching: third person plural.

Verse 4 the Teacher: second person singular.

Verses 5-8 the student, the remnant: first person singular.

This division makes it clear that the general truth of verses 1-4 must be applied personally in verses 5-8.

Verse 1, and in fact the entire stanza of eight verses is an introduction to the whole of Psalm 119. The psalm begins by saying "blessed". The book

of Psalms begins with a “blessed” to the righteous and his way (Psa 1:1). The ‘way’ means not only that a believer has found the way, but that, like Enoch, he walks and lives in that way. In Psalm 1, that way is characterized by three negative things in which the righteous does not walk. Here in Psalm 119, we find a positive “blessed” for the upright in their way. Their way is characterized by walking in the law of the LORD. This is emphasized in verse 2 with another positive “blessed”.

‘Blessed’ is not a wish or a command, but a fact. It is the naming of a fact, a spiritual law, passed on to us as teaching. Its first condition is ‘blameless, literally ‘perfect’. The walk of the upright is not a learned, superficial behavior, but a walk with a whole heart.

Teaching is not a subject, like theology, for example, but literally “a way” to walk, a path of life. It is a walk in the law of the LORD (verse 1b). Such a walk is possible for the believing remnant through the new covenant, whereby the law is written in their hearts (Jer 31:33; Eze 36:26,27).

There is only one way through the world for the God-fearing Jew and that is the way of the law. It is not wealth and possessions that lead to happiness, but going the way of obedience to the law. Those who go that way with a sincere heart are in the right relationship with God. The result is blessing (Lk 11:28).

Then another “blessed” is added. That is for “those who observe His testimonies” (verse 2). God’s law here is called “His testimonies” because the law contains the testimonies of Who He is and what He wants. This connects the remnant directly to Himself. His testimonies are observed by those “who seek Him with all [their] heart”. ‘Observe’ is literally ‘keep’. It implies first ‘accepting’ and then ‘obeying’. This speaks of a living relationship with Him, which is evident from the fact that the whole heart seeks Him (cf. verses 10,34,58,69,145; Jer 29:13).

When the things just mentioned are present, “they also do no unrighteousness” (verse 3). To commit unrighteousness means to continue to commit wickedness, falsehood. This is completely foreign to Who God is (cf. Zep 3:5) and therefore also to those who are born of God (cf. 1Jn 3:9). In the heart that goes out to Him are the highways (Psa 84:5). Such a person will “walk in His ways”, that is, in the ways of God.

Then the psalmist – and in him the remnant – turns to the LORD and says emphatically to Him: “You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep [them] diligently” (verse 4). Keeping God’s precepts is not optional; it is not a matter of politeness, but of obedience. It is also more than formal obedience. It is about its quality: it is obedience of a dedicated heart which can only be there if there is a renewed heart.

Obedience here is the result of teaching about the law as the basis of a truly happy life. The remnant learns the will of the LORD and is eager to live by it. The law is written in their heart. Therefore, it is a joy to their heart to be obedient to what the LORD asks.

In verses 1-4 we have received spiritual teaching. In the next four verses we read about the wisdom of applying this teaching to the practice of life. The psalmist expects, to put it with the apostle Paul, that the LORD will not only work the will, but also work the work in his life (cf. Phil 2:12-13).

As it comes down to practice now, we get a glimpse into the heart and state of mind of the psalmist. He senses that he falls short. A sigh, which is a prayer, comes over his lips: “Oh that my ways may be established to keep Your statutes!” (verse 5). He sees that his ways are not established when it comes to observing the statutes of the LORD. It is not just about inwardly acknowledging what God has commanded, but that in the practice of life it is also acted upon. We recognize here the sigh: “I do believe; help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24b).

He knows that he shall not be ashamed as long as he “looks upon all Your commandments” (verse 6). If he constantly keeps his eye on “all Your commandments”, that is, the whole will of God (cf. Col 4:12), he will be preserved from wrong expectations or wrong actions and thus from shame (cf. 1Pet 2:6). To look upon all the commandments without exception means to look upon the LORD. Through the Word our eye is turned to Him.

The psalmist resolves that he will give thanks to the LORD “with uprightness of heart” when he has learned all His “righteous judgments” (verse 7). He is ready to learn God’s judgments, which he calls righteous. He also realizes that those judgments make his heart upright, that is without twists and turns. He can and will give thanks to God in a way that is pleasing to Him, not with mere lip language, but from a heart that is upright.

The psalmist now learns a new lesson. He learns that the judgment of the LORD is righteous. He learns to see himself in the light of God. That alone enables him to praise the LORD with an upright heart, a heart cleansed by self-judgment.

We can apply this to ourselves. One day we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Then we will learn His righteous judgment on all our life. As a result, we will be able to give thanks to Him and worship Him in eternity with a perfectly upright heart.

When the remnant is taught by God, they resolve to keep God's statutes (verse 8). In dealing with Him and with His Word, they have come to love the LORD (cf. Jn 14:15). At the same time, there is the prayer to God not to "forsake" him "utterly" – this expression means: in no way (cf. verse 43). This is not a prayer that the New Testament believer prays, just as he does not pray that God will not take His Holy Spirit away from him, as David did pray (Psa 51:11b).

Psa 119:9-16 | /beth/ Dwelling With the LORD

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?
By keeping [it] according to Your word.

10 With all my heart I have sought You;
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

11 Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.

12 Blessed are You, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.

13 With my lips I have told of
All the ordinances of Your mouth.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on Your precepts
And regard Your ways.

16 I shall delight in Your statutes;
I shall not forget Your word.

The second letter, *beth*, means “house”. Associated with this is the idea that God has household members. These house members are those who are characterized by seeking, clinging to, longing for the LORD with all their heart (verse 10), with praising the LORD as a result (verse 12).

This *beth* stanza begins with the question how a young man can keep his way pure (verse 9). The question is posed to the LORD and comes from the awareness of a young man who longs to walk with the LORD (verses 7-8) in a world that is full of impurity, or uncleanness. The psalmist is teaching here. The young man is the student who listens. He represents the faithful remnant (cf. Pro 1:4). He wants to teach them the fear of the LORD, knowledge and thoughtfulness (cf. Psa 34:11).

The young man is in great danger of being sucked along by the lure of sin. He who does not know this question does not realize this and will certainly not keep his path pure.

The psalmist himself gives the answer to Him to Whom He has asked the question. He says to Him: “By keeping [it] according to Your word”, which is the Word of God in its most comprehensive sense. ‘Keep’ means that the Word of God is not just a dogma that we need to know, but that it permeates every fiber of our being, governs every aspect of our lives, filling all our heart, all our mind, and all our feelings.

Then he will experience the effect of the Word of God in his heart, namely its cleansing effect (cf. Eph 5:25,26). It is also emphatically “Your” word. This includes the acknowledgment that we receive the teaching of the Word not from a man, but from God Himself (cf. 1Thes 2:13).

The whole Word has a cleansing effect. Obedience to the Word in all its aspects and its application to all areas of life preserve from uncleanness. The Word that commands is also the Word that enables one to do what it commands.

The psalmist, and with him the remnant, can say to the LORD: “With all my heart I have sought You” (verse 10; cf. verse 2). Contemplating and feeding on the Word of God had the effect that the psalmist sought the LORD with all his heart. The effect of the Word in our lives is that our heart is strengthened to be dedicated to the Lord with resolute heart and with all our heart.

Seeking the LORD to know Him and His will is a way of life. The psalmist's heart goes out undivided to Him, to His Person. There is no other object to which his heart goes out. It is not possible to enter into a marriage part-time and with a divided heart. Likewise, it is not possible to seek the LORD with a divided heart.

He does not boast of this. Just because all his heart goes out to the LORD – meaning that he takes time to be busy with the Word – he sees that he is dependent on Him not to wander from His commandments. Therefore, he asks Him not to let him wander from His commandments, but to be led by them in his way. Here we see that Word and prayer go together. One cannot do without the other.

In the *aleph* stanza, we saw in verse 5 the psalmist's acknowledgment that he is weak and longs to stand firm. We find the same thing here in this *beth* stanza. Here we have the acknowledgment that his heart is capable of wandering and his desire that the LORD will keep him from doing so.

The Word is a telescope through which we see Who God is; the Word is also a mirror in which we see who we are. The Word teaches us that we possess this treasure in an earthen vessel, which portrays our weakness, "so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (2Cor 4:7). Practically, it means that we consciously take enough time each day for the Word through which our heart is cleansed (verse 9) and strengthened (verse 10) to be devoted to Him.

Once more the psalmist tells the LORD that his heart goes out to Him. For he has treasured His word in his heart (verse 11). Now that the psalmist has come to know the working of the Word, he resolves to treasure the Word in the depths of his inner being, namely in his heart.

This goes much further and deeper than knowing the Word with the mind. It is useful to study and memorize the Word. However, it must not stop there. The Word must be ruminated on, as it were; it must descend deeper into the inner self, into the heart, and be kept there like a precious treasure that you love.

The purpose of treasuring the Word is, he tells the LORD "that I may not sin against You". As long as the believer lives on earth, the *possibility* of sinning remains open. God gives His Word, so there is no *excuse* to sin.

Those who treasure God's Word in their heart are able to answer the fiery arrows of the enemy with "it is written" (cf. Mt 4:1-11).

The psalmist is aware that man was created for the glory of God and that therefore any sin in his life is sinning against God. The word "sin" means "to miss the mark", that is, to miss the purpose the Creator has for our life, which is that we glorify God (Rom 3:23).

If the Word of God is in the heart, to govern life from there, it refrains the righteous from sin. If sin is present in the heart, the opposite happens, sin refrains the righteous from the Word of God.

A person, including a believer, sins most quickly and easily with words (Jam 3:1-2). With a word salted with the spoilage repelling words of God (Col 4:6), we can give each the right answer and speak words of grace without missing the mark. Thanks to the Word of God that is in the believer, he can also be himself a spoilage repelling salt in this world (Mt 5:13).

When God's Word is in the heart, when it is abundantly present there, the God-fearing, instead of sinning, will bless the LORD (verse 12; Col 3:16). To do this, he turns directly to Him and says: "Blessed are You, O LORD" (cf. 1Pet 1:3). Even for the writers of this commentary, it is not possible to ponder the Word and make comments without our heart becoming full of praise for our blessed Lord.

Such expressions are especially pleasing to Him. From that attitude of praise, the question to the LORD sounds: "Teach me Your statutes." The psalmist longs to learn God's statutes in such a way that His will is engraved on his heart, so that he will not depart from them.

The love of the psalmist and of the remnant for God's Word is evident in the ordinances he told with his lips (verse 13). What he heard he did not keep to himself, but passed on to others in a public testimony. What the heart is full of, the mouth overflows with (cf. Psa 116:10).

To him the Word of God does not consist merely of words, truths he has learned by heart. To him the Word of God is "all the ordinances of Your mouth". *Each* ordinance has touched his heart because God's *mouth* has spoken it. The voice of the Beloved resounds in his heart and his lips speak of it.

This verse begins with “my lips” and ends with “Your mouth”. The psalmist speaks only what he has heard from God. Thus the Lord Jesus can testify: “The things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world” (Jn 8:26b) and: “The things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me” (Jn 12:50b). Peter says something similar to us in his first letter (1Pet 4:11a).

The joy he has over the Word of God is much greater than “all riches” (verse 14) [according to Dutch Translation]. He says to the LORD that the joy that all the riches of the world could give does not outweigh for him going “in the way of Your testimonies”. Joy in riches is by definition temporary and limited and never gives full satisfaction to the heart (cf. Psa 4:7). Whoever goes in the way of the testimonies of God, whoever let himself be led by them in his life’s journey, experiences its imperishable value.

The believer who has an eye for this is meditating on God’s “precepts” (verse 15; cf. Psa 1:2). Meditating on the Word of God, examining it, gives deep satisfaction. As a result, the believer gains an eye for God’s ways. Meditating on God’s Word is never just intellectual activity, but opens one’s eyes to the practice of life. It brings to doing what the Word says.

Being engaged with God’s Word in this way gives delight in God’s “statutes”, which are the inscribed, indelible words of God (verse 16; cf. Jer 15:16). It gives stability to the life of faith, for nothing in it is uncertain. Those who rejoice in God’s decrees can say with boldness: “I shall not forget Your word.” After all, it is chiseled into the heart.

Psa 119:17-24 | /gimel/ Walking as a Stranger

17 Deal bountifully with Your servant,
That I may live and keep Your word.
18 Open my eyes, that I may behold
Wonderful things from Your law.
19 I am a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from me.
20 My soul is crushed with longing
After Your ordinances at all times.
21 You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed,
Who wander from Your commandments.

22 Take away reproach and contempt from me,
For I observe Your testimonies.
23 Even though princes sit [and] talk against me,
Your servant meditates on Your statutes.
24 Your testimonies also are my delight;
[They are] my counselors.

The acronym for *gimel* is derived from ‘foot in motion’. It is an indication of the believer’s walk in life, living as a stranger in the earth (verse 19), in the midst of hostile persons (verses 21-23).

The word *gimel* is also related to the word *gamal*, which means camel, the animal that is the preferred means of transportation for the pilgrim’s journey through the wilderness. It also means to transport goods or good things. ‘To do good’ is also a meaning (verse 17). The Word of God is the counselor (verse 24) for the believer in his walk in the wilderness of this world. The believer’s walk in the world is illustrated in the life of Abraham (Heb 11:8).

The psalmist is not asking the LORD to help him to deal bountifully, but whether the LORD will deal bountifully with him (verse 17). He does not expect abundance from himself, but from the LORD. Thus, one who lacks wisdom on his way through the world can ask it of the LORD. In His abundance He will give, generously and without reproach (Jam 1:5). It is not a question of someone who wants to benefit from the abundance of God and then continue his own way. The psalmist asks as a “servant” of the LORD, acknowledging Him as his Lord and Master.

The psalmist calls himself a servant of the LORD. This title is also used in the book of Isaiah for the faithful remnant, following the perfect Servant of the LORD, the Lord Jesus. The Hebrew word *ebed* is translated here and in Isaiah as “servant”.

The psalmist appeals to the abundance of the LORD because it is the only way he will be able to live. This is about living in fellowship with God in a hostile world. The phrase “Enoch walked with God” (Gen 5:24), is translated in Hebrews 11 as “Enoch was pleasing to God” (Heb 11:5). The verb “walk” has a form that means “to walk for pleasure” and is a synonym for having fellowship with God.

This is the life the psalmist desires, in the midst of a world corrupt and full of violence: living in fellowship with God, as Enoch did just before the flood. That is the subject of this *gimel* stanza. To walk in this way may also be our desire (cf. Phil 2:15-16).

It does not mean that the psalmist only wants to get pleasant things from God. He motivates his demand for life: it is, that he may then “keep Your word”. This is true life. Man will not live by bread alone, but by all the word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

In order to keep God’s Word, the eyes must be opened to it (verse 18; cf. 2Cor 3:14). It is something that must come from God (cf. Lk 24:45; Eph 1:18). The psalmist longs to “behold wonderful things from Your law”. The Word of God is full of wonderful things that are not noticeable to us at first glance. All who love the Bible long to see more and more of those wonderful things.

In this respect, believers resemble the blind man in the Gospel according to Mark, whose eyes the Lord has opened, but who at first still sees people walking around like trees, that is, as impressive figures (Mk 8:24). The Lord must continue to work with him so that he can see sharply. So it is also here with the psalmist. To know the wonderful things and depths of the Word of God, God must open our eyes (Eph 1:18).

“The wonderful things from Your law” begin with the wonderful things of creation in all its variety. When sin has entered into creation, the wonderful thing of the sacrifice for sin is shown. This is followed by countless wonderful things, first only for individual people, then also for a whole people, God’s people. The creation alone is an unparalleled wonderful thing. And so it continues throughout the history of God’s people. It is all recorded in the Old Testament.

The believer’s way in the earth is that of “a stranger” (verse 19; cf. 1Pet 2:11; Heb 11:13). To know what this means, the believer must first come to understand who he is and what he is doing on earth. We were first as sinners strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph 2:12). Now that we belong to the Lord Jesus, we no longer belong to the world and are strangers there. “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3:20).

In order to know his way on earth to his homeland, heaven, the believer needs signposts. He finds these in the commandments of Word of God. To discover those commandments, those signposts, he is dependent on God. He does not ask God to show them to him, but to not hide them from him. Sometimes it looks like that to him. He then has no sense of direction, he does not know which way to go.

The pilgrim turns to the LORD and says to Him: "My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times" (verse 20). He has an intense desire for what the LORD has determined, what He has recorded in His Word for the life of His own. This desire he has not just occasionally, but "at all times". He constantly longs to know the will of God for his life and for the way he must go.

The mind of longing for the Word gives a right view of the worldly person. Opposite that mind are "the arrogant, the cursed" (verse 21), the people who act from themselves and are focused on themselves. They often seem to be successful and able to exalt themselves in pride against God with impunity.

The righteous knows that the LORD rebukes them. He says that to the LORD. The curse comes upon the arrogant because, he says to the LORD, they "wander from Your commandments". They know God's commandments, but they wander from them. They deliberately choose their own way. This acting against their better judgment, that is, against the express will of God, is arrogance. It is the sin of satan (Eze 28:17; cf. Isa 14:13-14).

This is also the greatest enemy of a believer who wants to walk the way with the Lord. Arrogance is the most serious aberration from the way with the Lord. This is why the Lord tells us to learn from Him, for He is "gentle and humble in heart" (Mt 11:28-29). Great knowledge of the Bible is not without danger, for it can lead to pride (1Cor 8:1). Only fellowship with the Lord Jesus and sitting and learning at His feet can keep us from this.

The curse comes upon the arrogant in accordance with the covenant of the LORD with Israel. An Israelite who violates the covenant comes under the curse (cf. Deu 28:15,45). The end of the cursed is "the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41).

The righteous is showered with “reproach and contempt” because he does observe God’s testimonies (verse 22; cf. 2Tim 3:12). Unlike the antichrist and his followers, the psalmist – and the remnant – do want to observe God’s testimonies. After all, the testimonies, for example the two tablets of the law, are a source of joy to him (verse 24).

He has observed God’s “testimonies” and on that basis asks that God turns away the reproach and contempt loaded on him. Those who heed God’s Word must count on the world’s scorn. But he may go to God with that and ask for the defamation to be turned away. God’s assessment of his life is the only thing that matters to him.

He even encounters the contradiction of “princes” (verse 23). He has been indicted by the accursed arrogant, and instead of acquitting the righteous, the high-ranking lords vindicate the accusers. He is not troubled by it, however, for, he tells the LORD, when they speak thus, “Your servant meditates on Your statutes”.

As in the first verse of this stanza (verse 17), here, opposite the “princes” he calls himself “Your servant”, a servant of the LORD. Servant of the LORD is an honorary title of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, it is also a privilege for the psalmist, and for us, to be called servant of the Lord. Princes may be of nobility, but to be a servant of the Lord is far preferable to the nobility of a prince.

The psalmist’s life is a life of service to the LORD. That is what has brought him this opposition. His protection from their false charges and condemnation lies in meditating God’s statutes. That keeps him standing in the midst of all the enmity. We see the fulfillment of this verse in the life of the Lord Jesus, Who during His whole life and especially in the ‘trial’ against Him “has endured so great contradiction from sinners against Himself” (Heb 12:3, Darby Translation).

For the psalmist, and for the believing remnant, and especially for the Lord Jesus, God’s testimonies are their personal, “my”, “delight” (verse 24). “[They are] my counselors”, the psalmist says to the LORD. This is a wonderful personification of God’s Word. Everything God says in His Word is good counsel for anyone who wants to listen to it.

This applies to the believer as a servant and as a stranger, and to situations where defamation, contempt and opposition are experienced. Then the believer knows what to do, what way to take, and how to respond to anything that comes his way or is done to him.

This stanza begins and ends with the psalmist as a servant of the LORD. Serving is the hallmark of the walk, *gimel*, of this righteous in the midst of a world that is corrupt (the antichrist) and full of violence (the king of the North) (cf. Gen 6:11).

Psa 119:25-32 | /daleth/ The Door and Way of Life

*25 My soul cleaves to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.
26 I have told of my ways, and You have answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.
27 Make me understand the way of Your precepts,
So I will meditate on Your wonders.
28 My soul weeps because of grief;
Strengthen me according to Your word.
29 Remove the false way from me,
And graciously grant me Your law.
30 I have chosen the faithful way;
I have placed Your ordinances [before me].
31 I cling to Your testimonies;
O LORD, do not put me to shame!
32 I shall run the way of Your commandments,
For You will enlarge my heart.*

The letter or the word *daleth* has two meanings: ‘door’ and ‘humble’, ‘poor’, ‘oppressed’. These two thoughts come together in the Sermon on the Mount of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 5-7, where He says: “Enter through the narrow gate; ... For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mt 7:13-14).

The way to life can only be walked by one who has first entered through the narrow gate. Only one who is humble and poor can enter through that narrow gate. Thus he, the psalmist, comes through the gate onto the way

of life. We find five verses in this *daleth* stanza with the expression “the way”.

A door is also the boundary between two areas, for example, between outside and inside. Thus, the Word as a door, through which we can enter only in humility, brings us to the way of life, which is the Lord Jesus, in a field of living in fellowship with the Father (Jn 10:9; 14:6).

The psalmist is downcast (verse 25). His “soul cleaves to the dust”, for he is near death (cf. Psa 104:29). He experiences how void and mortal he is. We find here “dust” (verse 25) and “weep” (verse 28), which speaks of grief and sorrow. The gate or door takes us from the road of death to the road to and of life. That road ends in salvation, but along the way the righteous encounter trouble and sorrow (cf. Mk 10:30). On that way the LORD is with him. Thus the LORD does not keep Daniel *from* the lions’ den, but He keeps him *in* the lions’ den; the LORD does not keep Daniel’s three friends *from* the furnace of blazing fire, but He keeps them *in* that same the furnace of blazing fire.

If on our path of life there is a stone that hinders us, the Lord does not take away the stone, but will send His angels to carry us, lest we not strike our foot against a stone (Psa 91:11-12; cf. Mt 4:6). That is, the Lord does not take away the difficulties, but helps us to overcome them.

The psalmist sees only one way to revive and that is for the LORD to revive him “according to Your word”. He knows that God’s Word has life in it and is powerful to deliver him from the power of death and give him life. This is about deliverance from physical death. The blessing of the new covenant indicates that the remnant will live and thus inherit the kingdom. This characterizes the faithful. He does not seek an easier path of faith, but turns to the LORD to live life as He desires.

Many times in the past the psalmist has experienced the faithfulness of the LORD. This gives him confidence to continue to trust Him in the future. He has told his ways to the LORD, which may include a confession of going his own ways, “my ways” (verse 26).

If we have to confess sins, it is important to tell the Lord everything about our life’s journey and not to hide anything. To confess means to see and name everything, as the Lord sees and names it. In Hebrew, to confess

means to 'enumerate', that is, to tell all things one by one. In Greek, confess means 'to say the same thing' that is, to say the same thing about this subject as God.

Based on what the psalmist said to God, God answered his prayer of the previous verse and revived him. The believer learns here the important truth that he must be taught God's statutes if he is to be glorified with Christ. This will enable him to keep to the ways of God and he will not fall into the error of going his own ways again.

He immediately follows this up by asking God to make him "understand the way of Your precepts" (verse 27). In verse 26, the psalmist has acknowledged that he is ignorant and therefore in need of teaching. But teaching is not enough. Therefore, the psalmist now asks if the LORD will give him understanding, enabling him to apply the teaching he has received to his life and also to pass it on to others (cf. 2Tim 3:14).

He wants to go the way of God's precepts because in that way he experiences fellowship with God. That is a way of wonders. Those who live in fellowship with God see more and more the wonders of His guidance and preservation. These wonders are worth meditating on because they show Who God is and of what He is capable. It can be small wonders as well as great ones.

There are also circumstances in which the soul "weeps because of grief" (verse 28). This happens, for example, when he looks at himself a lot. That always depresses a believer (cf. 1Kgs 19:13-14; Psa 73:13-16). 'To weep because of grief' is literally 'to melt away'. By the weight of his sorrow, the psalmist melts away, he becomes liquid, as it were, he turns to tears.

Then it is dark in life and the wonders seem so far away. The cause of the tears of sorrow can be very diverse. It can be illness or disappointment or deceit or slander or injustice, but also sins. Then, with a single word from His Word, God is able to strengthen again the life that has been depressed by sorrow. It can be a word of comfort or a word of exhortation, depending on the occasion of the sorrow. The psalmist realizes that he can only be helped by a Person. We know that God comforts by pointing to Christ (cf. Rom 7:24; Heb 12:2-3).

What the psalmist does not want is to go “the false way”, that is, the way of sinners (verse 29; Psa 1:1). When we see this verse in the context of the previous verse and the verse after it, it concerns the lie about one’s own spiritual situation. How easy it is for a believer to appear outwardly as ‘spiritually minded’ while inside, in his heart, things are not right. To the outside, a person can have the appearance of a spiritually minded brother or sister, but inside, things are morally not right, there may even be corruption.

The false way, the way of lies, is the way of unfaithfulness to the LORD and His covenant. He cannot avoid that way in his own strength. Therefore, he asks the LORD: “Remove the false way from me.” Instead, he asks: “Graciously grant me Your law.” The law, given in grace as a guide for life, places before the false way the sign: dead end. The way of the lie ends in death.

Under the new covenant the law will be given or written in the hearts of the believing Israelites (Jer 31:33). What grace! In our hearts are not written the stone tablets of the law, but Christ is written on the flesh tablets of our hearts (2Cor 3:3). What infinite grace!

Opposed to the false way (verse 29) is “the faithful way” or “the way of faithfulness” (verse 30). It is the way of faithfulness to the LORD and His covenant. The psalmist has “chosen” that way. God wants us to go that way, but does not force us to go that way. He presents us as responsible people with a choice. It has been so since paradise.

We choose the right way when we place God’s ordinances before us. This is about sincerity, about uprightness, about truth in our innermost being (Psa 51:6). Because Eve had not set God’s ordinances before her eyes, she chose the false way, the way of unfaithfulness to God. And David walked the false way for quite some time when, despite his sin with Uriah and Bathsheba, he carried on with his life as if nothing had happened.

The psalmist has said in the first verse of this stanza that his soul cleaves to the dust (verse 25). By the exercises of his soul in the following verses, he has now come to the point where he can say to the LORD: “I cling to Your testimonies” (verse 31). By this he clings to the LORD Himself, so that he cannot be torn away from it. It is a renewed commitment, see verse 32,

to remain close to the Lord with resolute heart (Acts 11:23). In verse 25 he cleaves to the dust; now he clings – the same verb – to the LORD.

The word “clinging” is first used in the Bible for the firm connection between Adam and Eve, where it is translated “joined” (Gen 2:24). Similarly, the psalmist has a firm connection to the testimonies of the LORD. The psalmist also senses how fragile this clinging or joining still is. Therefore, he appeals to the LORD not to put him to shame in this (cf. Rom 9:33b).

The word “for” in verse 32b is better translated “because”. The meaning is that the LORD has enlarged the heart of the psalmist. He shall run in the way of the commandments of the LORD with a relieved heart and renewed confidence and renewed intentions (verse 32a).

There are no more inner hindrances. He has put away the false way (verse 29) and chosen the faithful way (verse 30). Now the Lord can work in his heart. His heart is enlarged to the commandments, so he knows which way to walk. “To run” in Hebrew is “to hasten”. While at first he clings to the dust and cannot be moved forward (verse 25) and is in the process of melting away (verse 28), he now is able to walk with renewed strength (Isa 40:31) in the narrow way of the LORD with steady step.

Psa 119:33-40 | /he/ Understanding

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.
34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all [my] heart.
35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.
36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies
And not to [dishonest] gain.
37 Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,
And revive me in Your ways.
38 Establish Your word to Your servant,
As that which produces reverence for You.
39 Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your ordinances are good.

40 Behold, I long for Your precepts;
Revive me through Your righteousness.

The pictogram of the letter *he* is a window, which speaks of seeing and understanding a revelation or remark. *He* as a word means 'see' in Hebrew. Later it is *hinné* (verse 40). Through a window the light comes in, allowing you see something. Through a revelation the light comes in, making you understand.

"There [the Word] was the true Light which, coming into the world [the incarnation of the Word], enlightens every man" (Jn 1:9). Man is enlightened by the exclamation of John the baptist: "Behold, the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29). In Hebrew, "behold" would be *he* or *hinné*. The revelation is that concerning the Person of Christ, the Lamb of God.

In verses 33-34 we hear the psalmist's request for understanding the way of the LORD through teaching. Verse 37 speaks of the psalmist's eyes. His eyes are to be focused on a Person, not distracted by the deceitfulness of riches. Through the teaching of the Word of God he is to gain understanding to walk joyfully in the way of the LORD.

Each verse of this stanza is a prayer and indicates the relationship between the Word and prayer. Its tone is humility and dependence. The Word is the Word of God. Then, too, He alone can give the explanation of what He says. The righteous realizes this and therefore prays for it. He realizes that the LORD must open the window of his heart and that the light of His revelation and Person must shine into it. He is totally dependent on the LORD and His Word.

The Word of God is not just learning material, a subject, like theology, or a series of doctrines and principles. The Word of God is the Word that connects us with God. Therefore, if we desire to understand the Word, we can only approach that Word prayerfully, so that God will open the window of our hearts (cf. Lk 24:45). The psalmist understood this. He begins his prayer with "teach me" (verse 33). "Teach" in Hebrew is *moré*. Abraham also began his sojourn in the promised land at the oak of *Moré*, which is 'teacher' (Gen 12:6).

He does not subject the Word to his own logical thinking, but he casts himself down at the feet of the LORD to receive from Him His words (cf. Deu

33:3b; Lk 10:39). Thus we will have to read the Word of God prayerfully if we want to be taught and transformed into the image of Christ. Only then will we obtain wisdom and spiritual insight.

The statutes of the LORD remain of unchanging value to the believer as long as he lives. Learning to know them never ceases. As long as a believer lives, he will never be able to say that he can stop learning because he should know everything. To remain faithful to the end of life in observing the statutes, the desire is needed to be taught and instructed by the LORD. This is what the righteous prays for.

The problem of many people, but also of many believers who want to be biblically faithful, is that they are often so convinced of their own rightness that they can no longer be corrected by others and therefore neither by the Lord. How necessary it is that we take to heart the lesson of the letter *he*: that we are prepared in humility to open the window of our hearts and learn from others. Let us take an example from the Jews at Beréa in Acts 17 (Acts 17:11).

Understanding – see the meaning of the letter *he* – is necessary to keep God’s law (verse 34). Without understanding, the righteous do not understand what God requires of them. They gain that understanding if they are willing to obey it with all their heart. It is not a matter of a good intellect, but of a renewed, willing heart (cf. Jn 7:17).

The LORD has changed and shaped the psalmist’s heart, making it his desire to walk the path of God’s commandments. This makes him realize that to put God’s commandments into practice he needs His help and guidance. In the words of Paul, God must not only work in him to will, but also to work (Phil 2:13).

This is what the psalmist is asking for when he asks the LORD: “Make me walk in the path of Your commandments” (verse 35). Freely translated, he asks: ‘Let me live like this, let me walk the path of life with God.’ The Lord asks faith obedience. He gives us instructions that we want to follow with joy out of love.

The psalmist longs to walk that path, “for I delight in it”, he says. The taste of the Word is sweet, it gives joy to our heart. Then we joyfully go the way

the Lord wants us to go. When we do something with pleasure, we like to do it.

There is a special tendency, that is, “inclination” or “direction of the heart” in life, from which even the believer cannot escape, even if he follows the path of God’s commandments. That tendency is “[dishonest] gain”, being out to gain as much as possible, for example by robbing others (verse 36). “[Dishonest] gain” means “unfair advantage”. This can be in a material sense such as wealth, but it can also be in an immaterial sense such as fame, name, popularity.

As a believer, you often sense that the lust for wealth is not good – think of Lot’s wife. The lust for honor and prestige is also a great danger, even for us. Think of Ananias and Sapphira. In the school of God we may learn to keep the inclinations of our heart and the workings of our flesh in death (Col 3:5).

The wrong inclination is given no room when we ask the LORD with the psalmist: “Incline my heart to Your testimonies.” If his and our heart is set on dealing with the LORD, he and we will not be open to the pursuit of worldly prosperity.

The deception of riches is like weeds choking the seed of the Word (Mt 13:22). The weeds in Israel have deep roots, from half a meter to a meter, with roots growing between the rocks, making it almost impossible to remove them. These weeds, thanks to these roots, also grow at lightning speed. It does show how stifling the effect of wealth can be to the seed of the Word and how difficult it is to get free from that stifling effect. Let us therefore pray the psalmist’s prayer with him.

After speaking of his heart in the previous verse, the God-fearing speaks of his eyes in verse 37. He asks God to turn away his eyes, so that they may not be “looking at vanity”. “Vanity” is what has no value for the moment or for the future. This is quite an actual prayer for the time in which we live, with tidal waves of visual material via television and the Internet that are completely useless and often downright sinful, yet which people watch for many hours (cf. Isa 55:2).

Sometimes it’s about impure pictures that you come across unintentionally and unsought, e.g. advertising. Here the saying applies: the second look

is sinful. That is, the first time you see it, it happened to you, but the second look is a conscious choice. Of that, the psalmist asks if the LORD will turn away his eyes from that. In that regard, Job has given us an example by making a covenant with his eyes not to follow (lustfully) an attractive girl with them (Job 31:1). David is a great warning sign to each of us (2Sam 11:1-5)!

“Vanity”, empty, meaningless is that which is spiritually no food, it is stones and not bread. Paul calls all the privileges of this life rubbish compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord (Phil 3:8). The conscience question to us is what our priorities in this life are. The danger of temptation is great. Even one of the apostle Paul’s associates, named Demas, left the apostle for the love of the present age (2Tim 4:10). Demas too is a warning sign for each of us. Let us also pray this prayer with the psalmist.

To look at what is vanity is to look at something that, like a stealth killer, stifles the life of faith. This is evident from the second line of this verse. The God-fearing wants to enjoy the true life, which is life in fellowship with God. That life is lived by going in God’s ways. “Your ways”, which are God’s ways, are ways of life. When we go them, we are truly living.

The righteous knows that there is life through the ways of the LORD. Following that, he asks for a confirmation or fulfillment of the promise of life (verse 38). This is to the glory of the LORD (Eze 36:26-27). He asks that question as “Your servant” (cf. verses 17,23). To that he adds “as that which produces reverence for You”. He is not only one who serves the LORD but also one who fears Him, who lives in awe and reverence of Him. The LORD will not reject such a person.

What he does not want is the reproach of people who smear him for not receiving the promise of the LORD (verse 38), despite the fact that he remains faithful to the LORD (verse 39). He “dreads” that reproach and asks the LORD to turn it away from him by keeping him in faithfulness to His Word and fulfilling His promises. He also wants to be faithful because God’s “ordinances are good”. He also wants to be faithful because his unfaithfulness would be defamation to the Name of the LORD (cf. Rom 2:24).

He expresses his longing for the LORD's precepts (verse 40). This verse begins with "behold". The letter *he* means 'see', here it is *hinné*. Often we think only the promises of the LORD are important, but the psalmist longs for the precepts, the commandments of the LORD. In them is life.

The psalmist longs to revive, not as a reward for his desire, but "through Your righteousness". Life by God's righteousness means life for all eternity. Life that God gives by virtue of righteousness is life where the holy requirement of God's justice has been met. That justice was met by the Lord Jesus on the cross.

God's righteousness means that God always acts in accordance with His standard, which in this case is His covenant. The psalmist asks if the LORD will act in accordance with His covenant and His promise. In His promise, He wants to give a window so that light can come from above – a window, a light opening from above (Gen 6:16) – to chase away the darkness.

Psa 119:41-48 | /vav/ Heaven and Earth Connected

41 *May Your lovingkindnesses also come to me, O LORD,
Your salvation according to Your word;*
42 *So I will have an answer for him who reproaches me,
For I trust in Your word.*
43 *And do not take the word of truth utterly out of my mouth,
For I wait for Your ordinances.*
44 *So I will keep Your law continually,
Forever and ever.*
45 *And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek Your precepts.*
46 *I will also speak of Your testimonies before kings
And shall not be ashamed.*
47 *I shall delight in Your commandments,
Which I love.*
48 *And I shall lift up my hands to Your commandments,
Which I love;
And I will meditate on Your statutes.*

The pictogram of the letter *vav* is a human being, a nail, a tent pole or a (connecting) hook (cf. Exo 26:32,37; 27:10). The letter's function in Hebrew is to connect words; it means 'and'. Each verse in this *vav* stanza begins with the conjunction 'and', a word that connects two parts of a sentence. We see an illustration of this in Jacob's ladder connecting heaven and earth (Gen 28:12-13).

The *vav* is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and has the numerical value six. This is the number of man, who was created by God on the sixth day to be the connection between heaven and earth. Because the first man, Adam, failed, his place is taken by the second Man, Christ, Who established the connection between heaven and earth, between God and men (1Tim 2:5).

In this *vav* stanza we see the Word of God as the link between heaven and earth, between the Eternal and the puny. The Word is like the connecting hook in the relationship between God and men.

First, in verses 41-43 we find the psalmist's prayer, a prayer for help based on his trust in the Word. Then in verses 44-48 we find the psalmist's attitude of devotion and purposes toward the Word.

The faithful continually need the awareness of the LORD's "lovingkindness" and "salvation" (verse 41). First, the faithful has received new life based on the LORD's lovingkindness, and then he continues to need the LORD's lovingkindness in his life. For us, too, it is "grace upon grace" (Jn 1:16). We received grace when we came to repentance, and we also receive necessary grace throughout our stay on earth.

The LORD, in accordance with His covenant – lovingkindness, Adonai – has promised that He will give His own by virtue of His covenant the salvation, that is, the blessing of the realm of peace. He does not need to be reminded of this, but believers may remember this and say it to Him. His lovingkindness is shown in the salvation of the faithful from the dangers that surround them to then introduce them to the blessings of the new covenant.

There will always be those who reproach the believer (verse 42). These are the unfaithful Israelites, the followers of the antichrist, who have rejected the covenant and are reproaching the faithful remnant. The remnant is

being reproached because it seems that the LORD is not helping them. When He fulfills His promise, the remnant can thereby answer those who taunt them.

From himself, the psalmist cannot speak truth. The same is true for the remnant and for us. A believer can speak “the word of truth” only if God puts it in his mouth (verse 43; cf. Mt 10:19-20). Also, the believer has to wait for God’s “ordinances”. This speaks of the expectation he has that God will make His ordinances known to him.

With that, the psalmist can answer him who reproaches him. We too must always be ready to give an account to anyone who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (1Pet 3:15). To that end, the psalmist asks if the LORD will not take the word of truth utterly out of his mouth. This happens to us when we depart from His way by being unwilling to confess our sins or when we deliberately choose a different way than the one the Lord has shown us.

When the LORD delivers him from people who hate him (verse 42), he will continually keep His law, and will do so “forever and ever” (verse 44). He will then be able to confess the faithfulness of the LORD. This resolve of the heart is worth following for us. It is a decision based on the experienced love and faithfulness of the LORD, the full revelation of which we see in the work of Christ. In return, we can only offer total obedience.

When God’s law is continually kept, the believer “walks at liberty” (verse 45). Self-will and sin lead to bondage and hindrance in the prayer life and understanding of God’s Word (Psa 66:18; Jam 4:3; 1Pet 3:7). Seeking the precepts of God frees a person from any bondage that prevents him from doing God’s will and going God’s way. The Lord Jesus always walked at liberty. He never did anything but seek God’s precepts in order to accomplish them. He has lived on earth at true liberty. He makes slaves to sin truly free (Jn 8:36).

An unbeliever is not free, for he is bound by sin. He cannot do the will of God, nor can he walk in the way of God. A believer, who has been set free by the Son of God, is able to do what he now longs to do, namely the will of God. The Lord Jesus is his new life, and that new life wants to do in him

only what God wants, just as the Lord Jesus always did only what God wants.

If a person walks in liberty, he may even have to appear before kings (verse 46). He will “speak of Your testimonies” before them without being ashamed. There is no fear of man, but a desire to testify of Who God is even in the higher circles. Paul did so (Acts 25:23-24; 26:1-2,27-29; cf. Rom 1:16). We see the same thing with the friends of Daniel (Dan 3:17-19) and John the baptist (Mt 14:4).

Where there is love for the commandments of God, there is delight in them (verse 47). This theme runs like a golden thread throughout the psalm (verses 16,70,97,113,119,127,140,159,163). We experience this delight when we read and examine God’s Word. It is a characteristic that someone has life from God when he has love for ‘the love letter’ of God, the Bible. Someone who says he loves God but does not read His Word with love is a liar. When there is love for the commandments of God, these commandments do not press on the conscience like a burden, but are a joy to the heart.

The lifting up of the hands to the commandments of the LORD is an attitude of praise and prayer (verse 48; Psa 28:2; 63:4; 141:2; 134:2; cf. 1Tim 2:8). In this attitude, the righteous will meditate on the LORD’s statutes that he may understand them and live them out to His glory. This attitude comes from the love that the God-fearing has in his heart for those statutes. This is evidenced by the fact that he meditates on the statutes of the LORD. In meditating, the faithful one is not focused on himself, but on Him to Whom the statutes belong. He is concerned with getting to know the LORD better.

Psa 119:49-56 | /zayin/ Remember

*49 Remember the word to Your servant,
In which You have made me hope.*

*50 This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me.*

*51 The arrogant utterly deride me,
[Yet] I do not turn aside from Your law.*

52 I have remembered Your ordinances from of old, O LORD,

And comfort myself.

*53 Burning indignation has seized me because of the wicked,
Who forsake Your law.*

54 Your statutes are my songs

In the house of my pilgrimage.

55 O LORD, I remember Your name in the night,

And keep Your law.

56 This has become mine,

That I observe Your precepts.

The letter *zayin* is the seventh letter and is shaped like a scepter or a sword. The Word is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). It is the sixth letter, *vav*, with a crown on it. The *zayin* stanza begins with “remember” by the LORD (verse 49) and ends with “remember” by the psalmist (verse 55). When the LORD remembers His Word, it means that He is going to fulfill the Word concerning His promise of the future, when Christ will reign. Then He will be crowned with many diadems (Rev 19:12) and no longer with a crown of thorns.

The hope that we will be glorified with Christ gives us strength to suffer with Him in the world (Rom 8:17). That is the theme of this verse. We have a living hope (1Pet 1:3). The joy presented to us in it helps us to run the race of suffering with perseverance (Heb 12:1-3).

It is impossible for the LORD to forget the word He spoke to His servant. The fact that the servant asks Him to remember means that he is in affliction and it seems that the LORD has forgotten what He has said (verse 49). He has made him hope in His Word. Surely that hope will not be in vain.

The Hebrew word for remember, *zakar*, is an active remembrance, that is, it is an action. We see the meaning of the Hebrew words and names, for example, in Luke 1 with Zechariah, which is “the LORD remembers”, with Elizabeth, which is “[what] God swore”, and with their son John, which is “[fulfilled in] the grace of the LORD. Therefore, his name was to be John and no other name (Lk 1:5,13,59-63).

When God remembers His Word, it means that He saves His own in accordance with His faithfulness to His covenant (Heb 6:17-18). For the psalm-

ist, the Word is to him personally, the LORD has spoken to him through that Word.

In the next verse he gives the answer himself (verse 50). His comfort in his affliction is that the LORD has “revived” him by His word. That is, he has appropriated God’s promise. Believers know that God’s word revives. Do we dare to appropriate what God has said?

The word implies that Christ will be glorified and crowned and will sit on His own throne. Then the psalmist will experience the blessing: he may sit with Christ on His throne (Rev 3:21). He has experienced the vivifying power of God’s Word. People can speak words to comfort. Sometimes they are meaningless words, usually they are well-intentioned, but often they do not provide real relief. With the words of God, it is different. The words of God are living words; they have life in themselves.

The righteous must reckon with the biting, hurtful derision of the arrogant wicked (verse 51; cf. verse 21). This is a powerful weapon of unbelief. We see these expressed, among other things, in objectionable cartoons. It should not surprise us. Rejection is normal. The Lord Jesus also experienced this, and particularly at His condemnation to die on the cross. Just as He did not deviate from God’s Word, neither does the suffering remnant (cf. Heb 12:2).

The believer comforts himself when he remembers the ordinances of the LORD from ancient times (verse 52). He then sees that the LORD has intervened at times when the wicked have particularly cornered His people. For example, we see how the LORD intervened for Moses and Aaron against the wicked band of Korah (Num 16:1-3,28-35).

We forget quickly and easily, as the cupbearer forgot Joseph (Gen 40:14,23). That is why the Lord gave us His meal of remembrance to remember Him and His sufferings. When He instituted the Supper, He said: “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1Cor 11:23-26).

The God-fearing is seized by burning indignation when he sees the law of the LORD being forsaken and trampled on by wicked people (verse 53). He feels this is an affront to the LORD and shares His feelings in it (cf. Rom 15:3). Forsaking the law of the LORD is equivalent to forsaking Him. This will be done in full by the antichrist, who will openly forsake the law.

We become accustomed, sometimes without realizing it ourselves, to sinful situations. Are we still seized by burning indignation about sinful practices such as abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, or have we become accustomed to it? Are we also still moved by the fate of people in the world, who are on their way to perish forever because they live without God and without hope?

The faithful remnant hates forsaking God's law. In contrast, God's statutes are his songs (verse 54). This is what the remnant will do during the great tribulation, when are in the house of their pilgrimage, i.e. when they wander the earth as strangers (cf. Heb 11:13). They have been driven out and fled from their land to the mountains (Mt 24:16). In their hearts they have carried God's statutes. These have been their songs.

Singing means that the Word was comforting to the psalmist, that it sounded like music to his ears in the midst of bigoted, hostile people who surrounded him. We can also sing of God's Word when we are in need. It is a characteristic of redeemed sinners that they sing. Of angels we do not read anywhere in God's Word that they sing. Also when we are with the Lord, we will sing. If we are engaged with the Lord and His Word on earth, a song of praise will rise up in our hearts in the practice of every day, no matter what situation we are in. Then we will sing a song like "Amazing grace".

In the night of the great tribulation, they are determined by God's Name by the statutes about which they have sung (verse 55). Thus a night of affliction becomes a night of praise and thus a testimony to the glory of the Name of God (cf. Acts 16:25). People of the world advise to count sheep when you can't sleep. The psalmist says it is better to talk to the Shepherd. God's law is inseparable from God's Name. Whoever thinks of His Name, thinks of His Word, in which so much is written about that Name.

In verse 56, the God-fearing says why he was able to sing in the foreign land (verse 54) and think about God's Name in the night (verse 55): it is because he observed God's precepts. His thinking is not pondering, but doing. The path of obedience results in a song in which the Name of God is praised.

Psa 119:57-64 | /heth/ New

57 *The LORD is my portion;
I have promised to keep Your words.*
58 *I sought Your favor with all [my] heart;
Be gracious to me according to Your word.*
59 *I considered my ways
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.*
60 *I hastened and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.*
61 *The cords of the wicked have encircled me,
[But] I have not forgotten Your law.*
62 *At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You
Because of Your righteous ordinances.*
63 *I am a companion of all those who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.*
64 *The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.*

The eighth letter, *heth*, originally means “wall”, “enclosure”, “boundary”. Thus, the LORD surrounds the righteous with favor as with a shield (Psa 5:12). Our shield is faith (Eph 6:16), that is, full trust in God and His Word.

The corresponding number eight speaks of going beyond the limit of seven. Seven is a completed whole – seven days make a week full, make a week a whole – after which something new comes. We can apply this, for example, to the new life, to the resurrection, to the new covenant. The new life, as opposed to the old life, is able to be dedicated to the Word, because our new life is Christ.

In each of the eight verses of this *heth* stanza we find a synonym for the Word. It underscores the fact that the new life of the new covenant is characterized by love of and dedication to the Word (verses 57-60; cf. 2Cor 3:6-18; Heb 8:6-13), even though there are enemies all around (verse 61).

The psalmist can joyfully say that the LORD is his portion (verse 57; Psa 16:5; 73:26; 142:5; cf. Num 18:20). He has chosen the LORD. What He possesses cannot be measured. The psalmist does not say that his portion consists of great riches and blessings, no, he says that the LORD Himself is

his portion (cf. Gen 15:1). The psalmist is so impressed by this that he has promised to keep God's words. When we see what we have been given, namely, that God Himself is our portion, it will prompt us to the utmost obedience.

The God-fearing "sought" God's "favor with all" his "heart" (verse 58). This "sought", this effort, has made him realize that there is nothing he can do to please the LORD. The only ground on which the LORD accepts a man into His favor is His grace. Therefore, he asks that the LORD will be gracious to him, for this is in accordance with His word.

Literally it says: "With all my heart I am sick [that is, sick with desire] before Your face." He has confessed in verse 57 that the LORD is his portion, but now he says that he longs with his whole heart for the presence of the LORD. That, according to the meaning of the letter *heth*, is the securely fenced area for which the psalmist so longs, namely, the living, daily fellowship with the LORD.

The psalmist indicates the basis of his request, namely grace on the basis of God's word, His promise. For us, grace is no longer a promise, for grace and truth is realized through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17), through which we receive grace upon grace of His fullness (Jn 1:16).

In verse 58, the psalmist asked if the LORD would be gracious to him. Now he learns the conditions, how the LORD can be gracious to him: by considering his ways (verse 59). He may consider God's ways, but it is also necessary for him to consider his own ways. To consider one's own ways means that a person examines himself in God's presence and in the light of His Word. When a person reads the Word of God, it acts as a mirror through which he comes to know himself and his ways in the light of God (Jam 1:23-24).

God's ways are always right; those of the righteous may well be crooked. It seems here that the righteous, in reflecting on his ways, has come to the conclusion that something has not been right. Indeed, he says that he has "turned" his "feet" to God's testimonies.

"Turned" is literally 'converted', 'turned around'. Here we see the cleansing process that takes place when a believer considers the Word. Some

believers linger on considering and do not get to the point to 'turn'. James speaks of such persons as hearers, but not doers of the Word (Jam 1:23-24). After considering his ways in the light of the Word of God, the God-fearing makes a deliberate decision to keep the Word of God (verse 60). He resolves to obey the Word immediately in full awareness and confidence, without hesitation and without wavering.

There is new zeal to do God's will without delay. 'Did not delay' means not wanting to lose a second. The psalmist not only wants to be a hearer of the Word, he wants to be a doer of the Word. He shows in what way he wants to be a doer. He doesn't want to be a hesitant doer, a doer who has to sleep on it first, no, he wants to be someone who immediately does what God makes clear to him. The word "hasten", means 'immediately', a word that is characteristic of the Gospel according to Mark where the Lord Jesus is painted as the perfect Servant of the LORD, Who 'immediately' does what the Father tells Him.

The saying 'Haste makes waste' does not apply when it comes to doing the will of God. The believer cannot be too quick to obey without delay when something becomes clear to him from God's Word (cf. Mt 4:19-22; Lk 19:5-6). There is often much reasoning first about the usefulness of something. When it comes to the commandments of God's Word, such reasoning is out of the question.

Those who go their way with the Lord again must also count on new opposition (verse 61). The enemy becomes active when there is (renewed) dedication to the Lord. The purpose of his opposition is to make the believer unfaithful again to the law of the LORD, to the Word of God.

The deceitfulness of wealth, the lusts of the world, such as fame, entertainment, sex, can take away our joy in the Lord. Unconfessed sins and disobedience grieve the Spirit and take away the peace of the Lord. These things cause a breach in the fence of our fellowship with the Lord. Therefore, the Lord reminds us to hold on to what we have, lest anyone take away our crown (Rev 3:11).

The righteous can say that he has not forgotten God's law, which prevents the enemy from putting a breach in the fence and making him unfaithful

again. After all, he has made the decision with resolute heart to remain close to the LORD always (Acts 11:23).

His gratitude is so great that he rises up at midnight, when it is dark, to give thanks to the LORD for His "righteous ordinances" (verse 62). These ordinances are like a light in the night. He is not ruled by darkness, by ghost images, but by God's Word. That, in addition to light, gives rest and peace and works a song of praise.

The psalmist's subconscious is full of gratitude to the LORD. While some people wake up at midnight and lie down to doze off, the psalmist wakes up and continues what he went to bed with, which is to give thanks to the LORD.

He also knows that he is not alone (verse 63). He has companions, or rather he himself is "a companion" of all those who fear the LORD, as evidenced by their keeping His precepts. He belongs to those who fear the LORD, to that company he feels at home. With them he has fellowship. They can encourage each other mutually (Mal 3:16). Those who love God and His Word also love fellow believers, regardless of race, nationality, or social status (1Jn 5:1-3).

Many believers, including young believers, go wrong in the choice of their friends or even enter into an unequal yoke with an unbeliever. Such a wrong choice may be made because of disappointment in believers. Sometimes that choice is justified with the excuse of being of help spiritually to the other person. The result is predictable: the unbeliever is not helped, but the believer falls. Paul warns: "Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals"" (1Cor 15:33).

The psalmist seeks his company in the midst of those who love the Word. We too as believers have a calling, namely, to be a fellowship marked by Jesus Christ our Lord (1Cor 1:9).

When the LORD blesses, He also makes His own a blessing to others (Gen 12:2). That is how the blessing is overflowing. This is the experience of the psalmist. The circle of his interest is widening (verse 64). He sees that the earth is full of God's lovingkindness, although evil is still present. The blessings of the new covenant flow through the fullness of Israel to the nations (Rom 11:12). This is what happens when God rules. He does

so through His statutes. The psalmist wants to know these and asks the LORD to teach him.

Psa 119:65-72 | /teth/ The Good After the Suffering

65 *You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.*
66 *Teach me good discernment and knowledge,
For I believe in Your commandments.*
67 *Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.*
68 *You are good and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.*
69 *The arrogant have forged a lie against me;
With all [my] heart I will observe Your precepts.*
70 *Their heart is covered with fat,
[But] I delight in Your law.*
71 *It is good for me that I was afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.*
72 *The law of Your mouth is better to me
Than thousands of gold and silver [pieces].*

The ninth letter, *teth*, is originally a ‘womb’, a vessel containing something good, pointing to the coming of good after suffering, for example, of the contractions. We find in this verse the suffering of the tribulation – some connect this letter with the serpent – as a womb that produces something good (cf. Heb 12:11).

This stanza begins in verse 65 with the word “good” and ends with it in verse 72 as better=good. The letter *teth* first appears in the Bible in Genesis 1 where it says that God saw that the light was good (Gen 1:4). Five of the eight verses of this stanza begin with the word good.

Every servant of the Lord will be able to testify that the Lord’s dealings have been good and are good (verse 65). That goodness is “according to Your word” and in answer to the psalmist’s prayer in verse 17. His dealing in goodness is, as He makes Himself known in His Word. If we have experienced that goodness, it is also good to say so to God, as the psalmist does

here. We may say with the poet of a song: 'Count your blessings, name them one by one.'

His dealings in goodness in this verse are evident not so much in His direct blessings, but rather in the afflictions. This may sound strange to some believers, but the Word of God is clear: "We exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that ..." (Rom 5:2b-3a). God in His goodness uses tribulations to keep us on the right path or to bring us back to it (cf. *Psa 23:4; 2Cor 12:7-9*). Therefore, persecution is one of the blessings of the one who leaves everything to follow the Lord (*Mk 10:29-30*).

It is not difficult to accept prosperity and health as good. Anybody can do that, whether they are believers or non-believers. It is something else to accept adversity, tribulation and suffering as good. That is why the psalmist, as well as the believing remnant, and also we, need teaching. The lesson is to experience and realize that God is always good and does good, in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. We may well ask the question, which is at once a certainty: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (*Rom 8:32*).

When we have experienced the goodness of God, it awakens the desire to learn to discern well and to have the right knowledge for that purpose (verse 66). This teaching we may ask of God. There is in the righteous the proper condition of heart to ask this, for he believes and trusts in the commandments of the LORD. This is the condition of having benefit from teaching. There must be no doubt about God's commandments. We must not submit them to us, but we must submit to them. Then we will not look to other sources for learning discernment and knowledge.

As a result of his spiritual growth, the believer will become mature in faith. Spiritually mature believers are those "who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (*Heb 5:14*). Therefore, the psalmist expresses the desire: "Teach me." Are we eager to learn and willing to sit at the Lord's feet?

When the believer questions God's goodness, he goes astray (verse 67). Then God brings affliction into his life, setbacks and difficulties that make

him return to God. This discipline is God's education to teach us Who He is, that He is good, and that we can always trust Him, even and especially in difficult times. Abraham also showed that he had learned the lesson (Gen 22:1-19). In the midst of the most painful trial, he continues to trust in the goodness and omnipotence of God. The righteous is kept from going astray when he keeps God's Word.

God is good through and through and always, and He alone is good (verse 68; Lk 18:19). Therefore, everything He does is also good, even if He brings affliction and suffering into the life of the believer. Job had, and we too have, difficulty discerning this. Only after his test Job can testify that his knowledge of God was flawed and insufficient: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). The believer longs to know and trust the goodness of God better. Therefore, he asks that God teaches him His statutes.

The righteous lives in a world full of lies about Who God is (verse 69). The people who propagate these lies are here called "arrogant". An example of this lie is the popular book by conservative Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, entitled *When Evil Afflicts Good People*. In it, he believes he must choose between the goodness of God and the power of God. The arrogant smear the righteous with that kind of mendacious reasoning, with this deformation and damage to the image of God.

However, that is no reason for the righteous to deviate from God's precepts and abandon the path of obedience. On the contrary, he observes those precepts with all his heart. He refuses to believe these lies. He does not recognize in them the voice of the good Shepherd and flees from them (Jn 10:5), clinging all the more to the Word of God.

The heart of the arrogant is in great contrast to this. For that "heart is covered with fat", it is insensitive because they hang on to sin with all their heart (verse 70). This is evident from the fact that they try to smear their lies on the righteous without any sense of shame. A fat heart implies that it is no longer amenable to the Word of God (cf. Isa 6:10). The righteous has joy in his heart because he delights in the law of the LORD. This keeps him insensitive to the lies with which the arrogant besmirch him.

He acknowledges the benefit of the affliction in which he has been for a time (verse 71). He now understands that the affliction was necessary for him to become aware that God is always good and that He can always be trusted, not only in prosperity, but also and especially in adversity.

The affliction has been temporary, for it has ceased once, but it is good for him to have been in it, so he says. A believer does not simply arrive to the point where he can say that. He can say in faith that “all things ...work together for good to those who love God” (Rom 8:28), but trusting the LORD in great adversity is another thing. In this case, the righteous learned the LORD’s statutes through them and came to appreciate them.

This also leads him to appreciate “the law from Your mouth” (verse 72). He says of it that it is “better” to him “than thousands of gold and silver [pieces]”. What comes from the mouth of God comes from His heart. That is what makes His Word so valuable. “From Your mouth” means that the teaching of the Word for the psalmist comes directly and very personally from the mouth of God. It is a speaking from mouth to mouth, that is, from very close by. It speaks of fellowship.

Gold or silver have lost their appeal for those who have learned to value God’s Word. Gold and silver, despite all their value in the eyes of men, have only temporary value, while the value of God’s Word remains for all eternity.

Many people, unfortunately sometimes even believers, are in their heart full of material things. As a result, they think and talk a lot about material things. The psalmist’s heart is full of the Word of God and therefore he thinks and talks a lot about the Word. This testifies that his heart is full of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord, so that all the privileges of the world are regarded by him not only as worthless but also as harmful (Phil 3:7-8).

Psa 119:73-80 | /yodh/ Made by God’s Hands

*73 Your hands made me and fashioned me;
Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments.
74 May those who fear You see me and be glad,
Because I wait for Your word.*

75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are righteous,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.
76 O may Your lovingkindness comfort me,
According to Your word to Your servant.
77 May Your compassion come to me that I may live,
For Your law is my delight.
78 May the arrogant be ashamed, for they subvert me with a lie;
[But] I shall meditate on Your precepts.
79 May those who fear You turn to me,
Even those who know Your testimonies.
80 May my heart be blameless in Your statutes,
So that I will not be ashamed.

The tenth letter, *yodh*, with the numerical value ten, originally had the shape of a hand. The name of the letter is related to *jad*, the Hebrew word for hand. We know this word in the (Yiddish) Dutch verb ‘jatten’ which means ‘to steal – by hand’. The word *jad* also stands for the (pointer) stick used to read a Hebrew scroll. The letter *yodh* has to do with: work, power (right hand), responsibility (the number ten: ten commandments, ten fingers, ten wise and foolish virgins and so on).

The letter *yodh* is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. About it the Lord Jesus says: “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke [Literally one iota (Hebrew: *yodh*) or one projection of a letter (serif)] shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Mt 5:18). The *iota* is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew *yodh*.

The righteous acknowledges that he is made by the hands of God (verse 73; Psa 139:13-16), just as God’s hands also made the universe (Isa 45:12). He thereby acknowledges that he is totally dependent on his Creator (cf. 1Pet 4:19). God made everything for the purpose of serving Him.

The psalmist’s question is whether the LORD, Who has made and fashioned him, will complete His work on him. “Made” refers to his forming, “fashioned” means put in the place where he is now. He then looks to the future and asks for understanding to meet God’s purpose with his life.

He has learned the lesson: He accepts the trouble and affliction from the hand of the LORD knowing that He wants to use it to form him. The suf-

fering is like plowing the hard ground to make it ready for the seed of the Word (cf. Isa 28:23-29).

He is also dependent on his Creator for understanding God's commandments, because his mind has been darkened by sin. God can give him this understanding and that is what he asks for. He says to God, as it were: 'I have come into being through Your work; now will You complete Your work in me. I have now understood that affliction is necessary for this purpose' (verse 75; cf. Jn 15:2b). God's commandments are the manual for his life, for the completion of God's work in him.

Not everyone rejoices over the psalmist, but those who fear God do (verse 74). They see the righteous and are glad because they see in his life that he, like them, has waited for God's Word and that he, like them, has experienced that that waiting has not been in vain. Such a life is contagious. It makes others glad and gives them courage (cf. Mal 3:16; Phil 1:14). We see it in the encounter between Elizabeth and Mary (Lk 1:39-45).

The judgments of the LORD are righteous, both for the wicked and for the psalmist (verse 75). For the wicked, they mean ruin. The psalmist knows that God's judgments are always righteous, in accordance with His Word and His covenant. At the same time, these judgments are also part of God's faithfulness, namely, to purify the psalmist and restore Israel. Through the tribulation, God works that the righteous place all hope of salvation in Him and condemn all unfaithfulness in themselves (cf. Rom 8:28).

Those who are afflicted are in need of comfort (verse 76). Therefore, the psalmist asks God to comfort him through His lovingkindness. The word "comfort" in Hebrew means 'to sigh deeply of relief'. Experiencing that lovingkindness – that is, the blessing and love of God on the basis of His covenant, which includes salvation – causes the psalmist to be relieved. Thereby he appeals to the word that God has spoken to him, the promise He made to him, His servant. He personally appropriates the covenant, which has become a promise by virtue of the blood of the new covenant.

The psalmist clearly does not yet feel fully recovered from the affliction. This can be seen in his request to the LORD to let His compassion come to him (verse 77). He needs it. Everyone who is in miserable circumstances needs it. If he receives compassion, he will live, that is revive because he

has new strength, because he has new life by virtue of the covenant. This is evident from the fact that the law of the LORD is his delight, his source of joy. For an unbeliever, the law is not a source of joy, because it condemns him.

Then the psalmist asks if the LORD will stretch out His hand against the arrogant wicked (verse 78) and over the God-fearing (verse 79) and over the psalmist himself (verse 80). The arrogant have afflicted the righteous with lies (verse 78; cf. Jn 15:25). They have been able to do so under the permission of God, Who has His purpose in doing so. It does not mean that the arrogant have listened to God. On the contrary, they do not take God into account at all, but follow their own agenda.

The righteous knows this and therefore asks God that He will make them ashamed. He can ask that question because he meditates on God's precepts. As a result, he knows how God thinks about these oppressors. The arrogant with their big, lying mouths will be judged by God. As a result, the righteous also knows how to respond to these oppressors with their lies (1Pet 2:23). Their enmity cannot keep him from persevering in his trust in the LORD.

The psalmist needs fellowship with those who fear God and know His testimonies (verse 79). He feels alone and now asks the LORD if those who fear Him will turn back to him. He wants to share with them his experiences. This is a remarkable desire of believers in all ages. Those who know God's testimonies want to share them with those who also know them. We may take an example from the psalmist and pray that God will allow us to meet such people.

In the New Testament we learn that the love between the Father and the Son is also in us. Love cannot be practiced by anyone alone. A believer always needs fellowship with other believers. The love of God is only perfected in us when we as believers love one another (1Jn 4:12).

The psalmist prays that the LORD will let his heart be blameless in God's statutes (verse 80), for he is surrounded by arrogant, hostile liars. He recognizes the deceitfulness of his heart and knows that only the LORD knows it (Jer 17:9-10; 1Kgs 8:39; Psa 139:1b,23).

A blameless heart – literally, a complete heart, that is, undivided – is essential in dealing with God. God looks for truth in the innermost being. If that is present, the believer will not be ashamed because he does not give sin a chance to enter his life. Then he will not be shamed in this life nor later, before the judgment seat of Christ (2Cor 5:9-10).

Psa 119:81-88 | /kaph/ Covered by God's Hand

81 *My soul languishes for Your salvation;
I wait for Your word.*

82 *My eyes fail [with longing] for Your word,
While I say, "When will You comfort me?"*

83 *Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,
I do not forget Your statutes.*

84 *How many are the days of Your servant?
When will You execute judgment on those who persecute me?*

85 *The arrogant have dug pits for me,
[Men] who are not in accord with Your law.*

86 *All Your commandments are faithful;
They have persecuted me with a lie; help me!*

87 *They almost destroyed me on earth,
But as for me, I did not forsake Your precepts.*

88 *Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.*

The eleventh letter, *kaph*, depicts a covering. The meaning of the letter's name is 'an opened hand(palm)', a hand in connection with action, for instance, laying on of hands, protection. When the LORD says to Moses "and cover you with My hand until I have passed by" (Exo 33:21-22), that is His 'opened hand'.

The first time we find the word *kaph* in the Bible, defines the meaning of the word: "Stretch out your hand [*jad*] and grasp [it] [that is the serpent] by its tail" – so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand [*kaph*]" (Exo 4:4). The danger of the serpent was averted by the opened hand covering the danger.

The *kaph* stanza shows us the psalmist in sorrow and affliction. He is in distress and in great danger. In accordance with the covenant and promise of the LORD, he seeks refuge behind the protective hand of the LORD. There he is safe, as Moses was in the cleft of the rock, and as Zion is with the LORD: "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms [of My hands]; your walls are continually before Me" (Isa 49:16). The whole stanza speaks of the danger that surrounds the psalmist and how he deals with it.

The righteous looks forward with intense longing to the salvation of the LORD, to His rescue from distress and that he may be led into peace (verse 81). He languishes for it so intensely that his soul – that is, his person, soul and body – has succumbed to it.

But he has waited for what the LORD has said. He held on to that and it held on to him. He has not sought his salvation, his rescue, from himself or from anyone else. The psalmist is in danger of succumbing to the distress, prophetic the persecution under the antichrist. He deeply longs for deliverance from this danger. In danger, he clings to His Word in confidence of God's promise (cf. Phil 4:6-7).

His soul has succumbed, yes, especially his eyes have failed, because of the longing for the promises of the LORD (verse 82). He has asked Him: "When will You comfort me?" He needs comfort, that is what he longs for. The God-fearing has no doubt that the LORD will comfort him. He also desires to know when He will do it. By doing so, he indicates that he desires the fulfillment to take place as soon as possible.

He is completely at the end of his strength, he is exhausted (verse 83). He compares himself to a wineskin hanging in the smoke. The smoke takes away the flexibility of the wineskin and turns it black. It symbolizes prolonged oppression that scorches and suffocates, preventing him from breathing. It can be compared to the patience that disappears when a child just keeps whining. Thus we see with Samson: "It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death" [that is because of Delilah's nagging] (Jdg 16:16; cf. Lk 18:4-5)

The word "comfort" in the previous verse, in Hebrew has the meaning of breathing deeply, in this case of relief because redemption has come. The

cause of his great distress is that he feeds on the statutes of the LORD. Those statutes he has not forgotten. That is why he is persecuted by the wicked.

How long will he be able to live on, whereby he counts in days (verse 84)? When it comes to the suffering of the believing remnant the Bible usually speaks in days (Mt 24:22). When it comes to the domination of the enemy the Bible usually counts in times or years, for example, a time, which is one year, times, which is two years, and half a time, which is half a year, together three and a half years.

Life is short, but the days can be long for one who is oppressed when he is pursued from day to day by persecutors (cf. Rev 11:7; 13:7). He again calls himself "Your servant", indicating that he is in need because of serving the LORD. He asks Him when He will bring judgment on his persecutors so that he will be delivered from the threat of death. He does not take the law into his own hands, but leaves the vengeance to God (cf. Rom 12:19; 2Thes 1:6; Rev 6:10; Psa 94:1-2).

He knows that his persecutors, whom he calls "arrogant", "have dug pits" to catch him in them and then kill him (verse 85). The imagery makes it clear that the psalmist feels like a prey animal amidst of hunters who are trying to capture this animal through traps. They have made several traps, that much they are out for his death. Traps are an unrecognized danger. If you recognize the danger, you are vigilant, but if you do not recognize the danger, it is extra dangerous.

They dug pits, even though God has forbidden it. Nowhere is there an explicit commandment 'you shall not dig pits', but it does say that a person should love his neighbor as himself. Digging pits to catch someone in them and then kill them is clearly against that. But these people have no ears for God's teaching through the law.

The persecuted faithful confesses that all the commandments of the LORD, that is, without even one exception, are trustworthy (verse 86). His enemies assail him with lies and slander, traps, which almost destroy him. He calls on the LORD's help to deliver him. Through the covenant faithfulness of the LORD, he is brought to safety by the protective, opened hand, *kaph*, of the LORD. The Lord Jesus was persecuted with falsehood because He

testified to the trustworthiness of God's commandments. This will be experienced by every believer who testifies to that.

The persecution is fierce. It goes to the edge of a ravine (verse 87). Almost the persecutors have destroyed the righteous on earth. If the days of persecution (verse 84) were not shortened – to 1,260 days – all the remnant would have been killed (Mt 24:22; cf. Lk 18:8).

However, this threat of death did not cause them to forsake the LORD's precepts. They stuck to it, which means they stuck to life. They held fast to the covenant and remained alive in accordance with it.

The persecuted remnant asks God to revive them, appealing to God's lovingkindness (verse 88). If God does, they will heed the testimony of God's mouth. The remnant sees their life in connection with life on earth. It may be that God hears their prayer and He allows them to live on earth.

Even if they are killed, their prayer will be answered. For they will be made alive in the resurrection. Then they will perfectly keep the testimony of God's mouth, for it will be written in their hearts. Thus, to put it in a New Testament way, they are more than victors through Him Who loved them (Rom 8:37).

Psa 119:89-96 | /lamedh/ Teaching of the Shepherd

89 *Forever, O LORD,*

Your word is settled in heaven.

90 *Your faithfulness [continues] throughout all generations;*

You established the earth, and it stands.

91 *They stand this day according to Your ordinances,*

For all things are Your servants.

92 *If Your law had not been my delight,*

Then I would have perished in my affliction.

93 *I will never forget Your precepts,*

For by them You have revived me.

94 *I am Yours, save me;*

For I have sought Your precepts.

95 *The wicked wait for me to destroy me;*

I shall diligently consider Your testimonies.

96 I have seen a limit to all perfection;
Your commandment is exceedingly broad.

The letter *lamedh* is a picture of a (shepherd's) staff. For the shepherd, it is a stick with a curved end; for an ox shepherd, it is a stick with a sharp end, a goad (cf. Acts 26:14). They are both used to direct the animals. *Lamedh* is related to *lamad*, which means 'to instruct', 'to teach'.

The *lamedh* is the only letter that exceeds the upper limit of the other letters. This speaks of teaching from above. The shepherd teaches his sheep with the help of his staff. Our Shepherd is the heavenly Shepherd. The teaching of our heavenly Shepherd gives new life (verse 93; cf. 1Pet 1:23; Jam 1:18; Jn 3:3,5; Eze 36:26-27). It also gives steadfastness. The first three verses of this stanza (verses 89-91) are a thanksgiving and speak three times of standing firm. This also applies to us (1Cor 15:58).

The Word of God is not a passing word. It is eternal (verse 89). For the Word is "settled in heaven", that is, it is set *there*. It is heavenly in character. Never will man and the devil succeed in attacking it, for the Word is firmly established in heaven. Attempts to do so have been and are often made, but they have never succeeded and will never succeed. Every promise will be fulfilled to the letter (Lk 21:33).

The devil has tried to cast doubt on the Word at the Fall (Gen 3:1) and at the temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11). Man has also tried that by taking away from the Word of God – like the Sadducees – or by adding to it – like the Pharisees. In our day, we see the attempts to take away something from the Word in modern theology and the doctrine of evolution – the modern-day Sadducees – or add something to the Word in the teachings of men – the modern-day Pharisees.

God's faithfulness also never ends, but continues "throughout generations" (verse 90; cf. Psa 90:1-2). At issue here is the faithfulness of God toward creation. He proves this faithfulness to each generation as long as the earth, which was established by Him, stands. This is a great encouragement to each new generation. This is what each generation may pass on to the next.

The faithfulness of God is visible in the unshakability of the earth, which was established by the Lord Jesus. The same faithfulness is visible with the

Word of God. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word will always be fulfilled (Mt 5:18; 24:35). Our firmness is in the Lord Jesus, our Rock, for He is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8).

The believer can see this by the heavens and the earth, which were created by God (verse 91). They were created according to His will (Rev 4:11), and according to His ordinances they remain where He placed them to this day. And they are there as His servants, serving Him in the purpose for which He has made them in the place where He has placed them. This holds encouragement for us as members of the body of Christ, His church. We may serve Him and one another, for that is what He made us for with the talents He gave us.

In the midst of all the misery, the law of the LORD has been the delight of the tried believer (verse 92). This is illustrated by the Lord in the parable of the sower. Tribulation and persecution reveal that a person’s heart can be shallow soil, in which the seed could not take root (Mt 13:20-21). It is someone who does not rejoice in the Word and cannot withstand the affliction of tribulation and persecution.

Because the law has been the delight of the righteous, he has not perished, but has stood firm in the affliction. The law, the *torah*, here has the meaning of ‘teaching from the Word of God’. Since Christ is the center of Scripture, of teaching (Jn 5:39), He is actually the source of joy. The righteous who can be joyful while in affliction experiences the truth of the word: “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10b).

The righteous will “never forget” (verse 93) the precepts of the LORD, which are eternally established in heaven, as he said at the beginning of this stanza (verse 89). The reason is that he owes his life to this. The LORD made him alive by His precepts (1Pet 1:23). The words of Christ, the eternal Son of God, “are spirit and are life” (Jn 6:63b,68). The believer will never forget the origin of his new life. They are words that have given him life and at the same time keep him constantly alive.

The righteous knows that he is the property of the LORD (verse 94). Therefore, He asks for salvation. He says to Him: “I am Yours.” Such an intimate statement is unique in Psalms. We encounter it especially in a situation of

the greatest distress. This distress appears to have been caused by wicked people, namely the antichrist and his followers (verse 95; cf. Rev 13:7).

David also testifies to his intimacy with the LORD when he says: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psa 23:4). It is precisely in the difficult moments that David experiences the most intimate moments.

The psalmist reminds the LORD, as it were, that He therewith has also taken care of him. We are responsible to take good care of what belongs to us. We see that with God. Therefore, the righteous appeals to Him to deliver him. As an additional reason, he says that he has sought God's precepts. This shows that he is truly God's property and not just a natural descendant of Abraham.

In affliction, the Word remains the psalmist's delight (verse 92). By the same Word his heart was revived, he was born from above (Jn 3:3) and received new life (verse 93). He has become the property of the LORD and therefore His servant (verse 94). This is the basis of his cry for help whether the LORD will deliver him in his great need.

He asks for God's intervention because wicked have lurched upon him to put him to death (verse 95). The reason for their murderousness is that he diligently considers the testimonies of the LORD and shows it in his life. That is why the wicked persecute the righteous. This started with Cain slaying Abel. It reached its absolute nadir in the mass of the Jewish people who cried out for the death of the Lord Jesus, a cry that was heeded by Pilate. In the near future it will be repeated in the persecution of the faithful remnant of Israel (Rev 12:17).

Everything made on earth has an expiration date (verse 96). It can be so perfect, but it will come to an end (2Pet 3:10,12). The psalmist has seen that end. His spiritual eyes have been opened to this reality. He has also seen that only the commandment of God is "exceedingly broad", that it is boundless, it never comes to an end. The Word of God abides forever, as does he who does the will of God (1Pet 1:25; 1Jn 2:17).

Psa 119:97-104 | /mem/ Desire for the Word

97 *O how I love Your law!*

It is my meditation all the day.

98 *Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies,*

For they are ever mine.

99 *I have more insight than all my teachers,*

For Your testimonies are my meditation.

100 *I understand more than the aged,*

Because I have observed Your precepts.

101 *I have restrained my feet from every evil way,*

That I may keep Your word.

102 *I have not turned aside from Your ordinances,*

For You Yourself have taught me.

103 *How sweet are Your words to my taste!*

Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 *From Your precepts I get understanding;*

Therefore I hate every false way.

The letter *mem* has both the pictogram and the meaning of water (waves). Since water is essential to life, water as a picture of the Word of God in the Bible is always associated with purity and life (Eph 5:26; cf. Rev 22:17). The desire for God is also the desire for the Word of God. That is why we read of a “thirst for God” (Psa 42:1b-2). This stanza about the water as a picture of the Word is therefore again a song of praise about the psalmist’s love for the Word.

Whoever loves the LORD also loves His law (verse 97). Someone who says he loves God but never reads His Word is a liar (cf. Jn 14:23). What the righteous says here is not a hypocritical lip confession. “O how I love Your law”, is the exclamation of one who with all his heart pays attention to the teaching of God’s Word.

Nor is he merely engaged with God’s Word now and then, but it is “all the day” his meditation (cf. Psa 1:3). Just as a sheep eats the grass and ruminates on it the rest of the day, so Mary hears what has been said to her and keeps and meditates on it in her heart (Lk 2:19). This is how we should

read the Word and meditate on the Word the rest of the day. In this the Lord Jesus Himself is the perfect example.

He who loves God's Word so intensely and thinks about it all day long is wiser than his enemies (verse 98). The world has rejected Christ, and because of this, every one who wants to follow the Lord knows that the price of following the Lord is rejection by the world. A believer must be mindful that he has enemies in the world.

The Word of God makes the simplest believer, one who by the standards of the world is not among the learned, a wise one (cf. 2Tim 3:15). He stands out in wisdom far above the most intelligent people who are enemies of God. The world submits the Word of God to its wisdom and thinking, thereby rejecting the Word as the source of wisdom (Jer 8:9b). The believer submits his wisdom and thinking to the Word of God and receives wisdom that comes from above (cf. Jam 1:5; 3:13-17; 1Cor 2:14). The wisdom of the world perishes, but those who possess wisdom based on the commandments of God have an eternal source of wisdom with them. What the righteous say is perfectly true of the Righteous.

Verses 98-100 all begin in Hebrew with "more. The psalmist is wiser (more wise), has more insight and understands more than his enemies, his teachers and the aged. From this it is clear that this is not about intelligence or life experience, but about the guidance of God through His Word. The Word of God gives us the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is the secret of the psalmist's wisdom, understanding and insight.

One who is wise through God's commandments can say without a hint of pride: "I have more insight than all my teachers" (verse 99). His mind has been enlightened by God's Word and God's Spirit because he has made God's testimonies his meditation. Here it is not about teachers who are God-given, but teachers who possess worldly wisdom. By meditating on the Word, the psalmist receives wisdom that comes from above (Jam 3:13-17). He can speak with understanding about the things of life with which others struggle. Like the two previous verses, this applies perfectly to the Lord Jesus.

The righteous, even when young, can also say without a hint of pride that he has "understands more than the aged" (verse 100). The aged here are

not the recognized elders of God's people, but older persons in general with life experience. That life experience, however, yields only human wisdom and not the wisdom that comes from above.

The righteous does not say this because he himself is suddenly so wise and understanding, but because he lets himself be led by the LORD, by His Word. It is not about merely hearing or knowing the Word, but about keeping and obeying it, being led by that Word. A fool is one who is not led by the LORD and His Word, like the antichrist and his followers (Psa 14:1; 53:1b).

He has not only meditated on God's Word, but has also observed it, that is, he has lived by it. As a result, his understanding all things of this life becomes like a light that shows every thing in its true nature and in its proper relation to every other thing. The Lord Jesus, as a Boy of twelve, has more understanding than the teachers and elders who will emerge as His enemies (Lk 2:46-47).

Love for the Word of God, meditating on it, makes one wise, gives insight and gives understanding (verses 97-100). Verses 101-104 are about the psalmist's walk in life under the guidance of the Word. Keeping the Word means guidance in life, avoiding every evil way.

We see this with the righteous, who has restrained his feet "from every evil way" (verse 101; cf. Psa 1:1). By doing so, he demonstrates his adherence to God's Word. There are countless bad ways, but there is only one good way, which is the way that God's Word shows. All evil ways lead to death; the one good way leads to life.

That he abides by God's Word is not his own achievement. He does not deviate from God's ordinances because God Himself has taught him (verse 102). There is no teacher like Him (Job 36:22). He gives the perfect teaching that is exactly tailored to the student. The general effect of this sound teaching in the Word is that it has a preserving and sanctifying effect and works a desire for a life of holiness to God's glory (cf. 2Tim 3:16-17).

Teaching from God's Word is sweet to his taste (verse 103). It is pleasant to take in. Its sweetness exceeds the sweetness of honey (cf. Psa 19:10b; Rev 10:9). He who has tasted the sweetness of it has tasted that the Lord is kind (1Pet 2:3; Psa 34:8). Therefore he wants to have more of it.

The precepts of the LORD are truth and give understanding in the way of truth (verse 104). The believer who obeys these precepts gains understanding into the will of God. As a result, he will hate “every false way”, for in that way the precepts of the LORD are not allowed. The evil way of verse 101 is here called “false way”, for it goes against the way of truth, the way of the Word of God. The false way of sin is a way of error that leads to death. The righteous knows this because he listens to the precepts.

Psa 119:105-112 | /nun/ **From Suffering to Glory**

105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*
106 *I have sworn and I will confirm it,
That I will keep Your righteous ordinances.*
107 *I am exceedingly afflicted;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.*
108 *O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me Your ordinances.*
109 *My life is continually in my hand,
Yet I do not forget Your law.*
110 *The wicked have laid a snare for me,
Yet I have not gone astray from Your precepts.*
111 *I have inherited Your testimonies forever,
For they are the joy of my heart.*
112 *I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes
Forever, [even] to the end.*

The letter *nun* has the pictogram of ‘a growing seed’ or of ‘a fish’, which speaks of ‘continuation’ or ‘swimming against the current’. The letter has two forms, a normal form and a closing letter. The normal form is a curved line, while the closing letter is a long, upright line. Together these forms speak of the continuation from suffering to glorification (Lk 24:26; Phil 2:5-11). We too may walk this way, for we shall be glorified with Christ, at least, if we also suffer with Him (Rom 8:17b).

The numerical value of the *nun* is fifty, which speaks of perfect restoration, for example, the year of jubilee is the fiftieth year, and Pentecost is the fiftieth day after the Lord’s resurrection.

The word *nun* is related to the Hebrew word for lamp that spreads light. This light is needed to move forward. Thus, this *nun* stanza begins with “a lamp to my feet” (verse 105). The light of God’s Word in this *nun* stanza makes it clear that the psalmist’s way to glory must always go by the way of suffering. That is the way on which is pruned to bear more fruit to God’s glory (Jn 15:2). Similarly, the way to God in the sanctuary is only possible through the light of the lampstand. Thus we need the light of the Word to enter the sanctuary by the new and living Way (Heb 10:19).

The Word of God does not spread darkness, but light (Pro 6:23a). It is a lamp that shines before the feet of the believer, allowing him to know where to take the next footstep in a world that is completely dark. An illustration of this is the pillar of fire at night during Israel’s wilderness journey on the way to the promised land. This darkness can become the cause of the psalmist getting lost or falling down in his walk in the world that is spiritually a wilderness.

Because the Word of God gives light, the righteous has the determination to keep God’s “righteous ordinances” (verse 106). He realizes that at a weak moment, because of the persistent afflictions (verses 107-110), he might be tempted to give in to the pressure and let go of the Word. Therefore, he solemnly declares by swearing an oath that he will put his will into action. This conviction is expressed by a person only if he knows and accepts the value of God’s Word as a guide for his life.

Having the determination to obey God’s Word can bring such affliction that a person despairs of his life. However, the psalmist received a word, a promise from the LORD that he would remain alive, and so he can still live peacefully (verse 107; cf. 1Cor 10:13; Rom 8:35-39).

The believer lives in a world that is out to silence him. His life bears witness to Who God is, and this God the wicked want to get rid off. The believer therefore turns to God and asks Him to make him a living witness who does not yield to the pressure to remain silent.

The believer is an offeror and a disciple (verse 108). He learns that even and especially in difficult situations he will nevertheless come to God as an offeror or priest with “the freewill offerings” of his mouth, which are the spontaneous offerings of praise and thanks (Hos 14:3; cf. 1Pet 2:5; Heb

13:15). In accordance with the LORD's teaching in Psalm 50, he wishes God to accept them (Psa 50:23). He wants to offer those sacrifices in a manner pleasing to Him.

The issue is not only in what manner the sacrifices of thanksgiving are offered, but in what circumstances. The psalmist is in great distress. In such a situation, a person is more likely to go to the LORD for help than to give thanks to Him. But the LORD wants to teach the psalmist by His ordinances to praise Him in difficult circumstances (cf. Acts 16:19-25). Therefore, the psalmist asks the LORD to teach him His ordinances. We, Christians, know that the Father seeks worshipers and that He also tells us how to do so (Jn 4:23-24).

The life of the righteous is in constant danger (verse 109). The wicked want to silence him. They do not want the believer to honor God nor do they want to be reminded of God by his life. The righteous will not let them intimidate him that he forgets God's Word. That very Word is his protection against the danger that he would stop praising the LORD.

That the life of the righteous is in danger, is, according to verse 7, not imaginary. For the wicked have laid a snare for him (verse 110). That snare is that he stops praising the LORD when he is in danger (cf. 2Chr 20:15,19-21). However, it did not lead him into temptation to go astray from the LORD's precepts. Rather, those precepts kept him in the way of the LORD, so that he would not fall into the snare of the enemy. Thus, the enemy's attempts to ensnare him did not separate him from the LORD, but drove him into His arms.

In fact, the psalmist has inherited the testimonies of the LORD forever (verse 111). He knows its value and will never renounce it (cf. 1Kgs 21:1-3). That is, regardless of the circumstances, even in times of danger, the Word remains his portion and he will continue to praise the LORD with joy in his heart.

This is an inheritance that is the property of the LORD, but assigned by Him to an Israelite. The Israelite may not sell the inheritance, except in extreme need, but then the right to buy it back remains for him or his redeemer. This inalienable inheritance is here the Word of God.

He who values and preserves the inheritance will incline his heart to take full advantage of it (verse 112). He will want to know all that the inheritance entails. Along with this comes his purpose to give everything he discovers in it a place in his life throughout the rest of his life, “forever, [even] to the end” (cf. Acts 11:23).

Psa 119:113-120 | /samekh/ Protected

113 *I hate those who are double-minded,
But I love Your law.*
114 *You are my hiding place and my shield;
I wait for Your word.*
115 *Depart from me, evildoers,
That I may observe the commandments of my God.*
116 *Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my hope.*
117 *Uphold me that I may be safe,
That I may have regard for Your statutes continually.*
118 *You have rejected all those who wander from Your statutes,
For their deceitfulness is useless.*
119 *You have removed all the wicked of the earth [like] dross;
Therefore I love Your testimonies.*
120 *My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.*

The letter *samekh* has the pictogram of a complete circle and has the numerical value sixty. This gives the letter the meaning ‘circled’, ‘protected’. In ancient Hebrew, the letter *samekh* has the pictogram of a ‘thorn’. A flock is protected by a thorn bush all around, hence the meaning of the letter: protection, circled, support. The idea is that the believer is completely surrounded by the Word and protected by the LORD. In connection with the numerical value, we see this portrayed in the sixty bodyguards surrounding King Solomon (Song 3:7).

The upright “hates those who are double-minded” (verse 113). These are people with a divided heart or double-hearted people (cf. Jam 1:8). They are, so to speak, people of a semicircle rather than a whole circle, *samekh*. A semicircle does not provide sufficient protection. Half-minded people can-

not count on the LORD's protection. For that, a person must be completely dedicated, depicted in a whole circle.

The difference between with a whole heart and with half a heart (or double-minded) is the difference between love and hate. People who are double-minded cannot make a choice (cf. Jos 24:15). Such people say they love God, but in reality they despise Him. This is evident in their attitude toward the teaching of God's Word. The upright one, on the other hand, loves the law of the LORD with all his heart. He longs for the teaching from God's Word. His hatred of the half-minded, therefore, stems from this teaching. It is the hatred of God Himself (Psa 139:21-22).

The God-fearing is persecuted because of his dedication to the LORD. This leads him into a new experience, and that is that the LORD is his "hiding place" and his "shield" (verse 114). These two words in Hebrew both begin with the letter *samekh*. Together they mean "complete protection". We see in Psalm 121 that the LORD keeps us during the day (the sun) and during the night (the moon), that is, continually and completely (Psa 121:6).

Waiting for the word of the LORD brings safety and protection to the psalmist. At the same time, God's Word is also a hiding place and a shield from all the hateful words that are shot at him like fiery arrows, for hope and trust in it will stop the fiery arrows (Eph 6:16).

The God-fearing lives in the midst of evildoers (verse 115). Instead of speaking to the LORD, he speaks to them exceptionally onetime. Now that he is safe, safe because the LORD is his hiding place, safe because he has put on the whole armor of God, he can resist the evildoers and drive them away. The promise applies to us as well: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7).

He commands them to go away from him, for he wants to have nothing to do with them (cf. Psa 6:8). If he allows them to exercise their influence in his life, it will be at the expense of observing the commandments of God (cf. 1Cor 15:33). He does not want that. No believer should want that. Therefore, he will order evildoers to leave him immediately (2Jn 1:10; Tit 3:10; cf. Rom 16:17) and resist a false gospel (Gal 2:4-5).

The forceful action of the previous verse is possible only if at the same time an appeal is made to the word of God that He supports those who trust

in Him (verse 116). The psalmist's decision is certain. But he knows the strength of the opponents and he also knows his own weakness. Therefore, he resorts to the word of the LORD to sustain him. Then he will survive in a time of need. He asks for God's support because he does not want to be ashamed in his hope.

The support he asks for is in view of those who persecute him, for from them he wants to be safe (verse 117). When the LORD supports him, he is focused on Him and safe. Then he continually has regard for or delights in the statutes of the LORD. He keeps them and rejoices in them. These then determine the content of his life and not those who are after him.

He leaves the judgment of his persecutors to the LORD (verse 118). He knows what the LORD is going to do, that is to reject all those who wander from His statutes. They deceive others with their language of lies. This double description of their wickedness – "their deceitfulness is useless [literally: falsehood]" – underscores the mendacity of their language. This is prophetically about people who follow the antichrist in his lying deceptions.

All these wicked people are removed from the earth by the LORD like dross (verse 119). The dross is removed to purify, to refine the silver. The wicked are purged away to make Israel pure (cf. Pro 25:4; Mal 4:1; Lk 3:9,17). By this, the righteous refers to the melting process in which a smelter removes the dross that floats on the molten precious metal (cf. Isa 1:25-26; Eze 22:19-22; Mal 3:2-3; 1Pet 1:7). He knows that God will deal justly with the wicked. It is an additional motive for him to love God's testimonies.

Judgment on the wicked (verse 119) is for the God-fearing, besides being a motive for loving the testimonies of the LORD, also a reason for fearing Him (verse 120). He is therefore in great awe of Him (cf. Rev 1:17; Isa 6:5). That his "flesh trembles" is literally "bristles up", which means in our language that he gets goosebumps. In himself he is no better than the wicked and is impressed by the judgments of God on them. That is also the big difference with the wicked, because they show no fear of Him Who is so much to be feared.

Psa 119:121-128 | /ayin/ View on the Source

121 *I have done justice and righteousness;
 Do not leave me to my oppressors.*
 122 *Be surety for Your servant for good;
 Do not let the arrogant oppress me.*
 123 *My eyes fail [with longing] for Your salvation
 And for Your righteous word.*
 124 *Deal with Your servant according to Your lovingkindness
 And teach me Your statutes.*
 125 *I am Your servant; give me understanding,
 That I may know Your testimonies.*
 126 *It is time for the LORD to act,
 [For] they have broken Your law.*
 127 *Therefore I love Your commandments
 Above gold, yes, above fine gold.*
 128 *Therefore I esteem right all [Your] precepts concerning everything,
 I hate every false way.*

The letter *ayin* has the pictogram and meaning of ‘eye’ or ‘source’. ‘Eye’ has not only the meaning of ‘being able to see’, but especially the meaning of ‘having insight’, ‘understanding’. In Hebrew, the terms ‘good eye’ and ‘evil eye’ are associated with generosity and stinginess respectively (Mt 6:22-24). God has a good eye, because He is generous. He gave His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16).

That the eye is the lamp of the body means that our understanding of spiritual things is partly dependent on our mind. Stinginess, for example, will cloud our spiritual understanding. This insight is also necessary to be a good servant of the LORD (verses 122,124,125).

The word *ayin* also means ‘source’, which speaks of life. The first time we find a source in the Bible is Beer-lahai-roi [Beer=source], which means ‘the Living One Who sees me’. In that place the LORD finds Hagar (Gen 16:7-14).

The righteous can say to the LORD that he “has done justice and righteousness” (verse 121). Justice and righteousness are the foundation of God’s throne (Psa 97:2). This means that the psalmist is holding fast to the

covenant of the LORD. That covenant means that the LORD will never give him up.

What he says does not mean that he is without sin, but that he has served the LORD according to his uprightness. The wrong he has done, he has confessed, so that there is nothing between him and the LORD. On this basis, he asks the LORD not to leave him to his oppressors – that is, the antichrist and his followers (cf. Zec 11:15-17). For his preservation from his oppressors he does not count on his own strength, but on the LORD.

In verse 122 he goes one step further. He asks the LORD to be surety of his welfare (cf. Isa 38:14) and not allow the arrogant to oppress him and thus destroy his welfare. Thereby he again presents himself to Him as “Your servant”. A surety is not only a protector, but also and especially a substitute, one who takes on the cause of another and makes it his own.

The word ‘surety’ also occurs in Genesis 43 where Judah stands surety for Benjamin (Gen 43:9; cf. Phlm 1:18). The Lord Jesus is in a perfect sense a surety for His own because He took their sins upon Himself on the cross. And also now that He is in heaven, He is the surety for His own (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:22,25).

The eyes of the righteous have failed with longing for the salvation of the LORD (verse 123), that is, for His salvation and peace (cf. Psa 69:3). He has a ground for this and that is the righteous word of the LORD. That righteous word means that the LORD will act on the basis of the covenant. It means that He will judge evil and reward good. He will do both when He comes to earth in Christ for the second time.

The psalmist, as a servant of the LORD, asks Him to do with him according to His lovingkindness or covenant faithfulness (verse 124). That lovingkindness includes protection from his persecutors, but also teaching the statutes or ways of the LORD. Things and events never stand alone. They are always connected in some way to God’s Word. Therein we can learn how God views things and events, whereby we gain His view of them.

This is followed by his next question to the LORD, in which he asks for understanding (verse 125). Emphatically, he asks this question as His servant. A servant – mentioned for the third time in this verse, after verses 122,124 – asks for and carries out the will of his lord. If the LORD gives him un-

derstanding, opens his mind, he will know His testimonies with spiritual understanding. Here we see that receiving understanding depends on our willingness to serve Him. When Samson lost his hair (=dedication), he lost his eyes (=understanding) (Jdg 16:19-21).

Through the understanding received, it is clear to the righteous that "it is time for the LORD to act" (verse 126). It is important to know the times (cf. 1Chr 12:32) and not to act before the time (2Kgs 5:26). The question to the LORD to act is not a question of impatience, but the question to act now because His law has been broken. The law has been broken countless times, but in the end time it will be broken in the most egregious way, leaving no longer any delay of judgment. Then the measure of iniquity will be full (cf. Gen 15:16) and the LORD will act in judgment.

This will happen when the nadir of idolatry is reached, namely when a man comes in his own name (Jn 5:43) who will take the place of God, namely the antichrist (2Thes 2:4). This is man's response to the love of God. God in His love sent His Son to take man's place in judgment. To this, man responds by taking the place of God in pride (cf. Gen 3:5).

Because God's Word gives understanding about the time of the LORD's actions, the God-fearing loves the commandments of the LORD (verse 127; verse 72). His love for those commandments far exceeds the love for gold, yes, fine gold. Gold may be worth much, but its possession is fragile and temporary, for it may be gone in a moment, and its enjoyment ceases with death.

Verse 128 begins with "therefore", meaning that this verse is the conclusion of the stanza. The psalmist's conclusion is that all God's precept are truth (Jn 17:17). That his appreciation of God's Word far exceeds his appreciation of gold is evident in his obedience to it. He esteems all God's precepts right concerning everything. They are the truth. In contrast, he "hates every false way". The absolute measure of the difference between right and wrong is the Word.

Love of God's Word automatically means hating lies and every false way, that is, every way on which the lie reigns supreme. The two cannot possibly go together (cf. Mt 6:24). The contrast of Psalm 1 between the righteous and the wicked is here the contrast between the psalmist who loves God's

Word and those who walk the path of falsehood and hate the Word of God.

Psa 119:129-136 | /pe/ The Opened Mouth

*129 Your testimonies are wonderful;
Therefore my soul observes them.
130 The unfolding of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.
131 I opened my mouth wide and panted,
For I longed for Your commandments.
132 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
After Your manner with those who love Your name.
133 Establish my footsteps in Your word,
And do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.
134 Redeem me from the oppression of man,
That I may keep Your precepts.
135 Make Your face shine upon Your servant,
And teach me Your statutes.
136 My eyes shed streams of water,
Because they do not keep Your law.*

The letter *pe* has the pictogram and meaning of the (opened) mouth. This letter follows the letter *ayin*, the eye. The letter *ayin* speaks of understanding. That must first be present before the mouth can be opened – of which the letter *pe* speaks – to speak the truth. The mouth must also be opened to feed on the Word of God (verse 131).

Who knows God’s Word to some extent, will be impressed again and again and again by the wonders of God’s testimonies (verse 129). Who studies God’s creation, will marvel at its perfection. It towers above what man has made. The Word of God also brings us to wonder: it is truth, its opening spreads light (verse 130), it begets life, it is full of wisdom, perfect, and it towers over all the books ever written by men.

When the LORD opens His mouth and utters His testimonies, His words will work admiration in the hearts of believers. This cannot be otherwise, for one of the names of the Author is “Wonderful” (Isa 9:6). He is also the

God Who works wonders (Psa 72:18). It strengthens the soul's desire to heed the testimonies of such a God.

Life is complicated and there are many questions. What a precious gift the Word is then. When the Word is opened – figuratively, or also literally, when a scroll is rolled open – its light shines out on all the situations in which the righteous can be (verse 130). It also illuminates man's mind and heart. He sees himself in the light of God, and he also sees the Light in the light of the Word.

Then "the simple" get "understanding". The "simple" are believers who lack understanding and turn to God's Word for understanding the circumstances. The Word is hidden from religious, but not born-again wise and intelligent people, such as modern theologians, while the Father reveals it to simple children (cf. Mt 11:25).

The letter *pe* means, as mentioned, 'opened mouth'. In verse 130 we find the opened Word and in verse 131 we find a mouth opened of wonder (verse 129). The result is that the light of the Word illuminates and gives understanding to the psalmist.

The psalmist is such a simple one. He has intense hunger for the Word of God (verse 131). This underscores the significance of the letter *pe*. He does not merely open his mouth, but opens it wide like young birds do when the mother comes with food. He also panted, for he longed to take in the commandments. That great is his desire for them (cf. Psa 42:1b-2; 1Pet 2:2). Panting can also be translated 'yearning'. He yearns for God's commandments.

The psalmist has not yet taken the Word to himself. He does strongly desire that Word (verse 131), but he understands that understanding the Word is only possible through prayer. In verses 132-135 he prays. He prays for grace "after Your manner" to understand the Word (verse 132); he prays for a walk in accordance with the Word (verses 133-134); he prays especially for the presence of the LORD (verse 135) to teach him.

The righteous has read in God's Word that it is in accordance with the justice of God when God is asked to turn to the one who prays and the prayer is done by one who loves His Name. God's right has been satisfied through His Son on the cross for all who believe in Him.

There are two sides to the life of the lover of God's Name. One side is that his footsteps are established in God's Word (verse 133). He asks that this may be so, that he will live according to the will of God revealed in His Word. On the other hand, he realizes that he is living in the midst of a world full of iniquity, which can easily adhere to him. Therefore, he asks that God keeps him from this and that "not ... any iniquity" has dominion over him. If God turns to him, the latter will also happen.

There is pressure from people on him to make him bow to iniquity. He feels his weakness and asks God to redeem him from that oppression (verse 134). Because of that oppression, he feels an impediment to obeying God's precepts. When God delivers him from that, he is free to observe His precepts.

Together with the desire for God's Word there is also desire for the light of God's face upon him (verse 135), that is, that God would be gracious to him (Num 6:25). We know that we have become pleasing to God in Christ because He looks upon us in Christ. Therefore, God can be gracious to us.

In expressing his desire for the light of God's face, he asks for the light of God's presence, for His presence in his life as God's servant. The light of God's presence is the only good light in which God can teach His statutes.

While he is in God's light, he feels more than anywhere else that God's law is not kept (verse 136) by his oppressors, of whom he spoke in verse 134, that is, the antichrist and his followers. By despising the gift of the law, the Lawgiver Himself is despised. When he is in God's presence, he is particularly sensitive to this. It causes a stream of water to flow from his eyes, so deeply saddened is he about the contempt of the law. As a result, the people perish (cf. Lam 3:48; Rom 9:1-5). We also see this sorrow in Christ (Lk 19:41-44).

Psa 119:137-144 | */tsadhe/* **The Righteous**

137 Righteous are You, O LORD,

And upright are Your judgments.

138 You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness

And exceeding faithfulness.

139 My zeal has consumed me,

Because my adversaries have forgotten Your words.

140 Your word is very pure,

Therefore Your servant loves it.

141 I am small and despised,

[Yet] I do not forget Your precepts.

142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,

And Your law is truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have come upon me,

[Yet] Your commandments are my delight.

144 Your testimonies are righteous forever;

Give me understanding that I may live.

The letter *tsadhe* has the pictogram which can be interpreted as ‘a suffering servant’ and is related to the word *tsadik* which means righteous. The letter has two forms: the regular letter that speaks of a suffering servant and the closing letter that speaks of a glorified servant. This closing letter is long and straight, and has the shape of a palm tree (cf. Psa 92:12-13).

The letter *tsadhe* undoubtedly refers to Christ, the Just or Righteous (1Pet 3:18). When the Son of David will appear as the righteous Branch or Sprout, He will do justice and righteousness as King. His Name will be: “The LORD our righteousness” (Jer 23:5-6).

This *tsadhe* stanza is about the significance of the glories of the Word to the psalmist personally, how the Word of God brings him into the nearness of God. The stanza begins with the declaration and praise that the LORD is righteous, both in His Person and in His actions (verse 137). The stanza ends with the declaration and praise that the Word of the LORD is righteous (verse 144).

The psalmist expresses the deep conviction to the LORD: “Righteous are You” (verse 137; cf. Rev 16:5,7). The LORD is righteous when He declares the one righteous who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26). He is also righteous when He reveals His wrath (Lam 1:18; Rom 1:18). Righteous means that He acts according to His standard, which is His covenant and His promise.

Because the LORD is just, all His judgments are “upright” (cf. Rev 15:3-4). His judgments and His Person are in perfect accord with each other (Deu

32:4). This observation is of great importance. One who sees and considers this will rejoice in it (Psa 19:8).

The evidence of the observation of verse 137 is given in verse 138. The LORD has commanded His testimonies “in righteousness” as well as in “exceeding faithfulness”. Everything He says and does proves that He is righteousness and exceeding in faithfulness. There is no injustice present with Him. Therefore, He cannot be unfaithful either (2Tim 2:13).

The psalmist is consumed by zeal for the Word of the LORD (verse 139). In Psalm 69 we read that he was consumed with zeal for the house of the LORD (Psa 69:9). In John 2, the Holy Spirit quotes this verse from Psalm 69 and applies it to the Lord Jesus because He is its fulfillment (Jn 2:14-17).

This consuming zeal is necessary because the apostate members of God’s people, who are His opponents, have forgotten God’s words. The zeal of the righteous comes from his love for God’s words. The opponents of the faithful do not heed what He has said, but go against it with great vigor. This consumes the righteous who is driven by love for God’s words.

The God-fearing has not forgotten God’s Word, but on the contrary values it highly. He says to God that His “word is very pure”, it is without any defect (verse 140; Psa 18:30). Countless attacks have been made on it to invalidate or eradicate it. All these attacks have demonstrated its purity all the more. The enemy has achieved the opposite of his intentions. The servant of God has not forgotten or rejected the very pure Word of God, but rather loves it. For him, the Word is not only pure, but has a purifying effect in his life (Jn 15:3).

An important characteristic of a servant of the LORD is that he loves His Word (verse 97). An important characteristic of one who loves the Lord Jesus is that he keeps His Word (Jn 14:21,23).

In verse 141, we hear the faithful remnant speaking in the psalmist. They acknowledge that they are “small and despised” compared to the mass of their apostate, hostile peers. While their opponents have forgotten God’s Word (verse 139), they can say that they have not forgotten the precepts of the LORD. On the contrary, because they are small and despised, they are fully dependent on these precepts. In them they find their strength to stand firm against the enmity of the wicked multitude.

At the very moment when the psalmist is reviled and oppressed – and that includes the believing remnant – he holds fast to the powerful precepts of the LORD. More than ever he needs to know His will in such a difficult situation.

In verse 140 the psalmist – and in him the remnant – calls himself “Your servant”. In verse 141 we see the believer as a servant who suffers in imitation of the suffering Servant of the LORD, that is, the Lord Jesus. We are talking here about the suffering of the Servant because of righteousness (cf. 1Pet 4:13) and not about His atoning sufferings. In the latter suffering He is unique and cannot be imitated by anyone.

The righteousness of God “is an everlasting righteousness” (verse 142). Righteousness is the righteous action of God, an action that is in accordance with His Word, His covenant, His promise. Its foundation is the blood of the new covenant (Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20), which is the blood of the eternal covenant (Heb 13:20).

Therefore, it does not have only a temporary effect, but righteousness is absolute and eternal. Directly related to this is the observation that the law of the LORD “is truth”, perfectly true and reliable, without a hint of falsehood.

The faithful is afflicted by “trouble and anguish” (verse 143). This verse is parallel to verse 141. There is a difference, however. In verse 141 the emphasis is on the smallness and vulnerability of the psalmist’s person, whereas here in verse 143 it is on the magnitude of the trouble. In both cases the Word gives adequate support.

Trouble and anguish point to the time of the great tribulation in which all the faithful, that is the faithful remnant, will find themselves at the end of the age. In that time of great trouble, they have a “delight” that will help them through that time. That delight are the commandments of the LORD. During the great tribulation, man will lose all control, but the LORD never runs out of control. He will cause His own to arrive safely in the harbor of their desire (Psa 107:30).

The tribulation may last a long time, but it will come to an end, for He has set a limit for the great tribulation (Mt 24:21-22). It is different with the righteous testimonies of the LORD, for they are “forever” (verse 144). The

righteous asks for an understanding of those testimonies, for in them is the true life. This life is life with God and applies to both now and in the future, for His testimonies are forever.

God's testimonies are complete; there will not be added new testimonies. What we need as Christians are not new testimonies or revelations, but a deeper understanding of the God-given revelation in His Word. Without an understanding of this Scripture revelation from God, man, the believer, cannot live the true life, for in the Scriptures man, the believer, learns Who God is and who he himself is. This is not about receiving life (Jn 6:53), but about the practical enjoyment of it (Jn 6:56).

Psa 119:145-152 | /qoph/ Calling Out in Distress

145 I cried with all my heart; answer me, O LORD!

I will observe Your statutes.

146 I cried to You; save me

And I shall keep Your testimonies.

147 I rise before dawn and cry for help;

I wait for Your words.

148 My eyes anticipate the night watches,

That I may meditate on Your word.

149 Hear my voice according to Your lovingkindness;

Revive me, O LORD, according to Your ordinances.

150 Those who follow after wickedness draw near;

They are far from Your law.

151 You are near, O LORD,

And all Your commandments are truth.

152 Of old I have known from Your testimonies

That You have founded them forever.

The ancient Hebrew pictogram of the letter *qoph* is the horizon with sunrise; in Aramaic it is an eye of a needle (connect). The letter *qoph* in this stanza has to do with the concepts of calling, drawing near, and being sanctified (cf. Lev 20:26). All three verbs begin with the letter *qoph*. The purpose is to make a connection between heaven and earth. The believer is connected to heaven and is therefore sanctified, set apart in this world.

The righteous has cried out to the LORD with all his heart (verse 145; cf. Joel 2:32). This means that he has a pure heart, otherwise he cannot cry out to the LORD with all his heart. He calls on Him because he lives in a God-hating world and is in need. It is not that God is unaware of his distress, but He uses the distress to form him spiritually and bring him closer to Himself (Rom 5:3-5). The righteous cries out for an answer. To this he attaches the promise to observe the statutes of the LORD.

Verses 145-147 all begin with “cry” and verses 150-151 with “near”. In verse 146 the psalmist repeats his cry for deliverance, but more specifically “save me”. This is not about salvation from the penalty of sin, but salvation from the present affliction. It points to the seriousness of the affliction. Again, he attaches to his salvation the promise to keep God’s testimonies after his salvation.

In verse 147 he goes on to speak of his cry for help and says of it that he cried out before the morning began to dawn. Even before the dawn of day he called out to God for help. He did so because he waited for God’s words (Psa 136:6). Even during the night he opened his eyes to meditate on God’s Word (verse 148).

The Jews divide the night into three night watches. The last night watch ends with the sunrise, the time of prayer. Before the last night watch ends, the psalmist has already risen to meditate on God’s Word, to have his ‘quiet time’. These verses show how important it is to take set times for prayer and meditating on the Word and begin the day with them.

The psalmist asks the LORD to hear his voice and to do so “according to Your lovingkindness” (verse 149). He is claiming the right to be heard because he is appealing to God’s lovingkindness, that is, God’s faithfulness to His covenant. What he is asking for is to revive him. He acknowledges that God has the full right to his life. He wants to live as is right before God, to enjoy life according to God’s ordinances. According to the covenant, he will remain alive despite the enemies of the next verse.

He feels threatened in his life by those who “follow after wickedness” (verse 150). They “draw near” to keep him from prayer and the Word (verses 147,148). They behave this way because they are far from God’s law. They do not heed the authority of God in any respect.

The threatened righteous, seeing the wicked drawing near, says to the LORD that He is “near” (verse 151). When He is near (cf. Phil 4:5), the wicked can come as close as they want, but the LORD will protect him. The evildoers are far from God’s law, but the righteous says with conviction that God’s commandments are truth.

This is not a spontaneous confession in the face of imminent danger, but he knows “of old” from God’s testimonies (verse 152). God’s testimonies means the testimony of God’s Word about Who He is and about who we should be. From of old here means ahead of time. He does not look back with the wisdom of the present; he looks to the future with the wisdom from above. He also knows that God has “founded them forever”, namely, on the immovable foundation of the blood of the eternal covenant of Christ. God is eternal, therefore His testimonies also stand forever on a firm, unshakable foundation.

Psa 119:153-160 | /resh/ The Main Point

*153 Look upon my affliction and rescue me,
For I do not forget Your law.*

*154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.*

*155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.*

*156 Great are Your mercies, O LORD;
Revive me according to Your ordinances.*

*157 Many are my persecutors and my adversaries,
[Yet] I do not turn aside from Your testimonies.*

*158 I behold the treacherous and loathe [them],
Because they do not keep Your word.*

*159 Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.*

*160 The sum of Your word is truth,
And every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.*

The letter *resh* has the pictogram of a bowed head and is related to the word ‘see’ (verses 153,158,159) and the word ‘head’ (the sum or the begin-

ning, verse 160). In this *resh* stanza, a court case, as it were, is held (verse 154) and we hear

1. the psalmist's prayer in his affliction (verse 153),
2. with his request to live (verse 154),
3. the description of his enemies (verses 155-158),
4. with another request to live (verse 159),
5. and as a final conclusion his confidence that the words and covenant of the LORD are truth (verse 160).

As a reason for looking upon his affliction or tribulation and being rescued from it, the psalmist argues that he does not forget God's law (verse 153). The psalmist is in need of a comforter, someone who would stand by him in his trial, someone who would show compassion in his affliction. The Lord Jesus says: "And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none" (Psa 69:20).

The psalmist shows by his question that he is counting on God to look upon his affliction and to rescue him. He derives this certainty from the promise of the LORD in His covenant. There he got to know Him as a caring God, Who looks after His own in mercy, even when they are in affliction.

The righteous is being sued, there are serious charges, all of which are false (verse 154). He can boldly ask God to take his trial and stand up for him. Then he will be redeemed and go free (cf. Heb 7:25). He will get his life back, which is consistent with God's promise that He gives life on earth to those who turn to Him. He does this on the basis of His covenant.

"Salvation is far from the wicked" (verse 155). The cause of this is not with God, but with themselves. For they do not seek God's statutes. This is a great contrast with the psalmist and the faithful remnant, who do. Those who ignore God's Word will never enter the realm of peace. 'Not seeking' means having no desire for it. They do not want to engage in God's Word. The wicked here are the Israelites who have rejected the covenant of the LORD and have become followers of the antichrist. They are the persecutors of the believing remnant.

The righteous, on the other hand, sees that the mercies of the LORD are great (verse 156). He has experienced this in his life (Lam 3:22-23). Now that he is in affliction, he appeals to it again. He wants to live to the glory of God. Therefore, he asks that God revives him according to His ordinances. He knows that life with God is firmly tied to what God's Word says. Without the Word there is no life. The Word is life (Deu 32:47a).

The pressure on the righteous is great (verse 157). He is not persecuted and opposed by just a few, but his "persecutors and adversaries" are "many". It is terrible to be persecuted and opposed. When that also happens en masse, it is a very great trial. In the end time, the mass of the Israelites will accept and follow the antichrist (Jn 5:43b). Therefore, two-thirds of the people will also be exterminated by Assyria (Zec 13:8).

Despite the fact that the apostate crowd is against him, the righteous says that he does not turn aside from God's testimonies. He remains with the Lord with a resolute heart (cf. Acts 11:23). He experiences: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all" (Psa 34:19).

The psalmist has his eyes open to what is happening around him. He also beholds "the treacherous" (verse 158). They act treacherously – this word also means: deceitfully, apostate – toward the covenant of the LORD. That causes loathe in him. That loathe comes to him not because of the treacherous acting against him, but because they do not keep God's Word. Being treacherous is abominable, and all the more so when the word of God is known, but one does not keep it.

We can think of treacherousness in a marriage. In Jeremiah 2, treacherousness in marriage is compared to unfaithfulness to the covenant with the LORD (Jer 2:2). The word "love" in Jeremiah 2:2 is the word for faithfulness to the covenant. Marriage is also seen as a covenant (Mal 2:14). Dealing treacherously in the marriage covenant was and is – even today – probably the most heinous form of treacherousness in the sphere of human relationships.

The psalmist wants to live because life is promised in the covenant if he loves God's precepts (verse 159). He chooses life (Deu 30:19). His desire for life comes from love for God's precepts. This states that life is promised to

those who love God's Word. He appeals to God's lovingkindness for this purpose.

The last verse of this stanza is about the sum of the Word and that it is everlasting (verse 160). The God-fearing declares that the sum of God's Word is "truth". The Hebrew word "sum" also means "head". It means that the whole and the main point of the Word is truth, the Word is trustworthy (cf. 1Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2Tim 2:11; Tit 3:8). It is about the whole of God's Word. The Word, the covenant, with all the righteous ordinances it contains, has no end, it "is everlasting".

Psa 119:161-168 | /shin/ Tribulation

161 Princes persecute me without cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your words.
162 I rejoice at Your word,
As one who finds great spoil.
163 I hate and despise falsehood,
[But] I love Your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of Your righteous ordinances.
165 Those who love Your law have great peace,
And nothing causes them to stumble.
166 I hope for Your salvation, O LORD,
And do Your commandments.
167 My soul keeps Your testimonies,
And I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies,
For all my ways are before You.

The letter *shin* has the pictogram and meaning of 'teeth' and is associated with the concept of 'eating', 'fire', 'tribulation'. The negative meaning is tribulation and judgment, the positive is eating and finding a spoil (verse 162). Verse 161 and verse 163 speak of the great tribulation, in which the remnant will be persecuted by "princes", which are the false leaders (verse 161) and the false shepherds (Zec 11:15-17) of Israel. In the midst of these severe tribulations, in this stanza the psalmist and the remnant

remain faithful to the LORD and rejoice in the salvation and the Word of the LORD.

The psalmist has not been afraid of princes, the followers of the antichrist, who have spread lies about the LORD and His Word. He has, however, been fearful of God's Word in the sense that he has been "in awe" of it (verse 161). This has kept him from denying God's Name before government officials who have persecuted him for no reason, but rather testifying of Him faithfully before them. Examples are Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar, Paul before King Agrippa and above all the Lord Jesus before Pilate.

The joy at God's word or promise, His pledge, can be compared to finding great spoil (verse 162). That it is spoil means that it is what has been conquered in a victory over an enemy (cf. Isa 9:2b). It is not a lucky find, but the result of struggle. To find such great spoil requires effort.

Likewise, the knowledge of God through His Word is the result of prayerfully studying and meditating on the Word. That takes effort and time. At the same time, the Word is a weapon, the sword of the Spirit, which is necessary in a time of spiritual struggle, in a time of tribulation and distress.

Falsehood is reprehensible and abominable and worth hating (verse 163). The law, God's Word, is absolutely true and worth loving. These feelings of hatred and abhorrence for falsehood and love for God's Word are worked through the reading of God's Word. Through the Word of God we gain the proper awareness of falsehood and truth.

Falsehood here is denying that the LORD is the true God. Elijah asked who is the true God: the LORD or Baal. The confession of the remnant is what the name Elijah means: the LORD is my God. In the end time, the question is who is the true God: the LORD or man. Man wants to be like God (Gen 3:4-6) and erects the image of a man to be worshiped (Dan 3:1-5). Man takes the place of God (Acts 12:21-23; Rev 13:11-12). We see this taking full shape in the antichrist. He will tempt men with miracles of falsehood according to the working of satan himself to worship him (2Thes 2:3-4,9).

For us, falsehood is also living a hypocritical life. It appears spiritually healthy and rich on the outside, but on the inside it is dirty and hardened. We see an example and warning in the life of David in his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah.

The psalmist praises God seven times a day, that is continuously, all day long, because of God's righteous ordinances (verse 164). The Word of God also works feelings of gratitude. It is good to consider how far that goes. It is not just giving thanks "*in everything*" (1Thes 5:18), but it goes further: "Always giving thanks *for* all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Eph 5:20).

Everything in God's Word is also meant to bring us to give thanks to God. How much reason we get for giving thanks when we discover in God's Word Who the Lord Jesus is to God and to us and what He has done and still does.

Loving the Word of God results in "great peace" (verse 165) and that in a world that is full of discontent and temptation. That peace is the peace of God. Whoever knows this peace will find that the Lord keeps his heart and his thoughts (Phil 4:7; cf. Isa 26:3). He recognizes every stumbling block and is carried by the Lord through His grace and His angels, so that he does not strike his foot against a stone (Mt 4:6). With that great peace, the Lord Jesus went His way on earth without stumbling.

When the righteous are in trouble, in accordance with the covenant, they may hope for the salvation of the LORD, while doing His commandments (verse 166). This hope for salvation is not an uncertainty, but means that they are certain that what has been promised is coming (Heb 11:1). In addition and above, our hope is in Him Who will come to fulfill what is promised (Heb 10:37). This certainty does not make one frivolous, but obedient to the commandments of God.

The love of God and His Word are expressed in the keeping of God's testimonies and loving them exceedingly (verse 167; cf. Jn 14:21,23). Verses 166-167 are both about keeping God's testimonies and form the conclusion of this stanza. We too have been given the task of keeping or guarding what has been entrusted to us by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us (2Tim 1:14).

Just as faith without works is dead (Jam 2:17), loving the Lord Jesus without keeping His commandments is a lie. The psalmist speaks of "my soul". By this he is saying that his whole being, his whole inner being is involved. Love for God's testimonies is not shown by mere verbal declaration. That

love is evidenced by the full absorption of it in the heart, from which it is manifested in practice.

When the “precepts and testimonies” of God are kept, attached to that is the awareness that all the ways of the God-fearing are open to God (verse 168; cf. Heb 4:12-13). Because the psalmist knows that God oversees all his ways, he wants to be guided by His precepts and testimonies. To God the ways that His own go have no secrets. That is why it is so necessary to consult His Word, for in it He shows the way in which each of His own must go. He also makes clear to us what is in our heart, all the hidden corners of which are then revealed (Psa 139:23-24).

Psa 119:169-176 | /tav/ The Sign of the Cross

169 *Let my cry come before You, O LORD;
Give me understanding according to Your word.*
170 *Let my supplication come before You;
Deliver me according to Your word.*
171 *Let my lips utter praise,
For You teach me Your statutes.*
172 *Let my tongue sing of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness.*
173 *Let Your hand be ready to help me,
For I have chosen Your precepts.*
174 *I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
And Your law is my delight.*
175 *Let my soul live that it may praise You,
And let Your ordinances help me.*
176 *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant,
For I do not forget Your commandments.*

The letter *tav* is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The original pictogram of this letter is a ‘cross’ and has the meaning of ‘sign’, ‘covenant’. We find these aspects in the blood of Christ. In Exodus 12 we read about this in the picture of the blood on the houses of the Israelites: “The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you” (Exo 12:13a). The blood that is put on the doorposts

and lintels of these houses is in the form of the cross. Compare the sign or cross on the foreheads of the remnant in Ezekiel 9 (Eze 9:4).

The Lord Jesus calls Himself “the Alpha and the Omega”, the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet (Rev 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13). In Hebrew, that would be ‘the Aleph and the Tav’. The *aleph* speaks of an ox or bull, the animal of choice for the burnt offering. The *tav* speaks of the cross, or the altar on which the burnt offering is brought. Thus, the Lord Jesus is simultaneously the sacrificial animal, the altar, and the Priest Who brings the sacrifice.

The psalmist understands that his problem is not only caused by outside enemies, but that he has a problem inside of himself. He himself has sinned, he has gone astray like a lost sheep (verse 176). What he needs is the Shepherd Who laid down His life on the cross for the sake of His sheep. The Shepherd had to descend and seek him in his lost condition (Lk 15:4-7). A lost sheep cannot save himself. Man who is aware of this realizes that his help must come from outside (cf. Rom 7:24). He also realizes that his salvation comes not from something, but from Someone.

This is the last stanza singing of the value of the Word in all its aspects relevant to our life. The loudness of addressing God seems to be at its highest here. The psalmist calls out to God (verse 169). He has done so more often in this psalm, but here he presents his calling as a person for whom he asks God if that person may “come before” Him. He is a calling for understanding according to His Word. He would like to gain understanding in all things, not from human thought, but from God’s revealed will in His Word.

He who longs for understanding in God’s Word is also a special object of the enemy’s attacks (verse 170). Therefore, in addition to being someone who cries, he comes as a supplicant. He asks God that his supplication may come to “before” Him. The God-fearing begs for deliverance from dangers in accordance with God’s word or promise. After all, God has promised that He will neither abandon nor forsake His own. The enemy will do everything to render our prayer life powerless (cf. 1Pet 3:7).

Verse 169 and verse 170 form the two themes of Psalm 119. We see in verse 169 a prayer requesting understanding and in verse 170 a prayer for deliverance based on the promises of God’s covenant. These prayers form the

basis of his praise (verse 171), his teaching through the songs (verse 172; cf. Col 3:16), his struggle (verse 173), and his desires (verse 174).

After presenting himself to God as someone who cries and as a supplicant, he comes to God as someone who praises God (verse 171). In God's presence, not only cries for help come from his lips, but also songs of praise (cf. Phil 4:6). His lips even overflow with it. This is the result of teaching by God in His statutes.

His song of praise consists of singing the words of God (verse 172). What the heart is full of, the mouth overflows with. The 'instrument' for this is his tongue. In many contemporary 'songs of praise' there are statements that are not based on the Word of God, but are contrary to it. Our songs of praise, too, must be in accordance with the Word of God (Eph 5:19). Then He will gladly listen to them. The theme of the song here is the righteousness of God's commandments.

Verse 171 and verse 172 run parallel. As a result, we see a doubling of praise. The praise is doubly emphasized. The praise indicates that the psalmist is utterly convinced that the LORD, by virtue of His covenant, will hear his prayer. In verse 171 he utters praise to the LORD as a holy priest; in verse 172 he speaks to fellow believers as a royal priest (1Pet 2:5,9; cf. Psa 66:16).

There is also an awareness in the righteous that he is dependent on the LORD (verse 173). Therefore, he asks Him that His hand come to his aid. He has chosen God's precepts to keep them and be engaged in them. This choice every faithful one must make. The LORD's help is connected to His Word. He cannot help anyone who does not bow before His Word. We have been given the privilege of always approaching the throne of grace with boldness, that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help (Heb 4:16).

The God-fearing longs for the salvation of the LORD (verse 174). By this he means the period of the blessings of the new covenant under the government of the Lord Jesus. About this he has read in God's Word, that for him is his "delight". In relation to us, we are saved once for all by faith (Eph 2:8). However, in the present time we must work out our salvation with

fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). In the near future we will receive salvation of our bodies (Rom 8:23-25; 13:11; Phil 3:20-21).

The psalmist asks the LORD to let his soul live (verse 175). This is not to enjoy life, but to praise the LORD (Psa 6:5). He realizes that he cannot do that without the LORD's help. This help, he knows, lies in God's ordinances. The Word of God gives abundant reason to praise the LORD.

The last verse is a confession of sin with a desire for restoration of the relationship broken by sin (verse 176). The psalmist acknowledges that he has "gone astray like a lost sheep". He also acknowledges that he is being sought out by the good Shepherd, Who has laid down His life for His sheep, for he cannot find his way back himself. Yet he knows Who he is addressing. He also knows that he is God's "servant". He may have gone astray, but he has not forgotten God's commandments.

Just as the New Testament ends with the invitation to sinners to repent, so the psalmist ends here with the need for the people of Israel to be restored by the Good Shepherd.

Psalm 120

Introduction

With Psalm 120 begins a group of fifteen psalms, Psalms 120-134, which are sometimes referred to as “songs of pilgrimage”, or “songs *ha ma’aloth*”, which is translated “songs of ascents”. *Ha ma’aloth* means to go up, or emigrate to Israel, also called *aliyah*, and then to go up to Jerusalem, to sacrifice, and also to go up on the steps of the temple court to approach God. [The Jews connect these fifteen psalms with the fifteen steps of the temple court.]

Each psalm in this group has the heading “A Song of Ascents”. These psalms are sung by the Israelites as they make the “ascent” to Jerusalem as pilgrims – for Jerusalem is on a mountain (Isa 2:2-3) – to celebrate the annual feasts. Prophetically, we have in these songs of ascents especially the spiritual exercises of the ten tribes on their return to the promised land (cf. Jer 3:18; Eze 37:15-28).

The two tribes that had returned to Israel after the Babylonian exile had once again sunk into unbelief. The connection with God had been broken. They had become a dead people (Eze 37:1-14). By God’s Spirit they will come to repentance and be purified in the great tribulation. At Christ’s return, the ten tribes are still abroad, in the midst of hostile, intolerant nations, and will be gathered from there (Mt 24:30-31).

We know who the poet is of five of these songs of ascents:

1. Four are by David (Psalms 122; 124; 131; 133).
2. One is by Solomon (Psalm 127).

Of the remaining ten, the poet is not known.

They are composed in such a way that they begin with a call of the pilgrim from a place far from Jerusalem and the promised land (Psalm 120) and end with worship in the house of God (Psalm 134). The psalms in between describe the situations and experiences on the pilgrim road of the ten tribes and, albeit to a lesser extent, those of the two tribes as well. They

come out of the sea of nations to which they were carried away and are on their way to the promised land (Deu 30:3). In an application to us, we can compare it to our journey out of the world of darkness, lies and deception on our way to the world of light, life and truth.

The special theme of the first Song of Ascents is the falseness and deceit, the lie, of the enemies of the people of God, in the midst of whom the righteous dwells, and how he suffers because of it.

Psa 120:1 | Cried and Answered

*1 A Song of Ascents.
In my trouble I cried to the LORD,
And He answered me.*

This first “Song of Ascents” begins with the psalmist stating that he cried to the LORD in his trouble. In the voice of the psalmist we hear the voice of the faithful remnant, or the elect, from the ten tribes (Mt 24:30-31). Seeing that the LORD has brought their tribulation upon them outside the promised land, they turn to Him in prayer and cry to Him in their trouble. The cry to God is the beginning of the way back to Him (Deu 30:1-5).

When the people in their trouble cry to Him, He answers them by His presence. The enemies are still there, but He is with them now, so they are no longer in trouble. Because they turn to Him and not to people, there is an answer. Only God can save from trouble. This assurance is expressed by the righteous. What their great trouble is we hear in the next verse.

Psa 120:2-4 | A Deceitful Tongue

*2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
From a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you,
You deceitful tongue?
4 Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With the [burning] coals of the broom tree.*

It is one of the painful experiences of a believer that he lives among people who can only lie, who live a ‘life of lies’. That he is the object of this makes

it even more painful. It is an evil against which no protection is possible. No one can protect himself from false accusations.

False accusations are neither foreseeable nor preventable. It is often impossible to find out who is behind them. And if the culprit can already be tracked down and convicted, the evil cannot be undone. We have an example of a deadly false accusation in the history of Naboth (1Kgs 21:1-15).

The righteous, and in him the remnant, feels distressed by what “lying lips” claim about him and by what is said of him with “a deceitful tongue” (verse 2; cf. Psa 52:4). The only thing the believer can do is to say it to the LORD. So that is what the righteous does here.

The tongue is a special tool by which great mental and emotional harm can be done to others. When no real crimes can be discovered, a campaign of slander is resorted to in order to pillory someone and make his life impossible. The enemies will begin a terrible campaign of lies to strike the God-fearing to the depths of their souls. The God-fearing then resorts to the LORD with the plea to deliver his soul from this.

In verse 3, the righteous addresses the enemy. He asks him two questions, which constitute a curse on swearing an oath, as Abner once did (2Sam 3:9). The psalmist asks what the “deceitful tongue” will “give” him, what it will bring him. Then he asks “what more shall be done to you” – “you” is that deceitful tongue – what extra gain it will give him.

He himself gives the answer (verse 4). The enemy has sworn an oath with deceitful tongue, and now the LORD will strike him with the curse of this sworn oath. He, who has sharpened his tongue like a sharp arrow, will be pierced by “sharp arrows of the warrior” (cf. Psa 57:4; 64:3; Pro 25:18; Jer 9:3,8; Gal 6:7). The warrior is the Messiah (Psa 24:8).

He, who has spoken his words like a devastating fire upon him, will be consumed by the fire of “[burning] coals of the broom tree” (cf. Pro 16:27; Jam 3:6). Wood from broom trees is particularly hard and its coals burns fiercely and for a long time. Therefore, this coals are extremely suitable for attaching to an arrow, making that arrow a fiery, burning arrow.

Psa 120:5-7 | Longing For Peace

5 *Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech,
For I dwell among the tents of Kedar!*

6 *Too long has my soul had its dwelling*

With those who hate peace.

7 *I am [for] peace, but when I speak,*

They are for war.

The righteous, and in him the remnant, cries out “woe is me” over himself because he is surrounded by barbarous people (verse 5). Isaiah cries “woe is me” because he sees himself as an unclean sinner in the light of the holy God (Isa 6:5). That far the righteous is not yet here. That comes in Psalm 130. He is now more concerned with his surroundings and the feelings there toward him.

He “sojourns”, or he is a stranger, “in Meshech”, meaning that he is not at home there, but is staying there temporarily. In other words, he is saying the same thing when he then says that he dwells “among the tents of Kedar”. The righteous lives in the midst of an aggressive, intolerant, and discriminatory population.

Meshech is a descendant of Japheth (Gen 10:2; Eze 38:1). His descendants were in the far north, first around the Black Sea, later even further north to what is now known as Moscow. They were known as rough, uncivilized people. Kedar is the second son of Ishmael (Gen 25:13; Isa 21:13-17), with cruel, merciless descendants. It has become a designation for the various Arab tribes. Together they are Israel’s last enemies in the end time, namely the king of the North, with a coalition of ten Islamic nations (Psa 83:5-8), backed by Gog, that is prince of Great Russia.

Their area is the area to which the ten tribes were taken away at the time. This was also later confirmed by the historian Flavius Josephus. The sojourn with them has been long (verse 6). It is a ceaseless sorrow for their souls that they “hate peace”. Their daily practice is murder and mayhem. Justice and righteousness are completely foreign to these peace-haters. The truth is trampled upon by them. This is evident in the gross lies they spread about him. He suffers from this. He wants to be delivered from it.

He himself is a man of peace; he is “ [for] peace” (verse 7). Literally it says: I [am] peace, which implies that he is characterized by peace. He is not out to quarrel, but wants to live together in peace with all people (cf. Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14). Of this he also testifies before those in the midst of whom

he dwells. His attempts, however, are in vain. They are refused. They are even met with a bellicose response. These people want no peace and are unstoppable on their warpath.

Psalm 121

Introduction

This psalm sings of the LORD as the great assurance of those who go their way in faithfulness to Him. That is why His Name is repeated so often. This makes it clear that there is no one so secure as the one who expects his help exclusively from Him. He is the Creator of heaven and earth and the Keeper of His people Israel, of the faithful thereof. The LORD will always keep them in all circumstances.

The journey of the chosen people of Psalm 120 begins in dangerous and hostile territory. It is the journey of a sheep among a pack of wild, hungry wolves (cf. Mt 10:16). What does a person need in such a situation? Is there even a possibility of survival? And then a pilgrimage all the way to Jerusalem? Psalm 121 is about what someone who goes on a pilgrimage needs: the LORD's safekeeping.

In this psalm we find a threefold testimony that the LORD is the Keeper of Israel and a threefold testimony that the LORD will keep them. Since the Keeper is the LORD, the Creator of heaven and earth, He will bring His sheep safely to Jerusalem right through the pack of cruel wolves.

Psa 121:1-2 | The Creator

*1 A Song of Ascents.
I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?
2 My help [comes] from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.*

This second "Song of Ascents" (verse 1) connects closely to the previous one, in which the faithful is in trouble. In the previous psalm, the believer looks around anxiously; in this psalm, he looks up confidently for help to make his way to Jerusalem. 'Help' means protection, support, guidance and blessing. For this, the pilgrim in faith lifts up his eyes up to the moun-

tains surrounding Jerusalem. That may be far from him, but in the midst of it the LORD dwells (Psa 125:2; cf. 1Kgs 8:46-49; Dan 6:11).

The situation of these pilgrims resembles a threatening situation for King Hezekiah, who many believe is the composer of the Songs of Ascents. Hezekiah was threatened by Sanherib, the king of Assyria (Isa 36:1). Hezekiah's princes thought of help from Egypt (Isa 36:6). Could Egypt help? If the army of Egypt were to come, they would come from the surrounding mountains.

No, Hezekiah was not to look to the mountains. He had to look farther, his help had to come from even higher up (Psa 123:1). Therefore, he went into the temple and spread the threatening letter of Sanherib before the LORD (Isa 37:14). In doing so, he said what the psalmist says here, "My help [comes] from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth" (verse 2).

Mountains are a picture of earthly powers. The pilgrim realizes that his help comes not from earthly powers, but from the LORD (cf. Jer 3:23). He realizes that his help is from Him alone. This is not difficult when he sees in Him the Creator of heaven and earth (cf. Psa 115:15). Could He, Who created and sustains all things, not also care for him? Of this he is convinced.

God is not a local or national god, like the idols of the nations, but the God of heaven and earth. He, Who created and sustains everything, also knows the way of the God-fearing pilgrim and will help him to go that way. All the difficulties that he may encounter on his way come from the God Whom he is going to meet in Jerusalem. Therefore, those difficulties are under His control.

During the period prophetically spoken of in the psalm, God is totally denied and man is idolized. It is a period when the eternal gospel is proclaimed by an angel flying in midheaven. This gospel is: "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters" (Rev 14:6-7).

Given the current development of our society, by that time the theory of evolution will have been generally accepted as fact. This means that the message that God created the heavens and the earth is denied. That is why

God sends that angel to remind all people wherever they live on the earth – that is why that angel flies in midheaven, everyone on earth can see and hear him – that He is the Creator.

Psa 121:3-8 | The Keeper

*3 He will not allow your foot to slip;
He who keeps you will not slumber.*

*4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.*

*5 The LORD is your keeper;
The LORD is your shade on your right hand.*

*6 The sun will not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.*

*7 The LORD will protect you from all evil;
He will keep your soul.*

*8 The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever.*

In these verses we hear, as it were from the sanctuary, the response to the faith confidence expressed by the faithful in verses 1-2. The faithful is assured that the Keeper will not allow his foot to slip (verse 3). In this verse there is the word “not” twice. It is a double underlining that what is written in this verse will never, ever be allowed by the Keeper. He will support him in every step he takes (Job 31:4). God the Creator is mighty to keep from wavering and stumbling (Jude 1:24).

The Keeper will not slumber, He will not slacken in His vigilance for him for a moment. This is very different from what happened with the idols. Elijah at the time scoffed at the Baal: “Perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened” (cf. 1Kgs 18:27). This Keeper will not lose sight of him, nor will He watch him indifferently as he makes his way to Jerusalem, a way fraught with dangers. He will accompany him with the utmost personal attention and be closely involved with him. His Keeper has even counted the hairs of his head and not one of them will be lost (Lk 12:7; 21:18; Acts 27:34).

With the call “behold” (verse 4) the attention of the faithful is emphatically drawn to the Keeper as the One “who keeps Israel”, His people. There is no slackening in His keeping. There is no dozing and therefore no falling asleep. He will neither slumber nor sleep, but will watch over His property, His chosen people, without interruption. His people are His “personal property” (Exo 19:5; Deu 7:6).

In verses 3-4 it is not yet entirely clear Who the Keeper is, at least His Name is not yet explicitly mentioned. Only in verse 5 is His identity revealed: it is the LORD. It could have been, for example, an (arch)angel. What does someone need on a very dangerous journey? A keeper or a personal bodyguard. And who is this bodyguard? What can he do? He must always be vigilant. There must not be even a moment of slumber. Slumbering is an expression for a soldier who is not vigilant during his service (Isa 5:27).

If the keeper of Israel was an (arch)angel (cf. Exo 32:34; Dan 10:21), a demonic angel prince might have been able to stop him (Dan 10:13). Now that the LORD Himself has taken on the task of bringing Israel safely to Jerusalem, what seemed impossible before is now possible. Yes, everything is possible for those who believe. If the LORD is with us, who can be against us? He promises a safe arrival.

As He is the Keeper of His people (verse 4), so He is of the believing remnant. He is to them “your shade on your right hand”. He is as close to them as a shadow is to a person. He is also as inseparable from them as a shadow is from a person. They may walk in His shadow, which means that He keeps and protects them (Psa 91:1; Isa 25:4; 49:2), in contrast to earthly powers (cf. Isa 30:2-3). That He is on their right hand means that He supports them with His strength. It is the place where the defender stands (Psa 109:31).

His care for them is there day and night, when the sun shines and when the moon shines (verse 6). He shields His people from the dangers of the day and from the dangers of the night (cf. Gen 31:40; Psa 91:5-6). All the circumstances in which His people may be on their journey to Jerusalem are in His hand. He will provide them with everything they need (Isa 49:9-10).

Even the evil that surrounds them, their enemies, is in His hand (verse 7). He will “preserve them from all evil”. That is the evil of sin and the evil of tribulation. He will also keep their soul, which is under pressure by the opposition of the wicked, in His hand, so that they will not succumb in their soul (cf. Phil 4:7; Heb 12:3).

The LORD takes full responsibility for their entire journey (verse 8). He guards them when they are “going out” to travel. He guards them up to and including their “coming in” the promised land, when they have arrived at their final destination (cf. Deu 28:6). “Going out and ... coming in” is an expression that summarizes the whole of life (Jn 10:9).

And even there, in the place of blessing where they are then, He continues to guard them. He will guard them when they are “going out” of their house, for example to go to the temple, and He will keep them when they go back and are “coming in” their house again. He does it “from this time forth and forever”. This means, that now the LORD Himself is going along (Exo 33:14-17), the psalmist starts his long, dangerous journey with confidence.

The application for us: Having seen ourselves in the light of God and also having seen the world in its true character in that light, we set out on a journey to the Father’s house, the dwelling place of God. On our pilgrimage we may count on His constant nearness and care and may we come to know Him as our Keeper.

Psalm 122

Introduction

After his personal view on the LORD and the encouragement it gave him in the previous psalm, in this psalm he sees with great joy that there are fellow pilgrims. Here we hear about fellow pilgrims for the first time in the Songs of Ascents. This applies both to the remnant returning to the promised land and to the faithful Israelites in the land who are on their way to Jerusalem because of the feasts of the LORD.

While prophetically the chosen people from the ten tribes make their way to Jerusalem as pilgrims from all directions (Mt 24:31), they encounter fellow pilgrims. They encourage one another with the prospect of soon being in Jerusalem (verses 1-4) and begin to pray together for the peace of Jerusalem (verses 6-9).

This is a song of the single person, "I" (verse 1), who takes courage at the sight of fellow pilgrims. It is the experience of Paul who, when he is a prisoner on his way to Rome, just before Rome, at the Market of Appius and Three Inns, sees his fellow brothers. This leads him to give thanks to God and to take courage (Acts 28:15).

Psa 122:1-2 | The Joy of the Pilgrim

*1 A Song of Ascents, of David.
I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."
2 Our feet are standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem,*

Of this "Song of Ascents", the third, we know who the poet is (verse 1). This song is "of David". He expresses his joy about it when "they" say to him: "Let us go to the house of the LORD" (cf. Heb 12:2). His God-fearing peers tell him of their intention to go up to God's house, the temple in Jerusalem, on the occasion of one of the feasts (cf. Exo 23:17; 34:23; Deu

16:16). His heart leaps for joy when he hears of this desire. It warms the heart when it meets like-minded believers.

In verse 2, the pilgrims see themselves in faith as having arrived in the city. This is how faith can speak, because faith is sure that what is promised will happen. They address the city as a person, so excited are they about being back there.

They see their feet standing in the gates of the city. To stand with one's feet somewhere means to take possession of it and declare it property (Jos 1:3). Often the gate is the place of jurisdiction (Rth 4:1,11; Amos 5:10,12,15). The pilgrims have the right to enter the city; they belong there.

They can enter through the gates because by confessing their sins they have been qualified to enter God's presence. Both at the gate of a city and at the gate of the temple there are gatekeepers. They are to prevent unauthorized persons from entering (cf. 2Chr 23:19).

Now that the LORD is both King and Priest in Jerusalem, the distinction between the city of the great King and the house of God, the temple, becomes less sharp. It is noteworthy that the Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Old Testament – translates 'gates' with 'court'.

While in the Old Testament the temple is the house of God, where the LORD has made His Name to dwell, in the realm of peace the whole city will be the place where the LORD dwells. Then Jerusalem will have a new name, namely, "the LORD is there" (Eze 48:35).

Psa 122:3-5 | The Thanksgiving of the Pilgrim

*3 Jerusalem, that is built
As a city that is compact together;
4 To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD—
An ordinance for Israel—
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.
5 For there thrones were set for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.*

Full of admiration they look at the city and notice that it is "compact together" (verse 3). It is with it as with the curtains of tent that lie over the

tabernacle, which are also so fastened together that they form one whole. In Hebrew the same word “compact together” is used there (Exo 26:6,9,11). It expresses the unity and close fellowship of the people of God under their King and God.

In faith the faithful see the totality of the people who are now so divided and scattered. The people of God are formed by “the tribes”, that is, the twelve tribes, which are emphatically called “the tribes of the LORD” (verse 4). This means that Judah, the two tribes, and Israel, the ten tribes, are joined together (Eze 37:21-22).

Normally we speak of the tribes of *Israel*. So it is striking that here they are called the tribes of the *LORD*. This emphasizes that they are His property. Not only are they rightfully His because He formed them, they are also His because, as the Son Who became Man, He bought and redeemed them with His precious blood. They belong to Him because He has chosen and acquired them for Himself to be together His people.

This they will become aware of in the end time, when they come face to face with their Messiah.

“Every eye will see Him”, – that is, the whole world, whereas now only we see Him (Heb 2:9) –

“even those who pierced Him” – i.e. the two tribes (cf. Zec 12:10) – “and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him” – i.e. all the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt 24:30) –

“So it is to be. Amen” (Rev 1:7).

The city has great appeal for them. The attraction is in what and Who is there. They come there to praise His Name. It is about Him. It is He through Whom they are bound together as tribes and together form His people. They meet Him there.

The city is not only the center of worship, but also the center of justice (verse 5). To this “the thrones ... for justice” refer. Justice is directly connected to “the house of David”. This refers to the royal jurisdiction of the house of David. The LORD is then in truth the King of righteousness (Heb 7:2) in Jerusalem.

Just as Solomon as a king was also the highest judge, the Lord Jesus as King will also judge on His throne (Mt 25:31). There is mention of thrones, plural. This indicates that there are multiple thrones. They are there because there are others who may reign with Christ (Mt 19:28; Rev 4:4).

Psa 122:6-9 | The Prayer of the Pilgrim

6 *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:*

"May they prosper who love you.

7 *"May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces."*

8 *For the sake of my brothers and my friends,*

I will now say, "May peace be within you."

9 *For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,*

I will seek your good.

After the thrones of justice, which emphasizes maintaining justice, there can be peace (verse 6). Peace is based on justice. While the tribes are there, they ask to pray "for the peace for Jerusalem" (cf. Jer 29:7), for it is not yet the situation of the realm of peace. Peace is more than just the absence of war. It is harmony and prosperity under the government of the Prince of peace.

When an Israelite meets another Israelite, they wish peace to each other with the greeting *shalom*. When an Israelite enters a house, he wishes "God's peace" to that house. Even as the pilgrims enter the city of Jerusalem, they wish peace to Jerusalem, so that Jerusalem will in truth be 'the city of peace' according to the meaning of its name. Then the title of the Lord Jesus will also be King of Salem, that is, the King of peace (Heb 7:2). True peace is only possible when the Prince of peace is actually King.

A wish for blessing is attached to the prayer for peace: "May they prosper who love you." Those who love Jerusalem, the city of peace, love peace. Therefore, for them the LORD can be asked to make them prosperous (cf. Mt 10:40-42). Jerusalem means "city of peace", but since a brief period of peace under the reign of Solomon, there has never been peace in the city. That peace will only become a reality when the city opens its gates to the Prince of peace.

There is a great desire for “peace be within your walls” and “prosperity within your palaces” (verse 7). That there are walls (cf. *Psa* 48:12-13) means that although there are enemies, they are no longer a threat (*Isa* 26:1). There can be peace and rest when the heart is in fellowship with the LORD.

For a local church, a situation of peace and rest can also be a reality (cf. *Acts* 9:31). This will be the case when believers put themselves personally under the authority of the Lord Jesus. They will then experience “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Rom* 14:17).

Those who personally have that peace and rest will also wish it for their “brothers” and their “friends” (verse 8). Paul does the same in the opening words of almost all his letters. The God-fearing has with them a common love for Jerusalem and the temple, that is, for Him Who dwells there. Together they serve and worship Him. This shows that at the deepest level it is not about buildings, but about people. The peace of the city must ultimately result in the peace of the people toward God and among themselves.

This aspect is also important for the church. We are called “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (*Eph* 4:3), for we are with all believers “held together by what every joint supplies” (*Eph* 4:16).

The ultimate desire for peace has to do with the fact that in the city is “the house of the LORD our God” (verse 9). This is the motivation of the God-fearing to seek the good for the city. This psalm is emphatically about the house of the LORD. The psalm begins with it in verse 1 and it ends with it in verse 9.

That there is mention of the testimony in verse 4, connected with the Name of the LORD, makes it clear that this psalm is about the place the LORD has chosen “to establish His name there” (*Deu* 12:5). That place the psalmist loves.

In the same way, with us it must be about the Lord Jesus. Where He is glorified and worshiped, there is also our place. We know from the New Testament that we have come to the spiritual Mount Zion (*Heb* 12:22-23; cf. *Gal* 4:24). This drawing near denotes an atmosphere into which we enter. The atmosphere at “Mount Zion” is one of grace and peace, of inviting

love, where all fear is absent (1Jn 4:18). This is characteristic of the company of the children of God.

Psalm 123

Introduction

While the chosen Israelites are going through spiritual exercises in connection with their return to Jerusalem, they are being scorned and mocked by their surroundings. Therefore they raise their eyes to the LORD for help. Three times this psalm makes it clear that the LORD will be gracious to them and come to their aid.

Psa 123:1-4 | Prayer for Salvation

1 A Song of Ascents.

To You I lift up my eyes,

O You who are enthroned in the heavens!

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants [look] to the hand of their master,

As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,

So our eyes [look] to the LORD our God,

Until He is gracious to us.

3 Be gracious to us, O LORD, be gracious to us,

For we are greatly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is greatly filled

With the scoffing of those who are at ease,

[And] with the contempt of the proud.

This is the fourth “Song of Ascents” (verse 1). We hear in the poet the voice the chosen people of the tribes who are still outside the land. They are removed from the land, but their hearts are already in Jerusalem. They are still in the midst of their enemies. The last two verses of the psalm make it clear what their situation is: they are showered with scoffing and contempt. This drives them to prayer.

The psalmist’s prayer here is described as ‘the lifting up of one’s eyes to the LORD’. Using a poetic chiasm (mirror image), this is beautifully and strongly emphasized in the first two verses. It begins in verse 1 with “to You I lift up my eyes” and ends in verse 2 with “so our eyes [look] to the

LORD our God". What follows is the purpose of the prayer, which is until the LORD is gracious to them. That prayer the psalmist further expresses in verse 3 and verse 4.

Verse 1 begins with a personal prayer, "I", and continues with "our" and "we", plural. It is important and also precious that we have a personal prayer life, and that we also have a common and church prayer life (Mt 18:19).

They begin by personally saying to the LORD: "To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!" He "enthrones" there on His throne, at peace, and reigns (Psa 103:19). Nothing on earth can disturb His rest and government. By seeking Him there and taking refuge with Him, they are going to share in His rest. They know that things are not out of His control and they expect Him to change their situation for the better. He may be in heaven, but they know that He is intimately involved in their circumstances.

In their looking to the LORD, there is an expectant longing for His acting (verse 2). They compare themselves to "servants" whose eyes look "to the hand of their master" and to "a maid" whose eyes look "to the hand of her mistress". As individual members of God's people they are His servants and as a whole they are His maid.

They look to His hand, for it alone can bring salvation. Until then they wait patiently. They continue to look to Him "until He is gracious" to them. That they wait on the grace of the LORD involves the acknowledgment that they have been brought into these miserable circumstances by their own failures. They are not pleading their innocence. That they say "until" means that they trust that He will be gracious (cf. Isa 30:18). The only question is when He will be. Waiting is all they can do. They have no way to effect a change for the better.

They do not claim salvation, but they do make a pressing appeal to Him to be gracious to them by asking Him twice to do so (verse 3). The contempt poured out on them has taken such forms that they are "greatly filled" by it. The limit of what they can bear has been far exceeded. They cannot bear any more contempt.

Their soul has suffered more than enough from “the scoffing of those who are at ease” and “the contempt of the proud” (verse 4). They are oversaturated. For too long they have had to swallow the hateful and hurtful comments of their enemies. No more can be added. The remnant does not seek the favor of those enemies to get rid of the pressure that way, but turns to the LORD.

“Those who are at ease” are people who rely completely on their wealth and prosperity in their life, which means they don’t worry about anything (cf. Lk 12:16-21). These people shower them with scoffing. “The proud” place God out of their sight. They do not take God into account, for in their life they themselves take the place of God. These people look down on them with contempt.

Those who are at ease think they are secure in their power, which in their imagination will have no end. In their carelessness it does not occur to them that one day they will have to deal with God and that He will regard the scoffing of His people as being scoffed Himself. The proud are only after their own greatness and importance, that is all they believe in. God does not exist for them. Therefore, it would also be foolish for God’s people to seek their favor to free themselves from their scoffing and contempt.

Prophetically, the remnant will suffer the scoffing and contempt of a multitude of enemies for years. Those enemies are the antichrist or false king of Israel and his followers, the beast of the Roman Empire, the hostile king of the North and allies, Gog, or Great Russia. They are all powerful wicked people who are at ease.

Psalm 124

Introduction

In this psalm, the repetitions stand out. Repetition is a tool to underscore the message. Twice it says “had it not been the LORD who was on our side” (verses 1-2). After “had it not been” twice in verses 1-2, “then” follows three times in verses 3-5. Three times the enemies are represented as waters that would have engulfed them (verses 4-5). They also speak twice “over our soul”. There are two mentions of “escaping” and two mentions of a “snare” (verse 7).

The structure of the psalm also underscores the message:

A The presence of the LORD (verses 1-2a).

---B Kept from dangers (verses 2b-5).

-----C Praise of the LORD (verse 6a).

---B Kept from dangers (verses 6b-7).

A The presence of the LORD (verse 8).

This shows that the central message is: Praise the LORD, for He keeps in the midst of all dangers.

The chosen Israelites outside the land have been ridiculed and mocked (Psalm 123) and severely persecuted (Psa 124:1-5), but nevertheless kept. They have been able to leave their enemies behind without fear and are now on their way to Jerusalem.

The secret of being kept is the presence and nearness, “on our side”, of the LORD, the Keeper of Israel from Psalm 121 (Psa 121:3-8). The psalmist says in both verse 1 and verse 2 “had it not been the LORD who was on our side”. This doubly underscores the importance of the opening line. The LORD in this psalm is “the God with us”, the promised Immanuel, the precious title of the Lord Jesus from Isaiah 7 for the people of Israel (Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23). We can well understand in this light that Moses said to the LORD: “If Your presence does not go [with us], do not lead us up from here” (Exo 33:15).

Psa 124:1-5 | The LORD Is With His People

1 A Song of Ascents, of David.

*"Had it not been the LORD who was on our side,"
Let Israel now say,*

*2 "Had it not been the LORD who was on our side
When men rose up against us,*

*3 Then they would have swallowed us alive,
When their anger was kindled against us;*

*4 Then the waters would have engulfed us,
The stream would have swept over our soul;*

5 Then the raging waters would have swept over our soul."

This is the fifth "Song of Ascents" (verse 1). It is the second Song of Ascents which mentions that it is "of David" (Psa 122:1). David describes a situation that was extremely threatening to the existence of God's people. In fact, Israel would no longer exist if the LORD had not been with His people, on their side. This observation can be applied to all situations in which the people have been and were in danger of being wiped out.

Prophetically, it is about the dangers and spiritual exercises of the ten tribes who found themselves outside Jerusalem, in the midst of bigoted and hostile nations. In addition, we can also think of the part of the two tribes that fled from Jerusalem from the oncoming king of the North followed by the armies of the Assyrians, supported by great power in the far north, Gog, or Great Russia (Dan 8:24).

Their cry for help to the LORD and their confidence that the LORD Himself was their Keeper during their return to the promised land was not shamed. In this psalm we hear their testimony (verses 1-5) and their praise to the LORD (verses 6-8). They will, having survived all the assaults on their existence, acknowledge that their survival is due solely to His presence with them.

In the Old Testament, He has been present in most of their history. Sometimes He has been present in a hidden way, as the book of Esther shows. And even after the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 until now, He has always been, behind the scenes, the Protector of His people, so that they have not been annihilated. Their whole history is a history of deliv-

erances that the LORD has worked. They should recite that, bring it to the LORD's attention as a thanksgiving for what He has been and done for them.

In verse 2, David says it again: "Had it not been the LORD who was on our side." By doing so, he emphasizes the importance of the LORD's presence with His people. Without Him, they would have been helplessly lost and perished. His presence protected them from enemies and in dangers, from "men" who had risen up against them to wipe them out.

The word "men" at the same time indicates the vast difference from God. The Hebrew word used here is *adam*, which recalls the earth from which they were made. They are merely "dust of the earth" (Gen 2:7), while God is the Creator of heaven and earth (verse 8). What can dust do against its Maker? Israel has been attacked from all sides by 'men' countless times in its history. That the people still exist is not due to their cleverness, allies or fighting strength, but only to God.

The intentions of the enemies were quite impressive. If they had been given the chance, "they would have swallowed us alive" (verse 3; cf. Pro 1:12). The enemy is described as a great beast that wanted to devour them, a beast with fearsome teeth (verse 6), that came to them like waters (verse 4; Rev 12:15-16), with snares of the trapper (verse 7), against which they were not able to stand (verse 5).

The wrath of the enemies had been kindled against them. Their enemies were God-haters who wanted to vent their rage on His people. They wanted to swallow the life that God had given His people. That proved impossible, for the Living One was with His people.

Nor is it just a single nation that was so full of anger against them. The whole world was against them. They had joined forces and wanted to flood God's people like "waters" (verse 4). "Waters" symbolize nations (Isa 8:7; 17:12; Dan 9:26b,27b) and destructive forces. We see these waters in the approaching king of the North followed by the armies of the Assyrians, supported by Russia, the superpower in the far north (Dan 8:24). Israel therefore speaks of "waters" that "would have engulfed" them. These waters have swept over their soul, that is, over their person, their soul and

their body. This speaks of the fact that there was not only outward distress, but there was also distress in the soul, inward distress.

In verse 5, the people add another expression of the tremendous enmity. They speak of “the raging waters” that “would have swept over” their “soul” which would have caused that they would have perished. The enmity against Israel is described here as the flood of water in a wadi (verses 4-5). A wadi is a river valley in dry areas that is dry for most of the year. During wet periods, such a river valley can suddenly turn into a devastating flood of water due to sudden torrential rains (Psa 42:7).

Psa 124:6-8 | The LORD Protects His People

6 Blessed be the LORD,

Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth.

7 Our soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the trapper;

The snare is broken and we have escaped.

8 Our help is in the name of the LORD,

Who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 120 begins with distress. Psalm 121 speaks of trust in distress. Psalm 123 is a supplication in great distress. Psalm 124 testifies that they survived the attack of the enemy through the help of the LORD, leading the psalmist to give thanks. After listing the many rescues by the LORD from great distress and enmity, thanksgiving follows: “Blessed [or: Praised] be the LORD, Who has not given us to be torn by their teeth” (verse 6). To the LORD belongs all the glory for the protection He has given His people. This is the heart and center of this psalm.

In the wording, “Who has not given us”, is the aspect of acknowledging that they would have deserved it. The enemy is presented as a predator that God’s people saw as a prey to their teeth. But the LORD did not allow them to become prey.

The psalmist felt caught in a snare, and certain death awaited him. He was like a puny bird unable to flee. The LORD, the Keeper of Israel, did not surrender him as prey. He was near him and broke the snare and delivered the psalmist. The enemy was mighty, but with the LORD the psalmist was more than victorious.

He has let the soul of His elect “escape as a bird out of the snare of the trapper” (verse 7). It sounds like a triumphant exclamation that they have “escaped”. The enemy has not succeeded in holding them in his snare, for “the snare is broken and we have escaped”. The LORD has ensured that they could escape. He deserves all the glory for that.

While writing about this psalm, President Trump of America announced that America recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (6-12-2017). This has generated furious reactions from the Arab world and mainly disapproving reactions from the rest of the world. Everything and everyone is turning against Israel. Snares are being set for them. But they will escape, not with the help of any president of America – for that person will disappoint, as all hopes of men do – but simply by the LORD, Who cares for His people.

The song ends with the proclamation of the Name of the LORD (verse 8). That Name is their help. It is His Name that guarantees that He will fulfill all the promises He has made to His people. The foundation of that is the new covenant He has made with them. He is the LORD, “Who made heaven and earth” (cf. Psa 121:2), which indicates that He has complete control over them. This also means that He governs His people and all the nations. This is a great comfort to His people. It is also a powerful testimony in a world that denies its Creator.

Psalm 125

Introduction

In Psalm 124, the remnant gives thanks to the LORD because He has kept them. Now with resolute heart they make the decision to trust the LORD always.

The elect outside the land have left the lands of their foreignness. They are approaching the mountains of Israel, yes the city of the great King (Mt 5:35), Jerusalem, the city that will be given a new name, Yahweh *Shammah*, which means “the LORD is there” (Eze 48:35). This city enjoys the protection of the Keeper of Israel. What a comfort this is for the remnant. It will be great to be with Him soon.

Psa 125:1-3 | Unshakable Trust

1 A Song of Ascents.

Those who trust in the LORD

Are as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved but abides forever.

2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,

So the LORD surrounds His people

From this time forth and forever.

3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest upon the land of the righteous,

So that the righteous will not put forth their hands to do wrong.

This sixth “Song of Ascents” begins with trust in the LORD (verse 1). Associated with this is great assurance for the righteous. Every step of the righteous is a step of faith, a step of trust. Never has the LORD put their trust to shame (cf. Rom 10:11). In this psalm, the *step* of trust is transformed into a *walk* of trust. The righteous learn that the LORD is trustworthy (cf. Psa 36:5).

One who is aware of this stands unshaken in his faith. He is “like Mount Zion”, endlessly unshakable. Jerusalem, except for its northern side, had very steep slopes. This made the city a natural fortress and it was seen as an unshakable mountain.

However, the strength of Zion no longer lies in its geographical location, but in the fact that the LORD Himself is its Protector. Zion is more than a mountain. It is the symbol of God's help, of His presence in blessing and protecting His people, and of the privileges of the covenant relationship He has with His people. Those who trust in God have connected themselves to Him. This trust He never puts to shame. The psalmist's trust is a statement with respect to the elect themselves (verse 1), with respect to the LORD (verse 2), and with respect to the hostile wicked (verse 3).

The LORD is around His people, as the mountains are around Jerusalem (verse 2). Zion at this time is not higher than the mountains that surround Jerusalem. In the future, it will be different (Isa 2:2). The Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem and Mount Scopus to its northeast are higher, as are several other mountains. Therefore, Mount Zion is sheltered in the midst of the mountains. Mount Zion itself is stable and, because of the surrounding mountains, also secure.

The psalmist uses this picture for those who trust in the LORD. The trusting believer is like Mount Zion, and the LORD is like the mountains around it. The LORD protects His people from all sides (Zec 2:5; cf. Job 1:10). Because of this, nothing or no one is able to do any harm to the people who trust in Him, now or forever.

The need for this sure protection is "the scepter of wickedness" which "rest upon the land of the righteous" (verse 3). The scepter is a symbol of the power of a king. The issue here is the power of the wicked. The wicked will have power over the promised land for a short time, that is both the antichrist and the Assyrians. They will wield the scepter of wickedness in Israel, they will be in charge there, but only for a short time (Isa 10:5; cf. Isa 14:5). The scepter will be broken when these enemies have carried out the discipline over His people according to God's plan (Isa 10:12).

Then the righteous will be put in possession of their inheritance. The elect (Mt 24:31) who are outside the land are called "the righteous" because they have resolved to live by the standard of the Word and the new covenant of the LORD. They can do this only by the power of the blood of the new covenant. And according to this covenant, the righteous will receive the inheritance of the LORD.

Receiving the inheritance, they do not owe to themselves, but to Him Who has reserved it for them. They themselves have been protected for that inheritance (cf. 1Pet 1:4-5). They owe the right to their inheritance to Christ, Who redeemed the inheritance by His blood, cleansing it of the sin that had fallen on it through the guilt of His people. Through the blood, the righteous requirements of the covenant have been fulfilled and the LORD now gives His blessing to His people.

If the reign of the wicked lasted longer than the righteous could endure, there would be a great danger that the righteous would take the law into their own hands (cf. Ecc 7:7a; Mt 24:22). But God determines both the severity and duration of a trial (1Cor 10:13b).

They “will not put forth their hands to do wrong”, that is, they should not become unfaithful to the covenant (cf. Psa 73:1-15), but wait for God’s time. “Wrong” has the meaning of wickedness, unrighteousness. It implies here that they would lose their trust in the LORD. If that were the case, they would miss out on their inheritance, the blessings of the covenant.

Psa 125:4-5 | Peace Be Upon Israel

4 Do good, O LORD, to those who are good

And to those who are upright in their hearts.

5 But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways,

The LORD will lead them away with the doers of iniquity.

Peace be upon Israel.

After the righteous has experienced and expressed his trust in the LORD’s protection (verses 1-3), he makes intercession for others, indeed for all the people (verse 4). From the trust that the scepter of wickedness is temporary, the prayer for the blessing of the covenant follows. The scepter of wickedness is an impediment to the blessing of the covenant.

The righteous asks the LORD to do good “to those who are good and to those who are upright in their hearts”. He is praying here for all the righteous. They have life from God and are therefore good and upright in their heart. Therefore, God will do good to them.

Opposed to those who are good and upright are “those who turn aside to their crooked ways” (verse 5; cf. Jdg 5:6). These are the faithless in Israel,

the ungodly multitude, those who forsake the covenant with the LORD, depart from the LORD's straight way, and go crooked ways. The LORD "will lead them away", along "with the doers of iniquity", which are the wicked oppressors, the hostile nations around God's people.

When justice has thus prevailed, the prayer that "peace be upon Israel" is answered. Peace is desired here not only for Jerusalem as in a previous Song of Ascents (Psa 122:6-8), but for the whole people (cf. Rom 11:26), the twelve tribes, that is, the true Israel, the Israel of God (cf. Gal 6:16). Peace upon Israel is possible only when Christ, the King of peace, reigns. The latter will happen when all enemies are set as a footstool for His feet (Psa 110:1-2).

Psalm 126

Introduction

When the two tribes will be restored in the land, both the remnant that fled from Jerusalem and the remnant in the city that is redeemed, the people will not yet be complete. The ten tribes must be back in the land. Twelve tribes must be restored in the land. This is presented again in the next three psalms, Psalms 126-128.

God makes the captives return to the land (Deu 30:3). Those who return will experience it as a dream come true (verse 1). Tears have flowed because of the fate of the two and the ten tribes. Now God is bringing a turn in the captivity of the ten tribes. Then the new covenant is established. New life is sown. Now they can finally laugh and rejoice.

This is possible because the Lord Jesus has wept tears (verse 6), He has sown the grain of wheat and returns with a shout of joy, bringing His twelve sheaves with Him. He is gathering His people into one. That is the basis for the return of the ten tribes.

Psa 126:1-3 | Song of Thanksgiving After the Exile

1 A Song of Ascents.

*When the LORD brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.*

2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter

And our tongue with joyful shouting;

Then they said among the nations,

“The LORD has done great things for them.”

3 The LORD has done great things for us;

We are glad.

In this “Song of Ascents”, the seventh, the psalmist, and in him the elect who were scattered outside the land, sings of the return of “the captive ones of Zion” (verse 1). The captivity was a bitter time for all whose heart remained connected to Jerusalem. They solely can blame themselves for

the thousands of years of exile (Deu 28:15-19); they owed their restoration solely to the LORD (Deu 30:4-10).

It was too good to be true, it seemed like a beautiful dream. Slowly reality dawns on them: it is not a dream, it is true. They pinch themselves in the arm, as it were, to make sure they are not dreaming, but it is really true: they are back in the land. They are free! They are so happy that they can no longer stop laughing ... When they come to themselves, as it were, and realize that they are not dreaming, but that they are really free, their mouth is “filled with laughter” and their “tongue with joyful shouting” (verse 2; cf. Job 8:21).

Gone is the shadow of night, gone is all suffering. Instead of mourning and sorrow there is laughter, and instead of lamentation there is joyful shouting. The people who have returned are full of joy.

Their return to the land is a testimony to the power of the LORD over the nations. They acknowledge with undisguised reverence and awe: “The LORD has done great things for them.”

This testimony is immediately taken up by the remnant (verse 3). They say: “The LORD has done great things for us, we are glad” (cf. Joel 2:21). The God-fearing can find joy in nothing else but in God and in His works. We also have every reason to rejoice because God gave His Son for us to do for us what we could not do: to bring about reconciliation between God and us.

Psa 126:4-6 | Sowing In Tears, Reaping With Joy

4 Restore our captivity, O LORD,

As the streams in the South.

5 Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.

6 He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying [his] bag of seed,

Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves [with him].

The psalmist asks the LORD if He will change their lot from the danger of the enemy to deliverance by the LORD, which he compares to a change from drought to running water (verse 4). He asks for a change from tears and weeping to rejoicing (verses 5-6).

Their prayer is that the LORD will give to those who are going back with so few, the comfort that others will join them. They do not ask to “restore *their* captivity”, the captivity of those others, but to “restore *our* captivity”, that is, their own captivity, for their own restoration is not yet the restoration of all. It is prophetically about the great restoration and return of all twelve tribes to Israel.

The remnant asks that the LORD changes their fate, a change so great that they compare it to the wilderness of Sinai with its wadis. These are the wadis in the Negev (=the south) wilderness, south of Israel. Wadis are dry river beds, and in the Negev – unlike other places – they are many hundreds of meters wide and come from a very large area. When it rains in the Negev, these dry riverbeds can suddenly turn into a flood of water that wets the entire wilderness and turns it into a beautiful sea of flowers.

This great result of the return of all the tribes to the land is not the return from the Babylonian exile. That return consists of only a handful of Jews. Therefore, with the joy of that return, there is also the sorrow of the poverty of the situation (Ezra 3:10-13).

Full joy will soon replace the sorrow that the God-fearing has because of the evil of the world in which he lives (Mt 5:4). During the great tribulation, he will experience it in fullness, which will cause tears of sorrow. But after that, God will turn their fortunes and bring them into the blessing of the realm of peace where they will enjoy the blessing full of joy.

There is now still sowing in tears (verse 5) because of opposition and enmity from the surrounding nations. All this sowing is done in anticipation of a result that causes joyful shouting. There is rejoicing when the LORD has fulfilled His promises according to His Word, according to His covenant. It proves the truth of the word of the Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes that the end of a matter is better than its beginning (Ecc 7:8). Prophetically we see this in what Isaiah describes. He portrays the return of God’s people as an act of the nations bringing God’s people as a grain offering to the LORD (Isa 66:20).

Verse 6 does have a special application to the Lord Jesus. He is the Sower Who carried the good seed, that is the Word of the kingdom, and sowed that seed (Mt 13:1-9,18-23). This He has done while weeping, for it has

been a hard work (cf. Lk 19:41). But He will “indeed” come again to earth “with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves [with him]”. With sowing, we may think of new life based on the first coming of Christ. With reaping, we may think of His second coming, when He comes in majesty and glory to accept His earthly kingdom.

The sheaves are all His own who belong to the twelve tribes. They are sheaves as a result of the seed of the Word which He sowed in them and which has germinated in them, which is the new life, the life which He has given them. This is because He Himself also became the seed. He is the grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died, resulting in tremendously rich fruit (Jn 12:24). When He returns, He will be surrounded by the fruit that is the “result of the anguish of His soul” and “He will see [it and] be satisfied” (Isa 53:11a).

Psalm 127

Introduction

The faithful remnant is complete, the ten tribes are back with the two tribes (Eze 36:15-23). We will see the result of the reunion later in Psalm 133.

The psalm, like Psalm 128, begins as a wisdom psalm with the lesson that the wise, the *maskilim*, want to teach us. It is the lesson that the Lord Jesus summed up this way: “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5b). While after the destruction by the king of the North, the temple, the city of Jerusalem and the new families are now being built, they are crying out how dependent they are on the LORD.

The dependence on the LORD is underscored by the awareness that not all dangers are over (verse 1). Like Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, their building activities are done while there is danger from around.

In their trust in the LORD, can be said of them that they all “dwell in peace” (Eze 38:8). The remnant of Israel is made up of those “who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates” (Eze 38:11), trusting that the LORD is the Keeper of Israel.

Psa 127:1-2 | God’s Indispensable Blessing

1 A Song of Ascents, of Solomon.

Unless the LORD builds the house,

They labor in vain who build it;

Unless the LORD guards the city,

The watchman keeps awake in vain.

2 It is vain for you to rise up early,

To retire late,

To eat the bread of painful labors;

For He gives to His beloved [even in his] sleep.

Of this “Song of Ascents”, the eighth, the poet is again named: it is a song “of Solomon” (verse 1). Since the psalmist has in mind the situation of the realm of peace, it is not David who is mentioned as the main character, but

Solomon, who is a type of the Lord Jesus as the King of peace. It is noteworthy that of the 1,005 songs written by Solomon (1Kgs 4:32), only two of them are recorded in the Bible by the Holy Spirit: Psalm 72 and Psalm 127. These are both psalms that are connected to the realm of peace.

The pilgrims have arrived and are thinking about what awaits them in terms of building houses, guarding the city, working hard and having children. In this song, Solomon speaks of these things. These are the things of daily life, which we also think about. What Solomon says about it boils down to the fact that everything in it depends on God's blessing to succeed in the plans. It is about the awareness that everything the righteous does is completely dependent on God; everything must come from Him (cf. Jam 1:17).

If our activities are not determined and guided by God, everything we do is a waste of time and energy. Of every result in a particular work, we will have to say that it came about only through God's help (1Sam 14:45b). If a project succeeds, it is because He blesses it with His blessing, without requiring any performance, any "labor", on our part. Only *His* blessing makes rich (Pro 10:22).

This does not contradict the proverb that the hand of the diligent makes rich (Pro 10:4). Both one and the other are true. We must work, but also realize that the Lord must give us the strength for it and also the blessing on it. Then we realize that everything comes from Him and we will give Him the glory for it.

Solomon uses three examples from everyday life to illustrate this. He starts with building a house. People can do nothing else but build on it. They may even work hard at it. What matters is this: are *they* building, or is *the LORD* building? If He is not, all the toil is in vain.

We can think here of the rebuilding of the temple, the house of God. In the realm of peace, the building of the temple is attributed to the LORD Himself (Zec 6:12-13). Prophetically, this is about the restoration of the house of all Israel, namely when the house of Judah, the two tribes, and the house of Israel, the ten tribes, are united (Jer 3:18).

Solomon built the temple, not David. He knew that the house could only be built if the LORD built the house. The LORD was the architect, Solomon was merely the executor.

The second example is that of the security of a city. People can watch carefully and listen carefully, but nothing more. They can be watchful, but the ultimate protection of the city is in the hand of God. He is the Keeper Who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa 121:3-4). All human effort to shield the city from the intrusion of evil avails nothing if God Himself does not guard the city.

This is especially true of Jerusalem (Jer 31:38-40). The city has been conquered and destroyed many times in its history. When the LORD takes up the guard in the realm of peace, the city will be completely secure (Zec 2:5). Only then can the people sing, "We have a strong city; He sets up walls and ramparts for security" (Isa 26:1).

If we apply this to ourselves, we can say that it is our responsibility to provide security. The important question is what we put our trust in. Do we trust in our technical knowledge and ingenious alarm systems or in God, that our work will succeed only if He blesses it?

The third example is about doing our daily work in connection with forming the family (verse 2). Work is the activity of supporting the family. Work and career are not goals. Hard work is not wrong, but it is not enough. It is necessary to trust the LORD in this.

The purpose of the family is to have children from the hand of the Lord. It is considered old-fashioned, but this is the Biblical truth, even in the days when the world only wants (healthy) children if it will benefit itself or even has no desire for children. Children are the heritage of the LORD. This truth we may learn, and this truth the remnant may also learn.

It is clear that we must work for our bread. That has been true since creation. What matters is what our attitude is in doing so. If we do not remember that we work because God wants us to and that He gives us the strength for it, then we can work as hard and as long as we want and tire ourselves out, but it will not produce what was expected (cf. Hag 1:6). That is why Paul wrote: "Whatever you do in word or deed, [do] all in the

name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father” (Col 3:17).

All the zeal of those who do not live with God or reckon with Him produces nothing of lasting value. The people of the world seek rest and peace and security, but it is all in vain. God gives rest and peace to him who lives with Him, without him having to exert himself. He does this while he who is His beloved sleeps, or in ways unimagined by him (cf. Acts 12:6-7). It can also be translated that the LORD gives His beloved sleep as a blessing.

The pilgrim is “His beloved”. The word “beloved” is the translation of the Hebrew word *jedid*. This word also appears in the name God gave Solomon at his birth “Jedid-Jah” – meaning the ‘beloved of the LORD’ – because the LORD loved him (2Sam 12:24-25). Solomon is thinking of himself here. It also applies to every righteous who lives with God.

Families may grow up in the awareness that each member of the family is a beloved of the Lord. It is important to let our children know our love and that we are aware that they are the Lord’s beloved: “But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”” (Mt 19:14; cf. Mt 18:10).

Psa 127:3-5 | Children Are a Gift of the LORD

*3 Behold, children are a gift of the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one’s youth.
5 How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;
They will not be ashamed
When they speak with their enemies in the gate.*

Following on from what has already been said about the family, verse 3 is about the value and significance of the blessing of children. Children are not only a gift from the LORD, but also ‘the property of the LORD’. The Hebrew word for “gift” is translated elsewhere as heritage. It is worth remembering that the Israelites’ inheritance remains the property of the LORD (Lev 25:23). The Israelites are tenants or stewards of the LORD. So it is with the children the LORD has entrusted to us. We may ‘temporarily

manage' them, but they remain the property of the LORD. In His time, we will have to let them go.

Through the children the LORD bestows, He will establish the realm of peace (Psa 110:3). They are also "the fruit of the womb" and seen as "a reward". Reward here is not attached to an achievement, but to a position. It is a reward by grace, it is a gift, just as the position is also a gift. The fruit of the womb was given by Him and remains His as His property. Through Him, fruit is found among His people that is to His glory (Hos 14:8d; cf. Jn 15:2-5,16).

Let us be aware that in the covenant between the LORD and His people Israel, having children is one of the first blessings (Deu 28:4). Therefore, in the Old Testament, childlessness is perceived as a shame, as a sign that the blessing of the covenant does not apply to the childless woman (Gen 30:1; 1Sam 1:1-18; cf. Lk 1:24-25).

In the New Testament, the members of God's people are a *heavenly* people with *heavenly* blessings (Eph 1:3). The earthly blessings they may receive are not something to be taken for granted; they can be seen as breadcrumbs falling from the table to the ground (Mt 15:27). If there are believers who remain alone or couples who cannot have children, it is different than in the Old Testament. What does remain the same in the New Testament is the fact that children are a reward, or a blessing, from the LORD. Do we experience this in the same way?

Children that God has given are "like arrows in the hand of a warrior" (verse 4). Through these sons the LORD – He is the Warrior – will destroy the power of the wicked (Zec 9:13). The Son of God is also compared to an arrow that is in the hand of the Almighty (Isa 49:1-2). Here we find the promise that the sons of these chosen Israelites will be used by the LORD as instruments in the realm of peace (cf. Isa 59:21).

"So are the children", who are raised up to serve the LORD in the strength inherent in "youth", like arrows. This is an important clue to the raising of children if God has given them in His grace as the fruit of the womb (Gen 30:20; 33:5). We may raise them for Him (Eph 6:4), so that they will be servants in His kingdom.

The man who received this blessing from the LORD and “whose quiver is full of them” is a happy man (verse 5). His children will not be ashamed when they speak with “the enemies” in favor of their father who is seated in the gate. The gate is the place of exercising power (Deu 17:5; 21:19; 22:15,24; Amos 5:12). There the sons will act in favor of their father when he is dealing with enemies who are suing him.

Psalm 128

Introduction

There is progression of blessing in this psalm: first for the individual God-fearing, then for his family, and finally for the whole people. This wisdom psalm – which we can call such because it speaks of “everyone who fears the LORD” (verse 1), which is the principle of wisdom – describes an Israelite family during the realm of peace. The importance of the family according to the LORD’s mind is evident from the description of the realm of peace in Isaiah 65 (Isa 65:21-24).

The theme of this psalm is blessedness (verses 1-4) and blessing (verses 5-6). The ‘blessedness’ applies to everyone who fears the LORD. That is the message of this section, which begins and ends by stating “who fears the LORD” (verses 1,4). Fearing the LORD is at the same time the basis for blessing (verse 4), which is elaborated in verses 5-6.

Psa 128:1-2 | Blessedness of the God-Fearing

1 A Song of Ascents.

How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,

Who walks in His ways.

2 When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,

You will be happy and it will be well with you.

This ninth “Song of Ascents” sings of the blessedness of “everyone that fears the LORD, who walks in His ways” (verse 1). This is how the Israelites are described in the realm of peace. The fear of the LORD is evident by walking in His ways (Pro 14:2). The “blessedness” associated with it is the highest happiness, the true and lasting happiness. It is the fulfillment of the priestly blessing (Num 6:24; cf. verse 5).

In Psalm 127, the Israelite is blessed because of the blessing of children. Here in Psalm 128 he is blessed because of the blessing in his work and in his family. Psalm 144 makes it clear that he is blessed because the LORD is his God (Psa 144:15b).

Therefore, happiness does not consist of transient things like money and goods, prestige and power, but the receiving of the LORD's lasting blessing in work and in the family, as it will be enjoyed in the realm of peace. This is the full Old Testament blessing of the righteous (cf. Deu 28:1-5; Job 1:1,8; 2:3). In the case of unfaithfulness, others eat the result of the work (Lev 26:16b; Deu 28:33a).

The word "when" (verse 2) indicates that what now follows is what the "blessedness" of fearing the LORD and walking in His ways consists of. The first thing promised to the God-fearing is that he will "eat of the fruit" of his hands (cf. Isa 3:10). The LORD will bless his work. This is a huge difference compared to the man who works hard but without regard to God (Psa 127:2). The promise that it will be well with him does not imply prosperity in things that make life pleasant, but implies the joyful delight of the favor of God in life on earth.

Psa 128:3-6 | Blessing of the God-Fearing Family

3 Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine

Within your house,

Your children like olive plants

Around your table.

4 Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed

Who fears the LORD.

5 The LORD bless you from Zion,

And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

6 Indeed, may you see your children's children.

Peace be upon Israel!

Time and again, the songs of ascents show that God blesses the life of the God-fearing precisely in the sphere of his family (verse 3). This is the fulfillment of the blessing God promised at the creation of Adam and Eve (Gen 1:27-28a). In the realm of peace, this original purpose of God with marriage will be fulfilled, to the great blessing of the whole earth (cf. Gen 15:5; 22:17; 32:12).

The great blessing of the family is expressed in the vine and the olive tree. The age of Solomon and the realm of peace are characterized by these two

trees (1Kgs 4:25; Mic 4:4; Zec 3:10). The vine is a picture of joy (Jdg 9:13) and the olive tree of the power of the Spirit (cf. Psa 52:8). The wife of the God-fearing “shall be like a fruitful vine within” his house. She will give him many children (cf. Eze 19:10) and he will rejoice in them. She will be there for the children and by her upbringing ensure that the children are a joy in his house.

Around an olive tree, a host of young olive trees spring up from the root shoots. Thus, “children” are “like olive plants” (cf. Psa 52:8). They are still young olive trees. They still need to grow or be raised. To do this, they are sitting “around your table”. A table is a picture of fellowship, of enjoying the same thing together. There the father will teach them about living to the glory of God (cf. Eph 6:1-4).

With the call “behold” (verse 4) the psalmist points to the man he has described in the preceding verses. He says, as it were: ‘Look at that man, how he sits at the table with his children and eats with them of the fruit of the effort of his hands.’ This domestic scene, characterized by joyful fellowship, is the tremendous blessing the man receives “who fears the LORD”.

In addition to the blessing enjoyed in the present, there is also the promise of blessing in the future (verse 5). The blessing comes from Zion, the sanctuary where God dwells and from which grace flows to His people. The priestly blessing of Numbers 6 now comes upon the common Israelites as well (Num 6:24). Those who fear the LORD live in accordance with the covenant with the LORD. Therefore, they will surely receive the blessing of the covenant (Lev 26:1-9; Deu 28:1-14). These are exactly the blessings we find in Psalm 127 and Psalm 128.

Added to this is the fact that he will see the prosperity of Jerusalem, which means that he will share in the peace of Jerusalem. The God-fearing will experience the blessed reign of Messiah from His throne. This blessing continues “all the days” of his life in the realm of peace.

He will “see the children” of his “children” (verse 6; cf. Isa 59:21), which means that he will see a numerous and happy offspring. They will populate the land in the realm of peace. The psalmist therefore concludes this trio of psalms with the wish that “peace be upon Israel”, that is, the entire

nation of the twelve tribes, just as he concluded the previous two triples of psalms (Psa 122:8; 125:5).

There can be no peace for the people if there is no peace of the Holy Spirit in the families. So it is also in the church. The families are a community and are the building blocks of the church. What is shared there characterizes the church.

Psalm 129

Introduction

The next three Songs of Ascents show not only the outward restoration, as we have seen in the previous psalms, but also the spiritual restoration. In this order, their complete restoration takes place. First comes the Feast of the blowing of trumpets, then the day of atonement. The Lord Jesus is the Savior of their enemies, He is also the Savior of their sins.

This psalm is about a remembrance, whereas the two previous psalms are about a prospect. There they look forward, here they look back. The remnant is looking back to the time of their youth and the discipline. It is also the time when the LORD has not betrayed their trust (cf. Psa 125:1) and saved them (verses 1-4). This gives them a strong, renewed trust in the LORD in the face of their haters (verses 5-8), who will themselves wither.

Psa 129:1-4 | Persecuted and Delivered

1 A Song of Ascents.

“Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,”

Let Israel now say,

2 “Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up;

Yet they have not prevailed against me.

3 “The plowers plowed upon my back;

They lengthened their furrows.”

4 The LORD is righteous;

He has cut in two the cords of the wicked.

In this “Song of Ascents”, the tenth, the God-fearing looks back (verse 1). He remembers: “Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up” (cf. Jer 2:2; Eze 23:3; Hos 2:15; 11:1). He is the personification of God’s people; he speaks for all the people. From the youth of that people, from its birth as a nation, it has been persecuted. We can think of their sojourn in Egypt where they were severely oppressed.

Even after that, they have often been persecuted, under the rule of cruel nations. With the call, "let Israel now say", the God-fearing one urges the people of Israel to give clear audible testimony of that long time of persecution.

The greatest persecution, that is the time of the great tribulation, they have just passed through. The enemies have brought the people into great distress, but they have not succeeded in putting God's people to death (verse 2; cf. Rev 12:13-17). The word "yet" indicates the futility of the enemy's frantic attempts to bring down the people. There can be so much persecution of those who belong to the Lord, yet that persecution will never be able to undo God's plan for His own. He will bring them safely to the goal He has set for them: to be with Him.

They have endured great suffering (verse 3). The heathen rulers have rolled over them like a farmer plowing a piece of land. During the great tribulation, which is called "a time of distress for Jacob" (Jer 30:7), these are the king of the North with in his wake the armies of the Assyrians, supported by Gog, which is the superpower Russia.

The long furrows plowed in a land that is being plowed can be compared to the lashes of a scourge on someone's back. The back is imagery for the recent history behind them, the past, which is a history of suffering. That the furrows are lengthened refers to the length of time, the long period of suffering and especially the time of the great tribulation.

This is specifically a picture used in Isaiah 28 for the LORD's disciplining through Assyria (Isa 28:23-29). The Lord Himself also suffered, His back was beaten (Isa 50:6a; cf. Isa 53:5). Prophetically, verse 3 is about the wrath of the LORD, the discipline He used to purge Israel (Isa 10:5,25; 26:20).

That God's people can look back proves that they are still here. They owe that not to themselves, but exclusively to the LORD. Now He appears. They know that "the LORD", Who "is righteous", "cut in two the cords of the wicked" (verse 4; cf. Jer 30:8). The cords, with which 'the oxen' pulled the plow and split Israel's back, the LORD cut in two with one stroke of His sword. As a result, the wicked were unable to inflict any further furrows.

He did this not so much out of pity, but because He is “righteous”. He keeps His covenant with them, which He can do because He has a righteous basis for doing so. That basis is the work of Christ on the cross. Christ, through the blood of the new covenant (Lk 22:20; Heb 8:6), has fulfilled all the conditions to make His covenant true.

Even in the case where God has had to discipline His people because of their sins, He has remained faithful because of His Son’s work to His plan to finally do them good. He has met the expectations He has raised, and He has not betrayed the trust He asked of His people.

The LORD has cut in two the cords of the wicked with which they had bound the remnant as captives (Psa 126:1; cf. Psa 124:7). He has cut the cord and now taken control Himself. Sometimes it may have looked as if He paid no attention to His suffering people. Now it appears that He has kept His eye relentlessly fixed on them in grace. He has stood up for His people and delivered them. Now He is leading them on.

Psa 129:5-8 | No Blessing for Zion’s Haters

*5 May all who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned backward;
6 Let them be like grass upon the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up;
7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Or the binder of sheaves his bosom;
8 Nor do those who pass by say,
“The blessing of the LORD be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the LORD.”*

He delivers and blesses the remnant, while He “put to shame and turned backward” “all who hate Zion” (verse 5). The enemies are called “the wicked” in verse 4; here they are called “all who hate Zion”. Deep down, they hate Zion, the city of Jerusalem, because that city is the city of the great King (Mt 5:35), and the hatred is directed at Him, the Lord Jesus, that is, at God Himself.

The haters of Zion are all who have no regard for God and His promises. The reference to Zion makes it clear that it is about the presence of the

LORD in the midst of His people, about His covenant and blessing, and the hope of the establishment of His kingdom.

What is wished for the oppressors and what they will receive is compared to “grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up” (verse 6; cf. Isa 37:27). Grass is a picture of the brevity of life (Isa 40:6). It stands in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow (Mt 6:30).

The grass upon the housetops withers even faster, it withers away on the very same day it came up. It grows quickly, it has no deep roots, the sun comes up and scorches it, and the wind picks it up and takes it away. That is how quickly the life of those who persecute God’s people is over: it has withered before it is even pulled out.

Normally, grass is pulled out and left to dry and then used as food for animals. The grass upon the housetops dries up by itself before it is pulled out. It is a picture of what happens to Herod, as well as to the antichrist of whom Herod is a picture. Herod imagines himself to be a god. God makes it clear that he is not. Normally a person dies first and is then eaten by the worms. Herod is eaten by worms before he dies (Acts 12:21-23). Likewise, the antichrist will be cast into the lake of fire without dying, whereas normally a human being dies first and only then the judgment follows (Rev 19:20; Heb 9:27).

There is nothing to be done with this withered grass either, for it does not represent anything at all (verse 7). It is worthless as hay. A reaper can do nothing with it, he cannot even fill his hand with it, let alone that a binder could make sheaves of it with which he could fill his bosom. This is a complete contrast with the Sower in a previous psalm. He carries His seed, sows it while weeping, and returns rejoicing, carrying His sheaves (Psa 126:6).

No one, none of “those who pass by”, will wish them the blessing of the LORD on their way or bless them in the Name of the LORD (verse 8). Wishing prosperity on their way is foolishness because they will be shamed (verse 5) and can never be prosperous. They are going down a road where they let their hatred of God’s people run wild.

Psalm 130

Introduction

In the Songs of Ascents in Psalms 120-126 we recognize the Feast of the blowing of trumpets, the New Year's Day of Israel, when preparations take place to go to Jerusalem. In the Songs of Ascents in Psalms 130-131 we find the day of atonement. In the last two Songs of Ascents, Psalms 133-134, we recognize the Feast of Booths.

These three feasts are the last three of the seven feasts of the LORD in Leviticus 23 (Lev 23:23-44). Prophetically, these three feasts have to do with the restoration of Israel. We therefore recognize these three feasts in these songs of Ascents.

Psalm 130 is a retrospective of the day of atonement that found its fulfillment in the atoning death of Christ about 2,000 years ago. In Isaiah 53, actually beginning in Isaiah 52:13, we hear the confession of faith of the remnant on the occasion of the day of atonement (Isa 52:13-15; 53:1-12).

Psa 130:1-4 | Forgiveness and Fear

1 A Song of Ascents.

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.

2 Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.

3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

4 But there is forgiveness with You,

That You may be feared.

This eleventh "Song of Ascents" (verse 1a) is also the sixth of the seven "penitential psalms" (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). The psalmist or God-fearing cries "out of the depths ... to You, O LORD" (verse 1b; cf. Jona 2:2). This is about the depths of the sea as a picture of a very great distress in which a person is only one step away from death (cf. Isa 51:10; Jona 2:3).

In these depths, as with Jonah, it is not possible to save oneself. The only hope is the LORD. This is what the psalmist sees. He cries to the LORD.

Exactly what distress it is about is not said. We can derive from this song that the psalmist is overwhelmed by the distress of his sins. He speaks of “iniquities”, “forgiveness”, “lovingkindness”, and “redemption” (verses 3,4,7,8).

Prophetically, we do know of Israel’s distress. Just as David committed two great sins – adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband – so too Israel has committed these two great sins. For Israel committed adultery, or idolatry, with the antichrist, and rejected and murdered its Messiah, Christ (Jn 5:43). By their sin against God in idolatry and their sin against the Neighbor in the murder of Christ, they have broken the two stone tablets of the law.

The exclamation “O LORD” indicates the intense suffering under which the psalmist is burdened, and that there is no one but the LORD, Yahweh, Who can help him. This intense suffering is also evident in verse 2. After crying to the LORD, the God-fearing asks the “Lord”, Adonai, the sovereign Ruler and Provider, to hear and be attentive. In His hand are life and death.

He asks the Lord to hear his voice and that His ears be attentive to the voice of his supplications (cf. 2Chr 6:40; Neh 1:6,11). He makes an urgent appeal to the Lord to pay attention to him, for he is in great, hopeless need. Therefore, he cries and pleads with Him to look at him, who is sitting there in great depth, in misery over his sins, and to lift him up out of it.

In doing so, he appeals to God’s grace (verse 3). He knows that he has no right to deliverance from his misery. He is aware that no man, including him, can stand in God’s presence when God “marks iniquities”.

In verses 1-6, the psalmist speaks in the first person singular – “I” and “my”. Verses 7-8 make it clear that he is speaking on behalf of the whole people, “Israel”. That means this is about the iniquity of Israel. That is also what takes place on the day of atonement. The day of atonement is about redemption from the sins of all the people. The high priest acts on behalf of the whole people. It makes clear why the Redeemer had to bear the name Jesus: it was because He would save His people from their sins (Mt 1:21).

For example, in Leviticus 16, the living goat had to carry away the people's iniquity into the wilderness never to return (Lev 16:21-22). We have also seen this in Psalm 103: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psa 103:12). The east is the direction to which the living goat was to go, the west is where the people were, in Jerusalem.

God sees all iniquities; not one escapes Him (cf. Jer 2:22). To 'mark iniquities' means to impute those iniquities to the sinner, to hold him responsible for them. It means to keep track of those iniquities, to 'keep' them. The consequence is that God cannot receive him into His presence and cannot share with him what is on His heart, in other words, He cannot have fellowship with him.

This awareness is the beginning of the way up to reconciliation. We see this with the prodigal son. He has left his father and is living a wicked life. Then he comes to himself. He acknowledges that he is solely to blame for everything and wants to confess that to God and to his father. There is no self-maintenance at all, but the acknowledgment that he needs forgiveness. That is the moment of the way back to his father (Lk 15:17-19). Then he gets up and goes to his father, who takes him into his arms full of mercy (Lk 15:20).

This is the Divine "but" of which the God-fearing is also aware (verse 4). This is what he also says to God: "But there is forgiveness with You" (cf. Neh 9:17; Dan 9:9). Forgiveness is obtainable only from God, not from any man, and only on the basis of confession of sins and faith in the blood of His Son (1Jn 1:9). As a result, he whose sins are forgiven can approach God and be in His presence. This is the meaning of the day of atonement.

Those who know and enjoy this forgiveness will not only rejoice with joy, but above all will fear God. That is stated here as the goal of forgiveness. Fear is not being anxious about God or being afraid of Him, but having reverence and awe for Him. The awareness of forgiveness will not result in a frivolous life, but a life of worship of God and obedience to Him (cf. Deu 5:29; 1Pet 1:17). Forgiveness turns people into saints and imitators of God (Eph 4:32; 5:1-2).

To fear God is necessary to be able to draw near to Him. This is not so much about being delivered from the threat of judgment as it is about being able to draw near to God as a priest. That is the purpose of the day of atonement. The day of atonement is not about salvation from the anger of God – that is the Passover – but about how a redeemed people can approach God without being killed (cf. Lev 10:1-3).

The meaning of the day of atonement is explained in the letter to the Hebrews. The result of the atonement is: “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way ...” (Heb 10:19-20a), or to approach God as a worshiper (Jn 4:23).

Psa 130:5-8 | Expectation and Hope

*5 I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait,
And in His word do I hope.
6 My soul [waits] for the Lord
More than the watchmen for the morning;
[Indeed, more than] the watchmen for the morning.
7 O Israel, hope in the LORD;
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,
And with Him is abundant redemption.
8 And He will redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.*

That the fear in verse 4 that comes through forgiveness is not being afraid of God, as Adam was after his sin (Gen 3:10), we can see from verse 5. There we hear the God-fearing say: “I wait for the LORD.” He does not run from Him because he would be afraid (Gen 3:8), but he looks forward to Him. His “soul does wait” for Him. He is full of Him. The reason for that is His word, what He has promised. That is what he waits for, that is, he looks forward confidently to the fulfillment of what the LORD has promised in His Word. That promise is that he may come into the presence of the LORD.

More than watchmen who wait for the morning light, the God-fearing longs for the light of God in his dark circumstances (verse 6). By speaking twice of the longing of watchmen for the morning, that great longing is

emphasized. That the longing of the God-fearing for the LORD is even greater indicates how strong it is. He does not primarily long for change in circumstances, but for the LORD Himself.

Thereby, the watchmen have the assurance that soon, at a certain time, it will be morning (cf. Isa 21:11-12). The God-fearing also has the assurance of the appearing of the LORD, only he does not know when that will be. What he does know for certain is that “the sun of righteousness” will “rise” on that “morning without clouds” (Mal 4:2; 2Sam 23:3-4; cf. Hos 6:3b).

The application for the church is that she looks forward with great longing to the coming of Christ to take His church to Himself. In this she may also hope in His word, His promise. After all, He has said: “I am coming soon” (Rev 22:20a).

Those who know forgiveness and reconciliation want to share it with the people of God, with their brothers and sisters (verse 7). The testimony holds hope for Israel, a hope anchored only in the LORD. Only with Him “is lovingkindness, and with Him is abundant redemption”. Of this, anyone who has personally experienced it can and will testify. By “abundant redemption” we can think of the countless believers who have been redeemed, but also of the countless sins from which every believer has been redeemed. This applies to both Old Testament and New Testament believers.

Those who know the forgiveness of God for their sins (verse 4), who know Him as the God Who is merciful and with Whom is abundant redemption (verse 7), look forward confidently to the full redemption of His people (verse 8). With a powerful, affirming “and”, the God-fearing also testifies to this. God’s people will be redeemed by Him “from all their iniquities”. This is not about redemption from hostile nations around them, but redemption from their own sins.

There is not one iniquity that has not been atoned for, for “all” his iniquities have been put away. Normally, on the day of atonement, Israel’s iniquities of the past year are put away. Here the psalmist expects by faith that all the iniquities of Israel will be put away once and for all. This is not possible with blood of bulls and goats. Christ, as the perfect, great High Priest, has done it with the sacrifice of His own blood.

Everything that has prevented the blessing has been taken out of the way and disappeared without trace forever through the work of Christ. Transgressions have been wiped out like a mist and sins like a cloud (Isa 44:22). This makes possible the full enjoyment of the blessing of the realm of peace by God's people (Heb 8:10-12).

Added to that, we also look forward to the redemption of creation and of our bodies (Rom 8:20-23).

Psalm 131

Introduction

In Psalm 130 we see the fulfillment of the day of atonement for the people of Israel. There is a condition that a person must meet if he will be able to meet the LORD on the day of atonement and that is humility (Lev 23:27-29), for “if there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people” (Lev 23:29).

Psalm 131 is the psalm in which the remnant comes to humility, making them ready for the day of atonement. Verses 1-2 are in the first person singular. Humiliation is first and foremost an individual thing. It is something the LORD works in the believer who comes into His presence.

Psa 131:1-3 | Childlike Trust

1 A Song of Ascents, of David.

O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty;

Nor do I involve myself in great matters,

Or in things too difficult for me.

2 Surely I have composed and quieted my soul;

Like a weaned child [rests] against his mother,

My soul is like a weaned child within me.

3 O Israel, hope in the LORD

From this time forth and forever.

Of this “Song of Ascents”, the twelfth, the name of its poet is again given: it is a Song of Ascents “of David” (verse 1a).

This psalm connects to the previous one. The heart has come to rest in its relationship with the LORD because there is trust in Him. David is in the presence of the LORD and speaks to Him about his heart, his eyes, and his soul. He says to Him: “My heart is not proud” (verse 1b; cf. Zep 3:11-12).

A person can only say this if he knows that he can only come to the LORD as he is. An encounter with the LORD leads to self-judgment. We see this, for example, in Isaiah (Isa 6:5) and in Peter (Lk 5:8). It is instructive in this

context – coming into the presence of God – to compare the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the temple (Lk 18:9-14).

He who is in self-judgment with God “is not proud”, but broken. He can also say, “nor my eyes haughty”. It is impossible to look God in the eye with haughty eyes. Whoever has haughty eyes cannot be with God (cf. Psa 18:27). Those who are with God do not have haughty eyes and can honestly say so. Eliab, David’s oldest brother, accuses David of having insolence and wickedness in his heart (1Sam 16:6; 17:28-29). He completely misjudges David because he himself does not live in the presence of God (cf. 1Cor 2:14-15).

It is not easy for a king like David, who is powerful and rich, not to become proud. We see in him that he has an aversion to pride and haughtiness (Psa 101:5b). His walk is in accordance with his humble mind. Of this he can say to the LORD: “Nor do I involve myself in great matters.” Any grandstanding is foreign to him.

What does someone who is in God’s presence have to boast about? David acknowledges that there are things greater and more wonderful than he can comprehend and which only God knows. He is aware of his futility and limitations. He is anointed king, but goes his way like a hunted partridge on the mountains because he does not want to run ahead of God’s time (1Sam 26:20).

This mind and attitude has composed and quieted his soul (verse 2; cf. Psa 62:1b,5). This is a weaned child. “Weaned” means that a child is no longer breastfed, even though he is still dependent on his mother. He now comes to rest, not through his mother’s milk, but through his mother herself.

Similarly, the psalmist does not come to rest through the blessings of the Giver, but through the Person of the Giver Himself. That the soul of the psalmist has been brought to rest and to silence is because he comes into the presence of the LORD and feels there like a weaned child with his mother.

What a rest it gives when we no longer have to be concerned with ourselves, with our needs or with our urge to perform, but know that God oversees everything and provides for everything. Then we come to rest with Him, we rest in Him and in His faithfulness. When we can leave all

the issues of life to Him, we get rid of the tensions and go our way on earth with the peace of God in our hearts (cf. Phil 4:6-7).

Of this David testifies in Psalm 23. Even if he were to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, he would fear no evil. This is not because of his own strength or bravery, but because he can testify: "For You are with me" (Psa 23:4). The presence of the LORD gave him peace and rest.

David, as king, is a true leader. He also leads the people by being an example to them. He is a shepherd for his people who are called to follow him. Having thus come to rest with God, he exhorts Israel to hope "in the LORD from this time forth and forever" (verse 3). When that hope is alive, there is peace in the soul because he knows that everything is in the hand of God and that He will accomplish His plans.

In the last three Songs of Ascents (Psalms 132-134) this peace shines through. There is no more talk of enemies, nor of distress of soul.

Psalm 132

Introduction

Now that the foundation of fellowship with the LORD has been laid on the basis of the day of atonement (Psalm 131), the remnant has the proper mind to draw near to the LORD (Psalm 132). As a result, attention is drawn to the place the LORD has chosen to establish His Name there (Deu 12:5).

The faithful remnant of the twelve tribes now also has the right mind to ask the LORD to fulfill the desires of David. The temple in Jerusalem is rebuilt (Ezekiel 40-43). The *shechina*, the cloud of God's presence, the visible symbol of His presence, returns to Jerusalem (Eze 43:1-5). Then what Haggai prophesied about is fulfilled: "'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts" (Hag 2:9).

After Psalm 131, the pilgrim is no longer concerned with himself, but only with the house of God (Psalm 132), fellowship with his fellow pilgrims (Psalm 133), and the worship of God in His house (Psalm 134). He thinks in Psalm 132 of the origin of the house, where he wants to be because the LORD dwells there.

Psalm 132 shows Christ, the Son of David, as the King Who will build the house of God. Psalm 133 shows Christ as the Priest Who lets the Holy Spirit work in the remnant, with the result that the enmity between the two tribes realm and the ten tribes realm is over forever.

The building of the house of God is connected with two kings who jointly point to Christ: David, a picture of the suffering Christ, and Solomon, a picture of the glorified Christ. David had the desire to build the house for the LORD; Solomon was commissioned and empowered to do so.

Division of the psalm

The division of Psalm 132 is remarkable. Namely, the second half of the psalm is exactly the counterpart of its first part:

- A David swore to the LORD (verse 2)
- B What David has sworn (verses 3-5)
- C Place for the ark sought (verses 6-7)
- D Prayer for a resting place (verse 8)
- E Prayer for priests and godly ones (verse 9)
- F Prayer for the anointed (verse 10)
- A The LORD swore to David (verse 11a)
- B What the LORD has sworn (verses 11b-12)
- C Place for the ark chosen (verse 13)
- D Resting place established (verses 14-15)
- E Promise to priests and godly ones (verse 16)
- F Promises to the anointed (verses 17-18)

Verses 2-10 speak of what David wanted to do for the LORD; verses 11-18 speak of what the LORD will do for David. Everything that is prayed for in the first half based on David's oath is answered in the second half based on the LORD's oath.

It brings to mind the LORD's promise to David concerning the building of the temple. David wanted to build a house for the LORD, but the LORD answered that He will build a house for David. This promise is so important that the LORD confirmed it with the swearing of an oath (verse 11; Psa 89:3-4; 2Sam 7:11).

The psalm is most likely of Solomon. Namely, verses 8-10 correspond to some verses from the prayer Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple (2Chr 6:41-42). Solomon, the son of David, is a foreshadowing of the great Son of David, Who said: "Behold, more than Solomon is here!" (Mt 12:42). He is the Son of David Who will be King in the realm of peace.

We hear here the voice of the Spirit of prophecy Who is at work in the believing remnant in the end time. They are looking forward to the fulfillment of the promises of God to David. Those promises especially include the everlasting reign of the lineage of David, which is Christ, and the worship of God in righteousness in Zion. In this psalm, the kingship and the priesthood of the Lord Jesus are thus linked in a special way. In the Messiah everything of this psalm will be fulfilled.

We see the remnant of the twelve tribes heading for the house of God. Thereby they take to their lips the words of this psalm. These are the days

that herald the restoration of the people as God's people. They also expect a speedy fulfillment of the promise that God in the Messiah will take His place among them in the place He has chosen to establish His Name there.

Psa 132:1-7 | A Dwelling Place for God

1 A Song of Ascents.

Remember, O LORD, on David's behalf,

All his affliction;

2 How he swore to the LORD

And vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,

3 "Surely I will not enter my house,

Nor lie on my bed;

4 I will not give sleep to my eyes

Or slumber to my eyelids,

5 Until I find a place for the LORD,

A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

6 Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah,

We found it in the field of Jaar.

7 Let us go into His dwelling place;

Let us worship at His footstool.

This "Song of Ascents", the thirteenth, begins with the prayer to the LORD to "remember ... on David's behalf, all his affliction" (verse 1). The Hebrew word for "remember" is not merely 'remember something', but "act because of thinking of something". Remembering is an activity of the whole person.

The one who prays is not thinking of the toilsome ways David went, but of all his efforts to build a dwelling place for God (1Chr 22:14). This is evident in the following verses. In all his wanderings and all his struggles, he always had this goal in mind. As a man after God's heart (1Sam 13:14), he always sought to please the LORD. Therefore, he also had the strong desire to build a house for Him. The same desire that King David had, all the returned tribes, that is the remnant of Israel, have.

This is perfectly true of the great Son of David, the Lord Jesus, Who through His suffering brought about the church in which He and God now dwell.

The suffering of the Lord Jesus may also be the occasion for us to beseech God for what is now His house: the church of the living God (1Tim 3:15). Our prayer may be that He will find a place of rest with those who gather as His house.

David, with a view to a dwelling place for God, “swore to the LORD” and made a “vow” to “the Mighty One of Jacob” (verse 2). Jacob speaks of “the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob” in the blessing he pronounces on Joseph (Gen 49:24; cf. Isa 49:26; 60:16). It is one of the three titles of the LORD in connection with the patriarchs: He is the *shield* of Abraham (Gen 15:1), the *fear* of Isaac (Gen 31:42,53) – that is, Isaac feared God or was in awe of Him (Gen 27:33) – and here the *Mighty One* of Jacob.

By this name, the mighty God connects Himself with the weakness of Jacob, in whom here the whole people, all twelve tribes, are represented in their weakness. This name is also mentioned again in verse 5. It emphasizes that all this striving to find a place for God to dwell is done in weakness, but through His power leads to results. It also points out that His power eliminates any opposition that would seek to hinder this purpose.

At what point in his life David swore his oath is not recorded in Scripture. It is possible that he did so during the period when he became king. He then built a magnificent palace for himself, while the ark of the LORD stood in a simple tent (2Sam 7:2). David in his commitment to seek a dwelling place for God is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Who says of Himself, that zeal for God’s house has consumed Him (Jn 2:17; Psa 69:9).

The strength of his desire is evident in what he says: “Surely I will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until ...” (verses 3-5a). That is, David does not allow himself the luxury of rest and comfort until the ark of the LORD has been given its place of rest.

He will not be satisfied to lay his head to rest anywhere until he has accomplished this desire. This corresponds to the desire of God Himself to have a place where He establishes His Name and of which He wants His people to ask for and seek that place (Deu 12:5,11,14,18,21,26). God designates David that place (2Sam 24:18-25; 1Chr 22:1). The expression “place”

in verse 5a is parallel to “dwelling place” in verse 5b, that is, it is a place to dwell there.

In the days of Saul, the ark was not asked for (1Chr 13:3). Twenty years the ark is in Kiriath-jearim, in the house of Abinadab (1Sam 7:1-2). David begins to ask for it. When he and his men, “we”, are in Ephrathah, “in the field of Jaar”, they hear about “it” (verse 6). The ark is not mentioned by name. The psalmist speaks of “it” on the assumption that everyone will know what he is talking about. The return of the ark of the covenant after the “Ikabod” period (cf. 1Sam 4:21-22) is a reference to the return of the *shechinah*, which is the cloud of God’s presence, the visible symbol of His presence, to Jerusalem (Eze 43:1-7).

When David is king, he goes to pick up the ark from the house of Abinadab (2Sam 6:2-3). At first he doesn’t do this the right way. Then the ark comes into the house of Obed-edom. After three months, he picks up the ark there and brings it to Zion in the way God has prescribed (2Sam 6:4-17).

At the place where David brought the ark, which is in “His dwelling place” (Psa 74:7; 76:2; 84:1b; 132:5,13), the dwelling place of God, the people want to enter to worship God (verse 7). Historically, this happens when David and the people bring the ark to the tent he has pitched for it (2Sam 6:17). The ark as “His footstool” indicates that God has His rest on the ark. The footstool is a part of the throne on which the feet of the king rest. It is a sign of his great power (Psa 110:1). It is also the place to come close to the king and bow down to Him. Getting closer to a king is not possible.

When we remember that the ark is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus, we see that God’s people seek and find a place of rest for the Lord Jesus. That place of rest in our day is there, where the church meets as the house of God. This happens wherever believers gathers, even if only two or three, to the Name of the Lord Jesus (Mt 18:20; 1Tim 3:15). At the same time, the Lord Jesus is also the “place” of rest for God (Col 2:9). Nowhere else can God find rest on earth but in the Lord Jesus alone. All rest on earth is united in Him and passed on by Him to those who trust in Him.

Psa 132:8-10 | Prayer of God’s Anointed

| 8 Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,

You and the ark of Your strength.

*9 Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
And let Your godly ones sing for joy.*

*10 For the sake of David Your servant,
Do not turn away the face of Your anointed.*

Verse 8 is the only mention of “the ark” in the book of Psalms. This is in connection with the future restoration of the temple in Jerusalem, the place the LORD has chosen to establish His Name there. As a result, the new name of Jerusalem will henceforth be Yahweh *Shammah*, which means “the LORD is there” (Eze 48:35b). The ark represents the presence of the LORD. The LORD Himself will dwell in Zion, and therefore the ark will no longer be needed (Jer 3:16).

Now that the dwelling place for the ark has been found (verse 6), David wants to bring the ark there and make it the center of service to the LORD again. He does this prayerfully. His prayer involves three requests. The first request is in verse 8 and concerns the resting place for the LORD and His ark. This is answered in verse 14. The second request is in verse 9 and concerns the priests. This is answered in verse 16. Finally, the third request is in verse 10 and concerns the Son of David. This is answered in verses 17-18.

David uses words spoken by Moses in his prayer (Num 10:35). Moses did so in view of the rising up of the ark, for when the LORD goes with them, all obstacles are removed and all enemies are defeated (cf. Psa 68:1b). The God-fearing here asks the LORD to arise and go to His resting place.

The words of this prayer are also spoken by Solomon at the dedication of the temple (2Chr 6:41-42). The LORD “and the ark of Your strength” are mentioned in the same breath. The ark symbolizes both the LORD Himself and His strength.

The priests who serve at the ark are to be “clothed with righteousness” (verse 9). They shall not act wickedly as the sons of Eli did, who thereby brought upon themselves the judgment of God (1Sam 2:11-17,30-34). The clothing of righteousness symbolizes the dignity and truthfulness of the priests to serve the LORD in His presence according to His pleasure.

The sacrifice will not be despised, but honored and brought with joy and gratitude by God's "godly ones". The "godly ones" are the *chasidim*, the faithful, those who are faithful to the covenant. The word *chasidim* is derived from Adonai, which is lovingkindness or the faithfulness of God to His covenant.

"Be clothed with righteousness" means, fundamentally, that the priests reflect the features and glory of the LORD. This involves not only His holiness, but also His grace and mercy. That is the meaning of the priests' clothing described in Exodus 28. Likewise, the bride of Christ is clothed "in fine linen, bright [and] clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Rev 19:8). Here "righteous acts" means the righteous deeds that the bride has done out of love for the Bridegroom.

The first part of this song concludes by asking that the LORD will not reject the prayer of the previous two verses (verse 10). The prayer of verses 1-2 is temporarily interrupted in verses 3-9 where the background of the prayer is given. Then the thread is picked up again here in verse 10. The psalmist, anointed by God, makes intercession on the basis of the LORD's oath to David. The oath of the LORD is the response to David's oath in verses 3-5 and to what David did as a servant of the LORD to seek a resting place for Him.

It is the prayer "of Your anointed". It makes all the difference to God who prays. His anointed here is the anointed son of David; prophetically it is Christ, the great Son of David. It is a prayer "for the sake of David Your servant". David is the man after God's heart, to whom He has made the promise of His great Son, Who will sit on David's throne forever and ever. A prayer with those references – to His Son and to His promises – God can never reject.

The Lord Jesus is the Anointed in three ways: 1. when He was on earth, 2. now that He is in heaven, and 3. soon when He comes to earth again, then to reign.

1. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the beginning of His public ministry in Israel (Mt 3:16).

2. He is the Christ, which means Anointed. After His death on the cross and His resurrection, He ascended into heaven and seated Himself at God's right hand. There God "made Him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

3. In Psalm 45, He is anointed upon accepting His kingship when He sits on the Messianic throne (Psa 45:7; Heb 1:9).

The latter is what we are talking about here in Psalm 132. We find here the Son of David, anointed and thus declared as the King-Messiah. He prays here as the Son of David to God on the basis of what the LORD swore to David.

Psa 132:11-18 | God's Response

*11 The LORD has sworn to David
A truth from which He will not turn back:
"Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne.*

*12 "If your sons will keep My covenant
And My testimony which I will teach them,
Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever."*

*13 For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His habitation.*

*14 "This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.*

*15 "I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her needy with bread.*

*16 "Her priests also I will clothe with salvation,
And her godly ones will sing aloud for joy.*

*17 "There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth;
I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed.*

*18 "His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon himself his crown shall shine."*

In this section, the LORD answers the prayer of the previous verses. He begins with an answer to David's oath in verse 2. The answer to David's oath is an oath of the LORD Himself, followed by a denial ever to turn back from this oath, which reinforces the oath: He "swore to David a truth" and "from which He will not turn back" (verse 11; cf. Heb 6:16-18).

And what did He swear to David, to which He will not be unfaithful? “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne” (cf. 2Sam 7:12-13). Peter quotes this verse during his preaching on the day of Pentecost and applies its fulfillment to the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:30-31; cf. Lk 1:31-33).

The LORD does attach conditions to the succession to the throne by the son of David and the sons of his son (verse 12; 2Sam 7:14-15). They must listen to the teaching of God. He will teach them to observe His covenant and His testimonies. If they do, they will sit on His throne. However, they have not done that. As a result, the house of David has fallen to ruin. God will raise up that house again because there is one Son of David, Who did observe His covenant and His testimonies.

That Son has not only observed His covenant and His testimonies, but He renews the covenant by taking away, as Mediator, the curse of the old covenant. For this He shed the blood of the new covenant and on that basis secured the blessing of the new covenant. One of its blessings is the restoration of the house of David.

Inseparable from the promise of David’s everlasting kingship is the election of Zion by the LORD (verse 13). In the historical narrative in 2 Samuel 6-7 we find only David’s point of view. Here in the prayer of Psalm 132 we also find the LORD’s point of view. The LORD did it because He chose Zion and because He desired a dwelling place. Zion is the place the LORD has chosen “to establish His Name there for His dwelling” (Deu 12:5). Prayer deepens our spiritual life; for we come to know the heart of God.

The place that David searched for and found has long since been chosen by God. That place He has “desired it for His habitation”. There is with God not only election of that place, but also a desire to dwell there. The dwelling place of the king is also the dwelling place of God. Temple and kingship belong together.

Nor is it a temporary resting place for God, but His “resting place forever” (verse 14). The promise of entering into the rest of God is still there today. Its meaning is explained in Hebrews 3-4. The reason it is forever is that by the power of the blood of the new covenant, the people and their princes will receive a renewed heart, through which they will remain faithful to the LORD (Heb 13:20).

'Forever' here means the period of the realm of peace. During that entire time, Zion is His permanent dwelling place (cf. Psa 68:16). He will no longer have to travel with the people through the wilderness, for the people live in security and peace in the land. Nor will He have to forsake His people again, for they serve Him in faithfulness. These aspects make it clear that He has longed to dwell there.

As a result of God taking His place in the midst of His people, there will be an abundance of food, so that the poor will be satisfied with bread (verse 15). Where He dwells, there He richly blesses those who come to Him. The "needy" are especially in need of protection and care from the LORD (cf. Psa 86:1). The Lord Jesus made Himself one with the afflicted and needy (Psa 109:22).

More than bread for the body, He gives bread for the soul. The needy are not so much the poor in material terms as the poor in spirit (Mt 5:3). They are not full of themselves, but empty; they have no high pretensions. This allows them to be satisfied inwardly with peace.

In verse 9 it is prayed that the LORD will cause His priests to be clothed with righteousness and that He will cause His godly ones to rejoice. In verse 16 we hear the LORD's promise that He will do just that. He will do even more, for He will clothe the "priests ... with salvation". Salvation is salvation in the fullest sense of the word, including righteousness. It is the enjoyment of the full blessing of God's presence. The godly ones of Zion respond, not with singing "for joy", as has been requested, but with singing "aloud for joy". When the LORD answers a prayer, He does so according to the riches of His grace and therefore abundantly.

In verse 17, which connects to verse 12, the LORD speaks of "a horn" that He will cause to spring forth for David. Zechariah speaks of "a horn of salvation" in his song, referring to the Lord Jesus (Lk 1:68-69). A horn is a symbol of victorious power (cf. Psa 92:10; Rev 13:1; 5:6). 'Spring forth' indicates the sprouting of the Sprout, the Messiah (Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zec 3:8; 6:12).

The LORD also speaks of "a lamp" that He will prepare for His anointed. David is spoken of as a lamp (2Sam 21:17). His son is also spoken of as a lamp (1Kgs 11:36). The preparing of a lamp has the meaning that the light

of the house of David will never go out. There will always be a descendant of David who will reign as king. This has become a reality in the Lord Jesus, the true Anointed.

The enemies of God's King and God's people are always out to prevent God from being honored and served (verse 18). The Messiah will "clothe them with shame". In contrast, on the Anointed His crown will shine. The word for crown is literally "consecration" and is associated with the diadem on the head of the high priest as a sign of his consecration (Exo 29:6; 39:30; Lev 8:9). The King, the Messiah, over Israel is consecrated to God and is at the same time Priest (Zec 6:12-13). This latter aspect is the subject of the following psalm, which speaks of the Lord Jesus as the High Priest.

Psalm 133

Introduction

Psalm 132 is about the anointed King. Psalm 133 is about the anointed High Priest and about the united cohabitation of a people now still scattered over the earth. The psalm is therefore a prophetic vision. At the same time, it contains important lessons for us who live in a time of great division and confusion.

Christ is now King over His people. However, there is still a problem among the people, namely the original enmity between the two tribes realm and the ten tribes realm. To bring that enmity to a final end, the people are given a new heart, through which the law is written in their hearts. As a result, they have come to love the LORD and to love their neighbor. This is also what the prophets have spoken about (Isa 11:13b; Hos 1:11; Eze 37:15-28). These prophecies have never been fulfilled, but now they will be now that Christ is King over His people.

It will happen when the Spirit of God will come upon them like anointing oil (verse 2; Eze 36:27), just as the blessing of the LORD comes upon Zion like the dew of the Hermon (verse 3; Eze 36:28-38).

The structure of the psalm is a pyramid chiasm or cross, emphasizing the high priesthood (C):

A Blessing (verse 1)
---B Comparison (with oil) (verse 2a)
-----C High priesthood (verse 2b-c)
---B Comparison (with dew) (verse 3a)
A Blessing (verse 3b)

Psa 133:1-3 | Brotherly Love

*1 A Song of Ascents, of David.
Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brothers to dwell together in unity!*
2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,

Coming down upon the beard,
 [Even] Aaron's beard,
 Coming down upon the edge of his robes.
 3 It is like the dew of Hermon
 Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
 For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.

Of this “Song of Ascents”, the fourteenth, the poet is again mentioned: it is “David” (verse 1a). In the previous psalm, the ark, the centerpiece of service to God, was brought to God’s dwelling place in Jerusalem. Now David prophetically sees all twelve tribes living together in connection with that place throughout the land. He points to it with a “behold” and exclaims with delight: “How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity” (verse 1b). The fulfillment of this is described by Ezekiel when the LORD will make a covenant of peace with all the people, all twelve tribes (Eze 37:22,26).

Here we can think of the living together of all the Israelites in booths during the Feast of Booths. It is “good” to dwell together in unity, it is a good thing and also appropriate to be together. It is also good in the sight of God.

It is also “pleasant”, benevolently attractive, giving joy to dwell in unity with those who take joy in being in the presence of God. It is the description of a feeling we get when we see or hear something beautiful.

The word ‘how’ that precedes it indicates that it is particularly good and pleasant. Brothers belong together, they form a family together. They must express this by coming together, and also by dwelling together.

“In unity” is literally “as united”, “as one”. This is only possible if there is a center of their dwelling together. Thus the Lord Jesus came to be the center of Israel, but they refused to be gathered together by Him (Mt 23:37). Now that they have been born again, given a new heart (Jer 31:33), now they all go to the LORD as gathered together. We see a type of this when Hezekiah invites all Israel, all twelve tribes, to celebrate the Passover together (2Chr 30:5).

The same is true for the believers of the New Testament church. Before, as sinners, they each went their own way (Isa 53:6). They were hateful and

hated one another (Tit 3:3). This has been changed by repentance and conversion. They are now brothers. In the beginning of the church they also dwelled together. There was a close fellowship among them (Acts 2:44,46).

This dwelling together David compares to oil in verse 2 and to dew in verse 3. Both verses begin with a comparison, "it is like", and continue with "coming down".

Of the oil he says "it is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down on the beard, [even] Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes" (verse 2; Exo 29:7; 30:22-30; Lev 8:12; 21:10). "The precious oil" is a special mixture of holy anointing oil. This composition is to be used only for priestly service (Exo 30:30-33). Kings are also anointed, but not with this special mixture. "The edge" is the collar of the garment.

This refers to the anointing of the high priest. The anointing of the priest is done by sprinkling (blood and) anointing oil on their clothing (Exo 29:21). The anointing of the high priest is done by pouring anointing oil over his head (Exo 29:7), that is, pouring oil abundantly (cf. Jn 3:34). In addition, we have anointing in connection with the king's wedding (Psa 45:7).

With oil in the Old Testament, priests and kings are anointed and in one case, a prophet. Anointing oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). This makes it clear that the unity of the people, the dwelling together of brothers from the two tribes realm and those from the ten tribes realm, is the result of the abundant working of the Holy Spirit.

The same is true spiritually for us New Testament believers. We are kings and priests and are anointed with the Holy Spirit (1Jn 2:20,27). Living and gathering together in unity as a church is only possible when the members are led by the Holy Spirit.

The blessing comes from above, from the Head of the body, Christ in heaven (Eph 1:22). He sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth (Jn 16:7) to baptize the church into one body (1Cor 12:13) and to dwell in individual believers (1Cor 6:19). The Holy Spirit has worked unity. It is up to us to keep that unity, the unity "of the Spirit", in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). That unity is experienced and manifested when there is brotherly love (Jn 17:21).

After the anointing oil, David uses another picture, that of “the dew of Hermon” (verse 3). Both the oil and the dew descend from above to below. So it is with the Spirit and love: they come from God. The result is good and pleasant; there is life and refreshment and that forever.

Dew noiselessly descends on the earth at night as a refresher and moistens it, making the earth soft and fertile. The dew is compared here to brotherly love, which has the same refreshing effect. That love will be refreshing as the Holy Spirit makes hearts receptive to the Word of God calling them to love one another fervently (1Pet 1:22-23).

In the summer months, when there is no rain in Israel, the dew makes the difference between the crop staying alive and withering. The dew, then, as mentioned, speaks of life and refreshment that descends as a blessing from above. In the spiritual sense, it is about the love that comes from God and about the brotherly love that is necessary for the unity of the people.

The blessing that the LORD commands there, that is on Zion, is “life forever”, that is life in the realm of peace (cf. Dan 12:2). Life in the realm of peace is one great blessing. All the promised blessings are enjoyed there in full measure and continuously. Here we can think of a happy family life, the entire yield of the land and rich soil resources, and good mutual relationships with one’s neighbor.

In summary, Psalm 133 is about the unity of the people, of the two brother tribes Ephraim and Judah, who together represent all twelve tribes. This is depicted in the Feast of Booths.

Psalm 134

Introduction

The last psalm of the Songs of Ascents forms its majestic conclusion. There are no more prayers and supplications and no concrete promptings that call for praise. This final Song of Ascents is characterized by spontaneous praise (verses 1-2) and a prayer of blessing (verse 3). For spontaneous praise, of course, there are plenty of reasons mentioned in the preceding psalms. The prayer of blessing is the blessing from the LORD that the priests may pass on to the people (cf. Num 6:24-26).

Psalm 133 and Psalm 134 are related. They both begin with the same Hebrew word *hinneh*, which is translated “behold” (verse 1; Psa 133:1).

Psa 134:1-2 | Exhortation to Bless the LORD

1 A Song of Ascents.

*Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD,
Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!*

*2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary
And bless the LORD.*

Psalm 134 is the last “Song of Ascents” (verse 1a) of the series of fifteen that began with Psalm 120. In Psalm 120, the pilgrims of the ten tribes realm are in a foreign land, in Meshech and Kedar (Psa 120:5), and the pilgrimage has yet to begin. Here they are in Jerusalem and have joined the remnant of the two tribes. Together they call on “all servants of the LORD”, the priests and Levites, to bless, or praise, the LORD (verse 1b).

The difference between “bless” in verses 1-2 and verse 3 is that in verses 1-2 the blessing involves good things being said by man toward God, while the blessing in verse 3 involves the opposite. This is what we can expect in the realm of peace: people blessing or praising the LORD and the blessing of the LORD being wished upon the people. In Psalm 133, blessing from the LORD descends to Israel (Psa 133:3). In Psalm 134, the

blessing of Israel ascends to the LORD (verses 1-2) and the blessing of the LORD passes through Israel to the world (verse 3; Rom 11:12).

The servants of the LORD “serve by night in the house of the LORD”. The priestly service in the night is connected with the feasts of the LORD and especially for their preparation, as we read in Isaiah 30: “You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival, and gladness of heart as when one marches to [the sound of] the flute, to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel” (Isa 30:29). In the Old Testament we do not read of temple services at night. The Talmud mentions that during the Feast of Booths, people sang songs in the night.

In the New Testament church, every brother has been given the privilege of praising God as the mouth of the whole of the local church (1Cor 14:26). To this end they are all called. It is a great privilege in the church, the house of God, to praise God as a priestly people (1Pet 2:5). This happens in the night, the spiritual darkness, in which the world without God is enveloped. God desires that in this darkness we are in the light of His temple to praise Him.

The servants of the LORD are to lift up their hands to the sanctuary (verse 2). The lifting up of the hands also shows a prayer attitude (Psa 28:2; Lam 3:41); here it is an expression of worship (cf. Neh 8:7; Psa 63:4). With the hands, as it were, the offering is lifted up to the sanctuary, the dwelling place of God, that is, to God Himself.

Psa 134:3 | Prayer of Blessing

*3 May the LORD bless you from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth.*

The blessing that is wished to the people does not come from heaven this time, but from Zion, for that is where the ark is. Prophetically, it is about the presence of Christ, for the ark will no longer be there (Jer 3:16). The blessing goes wherever God’s people are, covering all aspects of their lives. For the blessing comes from Him “Who made heaven and earth”. He is the Ruler of the universe Who thinks of all and deals with them in blessing.

Psalm 135

Introduction

Psalm 135 and Psalm 136 form an appendix to the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). They are the songs of praise of all Israel because of the goodness and great mercies of the LORD now that Israel is once again a nation of twelve tribes returned in the land with Him. In Psalm 135, the restored nation of Israel is called upon to praise the Name of the Lord. Psalm 136 is the answer to that.

In Psalm 135 we see representatives of the twelve tribes standing in the courts of the LORD's house. They are called upon to magnify the LORD (verses 1-4) because of His great power and His redemption (verses 5-12) and because of the purifying of the people (verses 13-18). In the final verses, all are called to praise the LORD (verses 19-21).

Psa 135:1-4 | The LORD Is Good

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the name of the LORD;

Praise [Him], O servants of the LORD,

2 You who stand in the house of the LORD,

In the courts of the house of our God!

3 Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;

Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.

4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,

Israel for His own possession.

The psalm begins with "praise the LORD!" or "hallelujah!" (verse 1). This word "hallelujah" meaning "praise the LORD" occurs fifteen times in Psalms, the first time only in Psalm 104 (Psa 104:35). In the New Testament, this word occurs only – and only four times – in the book of Revelation, when the LORD has accepted the kingdom (Rev 19:1,3,4,6). This sparse use in the Bible stands in stark contrast to the frequent use of this word in certain parts of professing Christianity.

In this psalm, the “hallelujah” sounds three times (verses 1,3,21). The object of the praise is “the Name of the LORD”; the bringers of the praise are the “servants of the LORD”. The Name of the LORD is “I AM WHO I AM” (Exo 3:14), that is, He is without beginning, without origin. He is Himself the origin of everything. He is the Eternal, the eternally Being.

He created everything to His glory. Therefore, it is becoming for every creature to praise Him. Not all creatures do. His servants do. It is an enormous privilege to serve Him, because that means being in His presence. That alone is reason enough to praise Him.

Then the place where the praise is done is mentioned (verse 2). It happens “in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God”. “The house of the LORD” – that is the new temple described by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40-43) – is His dwelling place in the midst of His people. “The courts” are the court for the priests and a great, or outer, court for the people (2Chr 4:9). The two courts show that there is a separation between the priests and the common people (cf. Eze 10:3,5).

This separation does not exist for the believer of the church. The New Testament believer is both a priest and an ordinary member of the people (1Pet 2:5,9). That he is a priest points to the privilege to draw near to God with sacrifices. That he is an ordinary member of the people points to his every day life that he is to live in accordance with his high calling as a child of God to be a witness in the world. His life in ‘the great court’ of the world takes place in the direct presence of God, even though his earthly obligations prevent him from thinking of it in concrete terms. His life is to the praise of God when he remembers in everything that he lives before His face.

There is reason to praise the LORD, “for the LORD is good” (verse 3). He alone is good (Mk 10:18b). He is good in His benefits to His people by virtue of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34). There are two reasons to magnify Him:

1. His eternal power and Divinity, which are evident in creation.
2. His redemptive power.

We see the first aspect in Revelation 4 and the second in Revelation 5.

There is also reason to sing psalms “for His Name, for it is lovely” (cf. Psa 147:1). He has made His Name known in love to His people, which He also proved, as the next verse says.

The word “for” with which verse 4 begins indicates that now the reason for the call in the previous verse follows. A close relationship has been established between God and His people. That relationship has emanated from God. He “has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession” (cf. Exo 19:5; Deu 7:6; 14:2; cf. Mal 3:17).

The word “possession” refers to a precious treasure, which is carefully kept and is to the special joy of a king (cf. Exo 19:5; Mt 13:44). This is a wonder of grace, about which the people can only marvel and rejoice with gratitude. For this he can praise the LORD and sing psalms.

It is clear that God’s election of Jacob is in no way due to Jacob himself. The name Jacob means ‘heels holder’. Jacob’s life – and that of his descendants – proves that he ‘honored’ his name. This only adds to the wonder of his election. When it is added that God elected “Israel for His own possession”, it is because He made Jacob Israel. God has done that. To Him therefore belongs all honor, praise, glory and worship.

For us, believers of the church, the same applies and to an even greater degree. We may know that God has chosen us for His own possession, which means that He has predestined us to adoption as sons to Himself (Eph 1:4-5). This is an unfathomable, immeasurable privilege when we consider what we are by nature and where we have come from.

We lived in sin and deserved the second death: the lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15). We had absolutely no right to anything whatsoever. And now we have been made household members of God (Eph 2:11-22). What Israel is as a people, we are personally. We are personally the special objects of His grace and joy (Tit 2:14; 1Pet 2:9). This cannot but bring us to great admiration and gratitude which we express in praise to Him Who conceived and wrought all this (Rev 1:5-6).

Psa 135:5-7 | The LORD Is Great

*5 For I know that the LORD is great
And that our Lord is above all gods.*

6 *Whatever the LORD pleases, He does,
In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.*
7 *He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
Who makes lightnings for the rain,
Who brings forth the wind from His treasuries.*

From the depths of his heart, the righteous acknowledges in an emphatic personal confession, "I", that "the LORD is great" (verse 5). This is, as it were, the echo of Jethro's personal confession when he saw what the LORD had done to Israel (Exo 18:11). He is absolute in His greatness. It is folly to make any comparison between Him and anyone or anything else. There is no one and nothing to compare Him to (Exo 15:11; Isa 40:18,25). The gods that are there are dwarfed in His presence.

The muslims cry 'allahu akbar' – meaning 'allah is greater' (than other gods) – but the psalmist exclaims "the LORD is great". In the book of Isaiah, the LORD is called "the First and the Last" (Isa 44:6), meaning that He is not only the greatest, but also the Only One, the only true God. There is no God outside of Him.

He is the "Lord", Adonai, the sovereign Ruler of the universe. This is how the righteous know Him, for they speak of "our Lord". He is the absolute Ruler, Who can and does do whatever pleases Him (verse 6). He not only has a sovereign will, but also absolute power and might to carry out His will. Nor is there any area or territory that can escape His power. His sovereignty and power are unlimited. He does what pleases Him "in heaven and in the earth" and also "in the seas and in all the deeps" (cf. Jer 10:13; 51:16). The "deeps" are the subterranean waters.

That He is Lord over creation is a fact. That He is Lord over men is at present a choice. The believers acknowledge His lordship, the unbelievers do not, that is, not yet. For a day is coming "that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:10-11).

The entire universe is created by Him and therefore subject to Him. Here it is not primarily about the LORD as Creator, but about His power over creation. It is about God's eternal power and Divine nature, which have

been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made (Rom 1:20). Knowing His eternal power and Divine nature should lead us to honor Him and give thanks to Him as God (Rom 1:21). That is what the psalmist is doing here.

His power is evident in causing vapors to ascend (verse 7). We speak of evaporating the water, but the psalmist teaches us here that God does it. The Canaanites believe that the Baal works this. In the future, man will believe that the beast can do anything (Rev 13:4). The remnant, however, puts their trust in Him Who has said that to Him all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (Mt 28:18).

The psalmist is not speaking as a physicist, but as a believer who knows that everything that happens on earth comes from God, is worked by Him. In the same way, we speak of 'it lightens' and 'it blows', while here we read that God "makes lightnings for the rain" and "brings forth the wind from His treasures" (cf. Job 38:22). He is indeed incomparably great. We cry out with the writer of the song: 'How great Thou art, how great Thou art!'

Psa 135:8-12 | God Redeems His People

8 He smote the firstborn of Egypt,

Both of man and beast.

9 He sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt,

Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.

10 He smote many nations

And slew mighty kings,

11 Sihon, king of the Amorites,

And Og, king of Bashan,

And all the kingdoms of Canaan;

12 And He gave their land as a heritage,

A heritage to Israel His people.

God is not only great in His power over creation and nature, He is also great when He uses His power to redeem His people. That people He has chosen to be His people, that they may serve Him. The redemption of the

remnant of Israel in the future is now described in the language of the redemption from Egypt.

The redemption from Egypt is a foreshadowing of the redemption to come. The redemption from Egypt focuses on the death of the firstborn (verse 8), and from verse 10 on the death of the hostile kings. The future redemption involves driving out the antichrist and defeating the kings of the nations.

In their deliverance from Egypt, God acted with great display of power. The greatest display of power is mentioned first, which is His power over life and death. For the deliverance of His people, He broke the power of the enemy by smiting “the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast” (Exo 11:5; 12:29). It is the culmination of the ten plagues on Egypt, the culmination of the signs and wonders for God’s people. Egypt is struck to the heart by it.

He did have this supreme display of power precede by “signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt” (verse 9; Psa 105:27-36). In the middle of his argument, the psalmist suddenly addresses Egypt, so involved is he in and impressed by what God has done. Pharaoh and all his servants have had to acknowledge the power of God in the signs and wonders done in their midst.

The Israelites owe their existence to the LORD’s deliverance from Egypt. That is why this is repeated again and again (cf. Psa 78:51; Neh 9:10). The believers of the New Testament dispensation realize that they owe their existence to the redemption by the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. Therefore, their redemption is also spoken of with regularity (cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 1:7; Rev 1:5b).

After He delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt, He did not leave them to themselves. On their journey through the wilderness, He “smote many nations and slew mighty kings” (verse 10; Deu 7:1) who sought to bar their way to the promised land.

The first redemption of Israel is their redemption from the power of the false king, Pharaoh of Egypt. The first deliverance in the future is from the power of the false king of Israel, the antichrist. The final deliverance of Israel, before the people enter the promised land, is from hostile powers in the wilderness side of Jordan. The last deliverance from hostile powers in

the future, just before the realm of peace, is also in the area at the eastside of Jordan, namely from the power of the hostile nations in Edom (Isa 63:1-6).

God killed “Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan” and defeated “all the kingdoms of Canaan” (verse 11; Num 21:21-26,33-35; Deu 2:30-33; 3:1-6). Sihon and Og are mentioned by name. The defeating of these kings is described in detail in Joshua 12 (Jos 12:1-6). They are the first hostile nations of whom God tells His people to conquer and take possession of their territory. Of the rest of the kings, “all the kingdoms”, only the names are mentioned in Joshua 12 with the mention at the end of “in all, thirty-one kings” (Jos 12:9-24).

Having thus paved the way for His people in power and majesty, God gave the land of the hostile nations “as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His people” (verse 12; Deu 4:38; Psa 111:6). The heritage consists of both the possession of the land on the east side of Jordan (Deu 3:12) and the possession of the land of Canaan.

Psa 135:13-14 | The Name LORD

*13 Your name, O LORD, is everlasting,
Your remembrance, O LORD, throughout all generations.
14 For the LORD will judge His people
And will have compassion on His servants.*

The Name LORD is the Name of God by which He has made Himself known to His people and committed Himself to them (verse 13). In that Name He sent Moses to deliver His people from bondage and declared that this would be His Name forever, “throughout all generations” (Exo 3:15; 6:3,6-8). In that Name He has taken upon Himself the care of them forever. The Name here is associated with “Your remembrance, O LORD”. This is also the case with the Supper in the New Testament, of which the Lord Jesus said to eat the bread and drink the wine “in remembrance of Me” (1Cor 11:23-26).

That Name is the guarantee that He will provide justice for His people after the people have utterly failed (verse 14). They have turned their backs on Him and begun to serve idols. Moses describes this in his song in Deu-

teronomy 32 (Deu 32:36-39). On that basis, the LORD should, by the exercise of justice, exterminate them.

Moses also sings that the LORD “will have compassion on His servants”. “His servants” are those among the people who have remained faithful to Him, a remnant. To them He will fulfill His covenant. He will provide them justice on the basis of Christ’s work on the cross. Through this, reconciliation has been established between them and God and God can fulfill His promises to them.

Psa 135:15-18 | The Ridiculousness of the Idols

15 The idols of the nations are [but] silver and gold,

The work of man’s hands.

16 They have mouths, but they do not speak;

They have eyes, but they do not see;

17 They have ears, but they do not hear,

Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.

18 Those who make them will be like them,

[Yes], everyone who trusts in them.

In this section the judgment on the idols is presented (cf. Psa 115:4-8). This is a warning to the people and should keep them from placing any value at all on those idols. Unfortunately, they closed their eyes to that. They have committed fornication with the idols (Hos 2:2-15; 4:17). As a result, these idols also became the cause of their fall (cf. Deu 32:37-39). For this the ten tribes were taken away into the scattering by the Assyrians. For this the two tribes were taken away into exile to Babylon by the Babylonians.

“The idols of the nations” prove to be worthless in the defense of Canaan. God completely makes an end to them and gives the land to His people. The whole world belongs to Him and He determines who lives where, starting from the area He has reserved for His own people (Deu 32:8).

The idols, because they are of “silver and gold”, may look as shiny and valuable as ever, they are nothing more than “the work of man’s hands” (verse 15; Isa 40:19). It is folly at its best to trust in something of one’s own making, for which the material was taken from a perishable creation (Isa 44:9).

The description of the idols is full of sarcasm. Look at these images: “They have mouths, but they do not speak; they have eyes, but they do not see” (verse 16). You can ask them whatever you want, but you won’t get an answer, because they don’t speak. You can bow down to them and ask for their attention, but they will not see you, because they cannot see.

There are also ears made on their head (verse 17). You may think they hear you if you shout loudly, but they do not hear you, for they are made of dead matter. Don’t you see then that there is not “any breath at all in their mouths”? Breathing generally means life, but idols are totally lifeless.

These dumb, blind, deaf, lifeless human products are nothing but a representation of the thinking of their makers. Therefore, their makers will become like them (verse 18). “Everyone who trusts in them”, anyone who worships these dumb idols and expects anything from them, will become as dumb, blind, deaf, and lifeless as they are. That is what happened to the people of Israel (Isa 43:8; Jer 5:21). This is generally the condition of humanity in the end time (Rev 9:20).

Psa 135:19-21 | Call to Bless the LORD

*19 O house of Israel, bless the LORD;
O house of Aaron, bless the LORD;
20 O house of Levi, bless the LORD;
You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD.
21 Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
Who dwells in Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!*

The psalm ends with a fourfold call to bless or praise the LORD (verses 19-20). The call is addressed to the entire “house of Israel”, the “house of Aaron” (verse 19), the “house of Levi”, and “you who revere the LORD” (verse 20). This call corresponds to earlier calls (Psa 115:9-11; 118:2-4), to which the “house of Levi” is added here.

Psalm 134 also begins with this call to “bless the LORD”. To bless means to say good things about the LORD, to praise Him by word and deed, by showing that your trust is completely in Him. Psalm 135 begins with the call to praise the LORD – a different Hebrew word than in Psalm 134 – and

ends with a fourfold call to bless Him, as in Psalm 134. The call to “you who revere the LORD” means that those from the nations who revere the LORD are also called to join Israel in praising the LORD.

This blessing of the LORD occurs “from Zion” (verse 21), for Zion is the center of worship. That is where the groups mentioned in the previous verses are located. They are now praising the LORD from His presence. The LORD is there. He dwells “in Jerusalem”, in His temple.

The righteous ends the psalm as he began it (verse 1), with a jubilant “hal-lelujah”, or “praise the LORD”. By this he is saying that the psalm is a psalm of praise from beginning to end.

Psalm 136

Introduction

Psalm 136 can be seen as the response to the call of the remnant in the previous psalm to praise the LORD (Psa 135:19-20). This call is connected to the reality of Israel's restoration in the realm of peace. It is as it is prophesied by Jeremiah that we hear "the voice of those who say, "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting"" (Jer 33:10-12).

We hear that voice in this psalm, which is characterized by the phrase "for His lovingkindness is everlasting". This expression reflects the unchanging goodness of the LORD toward Israel. It occurs in every verse of this psalm, that is, twenty-six times. It is an echo that will reverberate through eternity.

This psalm has been called the 'national anthem' of the people of God in the realm of peace. The Jews call Psalms 113-118 'the little hallel', while they call Psalm 136 'the great hallel' – hallel is praise song. It is a retrospective of the creation and the history of God's people. Every act in creation and in connection with His people is an occasion to sing His lovingkindness.

All that is mentioned are particularities in which the lovingkindness of God is manifest. The psalmist mentions one particular after another and says of each particular that its origin is God's lovingkindness and that this lovingkindness is everlasting.

We might list all those particulars and then point out in one sentence that they all prove of God's lovingkindness. However, the psalmist does not do that. He mentions the origin of each individual act: the lovingkindness of God. This teaches us that we must have an eye for every detail of the many particulars of God's action in our lives and the lives of all His own, and that we praise Him for it.

The construction of the psalm indicates that when worshiping God, the psalm is sung as a turn on turn song. We can imagine a cantor singing the

line that mentions an act of God and the people responding with the words “for His lovingkindness is everlasting” (cf. Ezra 3:11a; Deu 27:14-26).

The lovingkindness of the LORD is the source of all His actions in creation and in the redemption of His people. He acts in this way because He is good. The occasions for praising Him for His lovingkindness are inexhaustible. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a selection of God’s actions has been made by the psalmist to sing of them.

We may add to this our experiences. We will do so for all eternity. The LORD’s lovingkindness to Israel, God’s earthly people, is evident in creation and in their redemption. As God’s heavenly people, we are joined to the Lord Jesus in heaven (Eph 1:3). We may praise Him on the basis of His work on the cross (Eph 1:7). Through this we are joined to Him in the most intimate way imaginable, namely as a body, the church, to the Head, Christ. We are made one with Him in His death, in His resurrection from the dead (Eph 1:20) and in His glorification (Eph 1:21).

The fact that we have occasion to praise Him is in itself a testimony to the fact that His lovingkindness is everlasting. Every step of our pilgrimage on earth, every new challenge, every new struggle, even our weakness or failure, is an occasion to praise and glorify the LORD because of His lovingkindness, for it is everlasting.

Division of the psalm

The division of this psalm is in the form of a reclining pyramid, with the center, or culmination, the inheritance that the LORD gives to His people in the realm of peace (verses 21-22):

- A. Call to give thanks by Israel (verses 1-3)
- B. The Creator of the universe (verses 4-9)
- C. The Redeemer in the past (verses 10-20)
- D. The inheritance for Israel (verses 21-22)
- C. The Redeemer in the present (verses 23-24)
- B. The Sustainer of the universe (verse 25)
- A. Call to give thanks by all (verse 26)

Psa 136:1-3 | Give Thanks to the LORD

| 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

2 Give thanks to the God of gods,

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords,

For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

The psalm begins with three calls to give thanks to God (verses 1-3). To give thanks means to 'confess' or 'acknowledge'. It is a confessing that goes on continuously, without ever stopping. Thereby, the three great Old Testament names of God are mentioned: "LORD", Yahweh, (verse 1), "God", *Elohim*, (verse 2) and "Lord", Adonai, (verse 3).

The "LORD" is only and alone in His glory. The LORD is to be compared to no one and nothing. "God" and "Lord" are mentioned in comparison with gods and lords. The first name is in connection with Israel, the second in connection with earthly and heavenly rulers, and third in connection with all who are rulers and exercise influence.

The psalm begins with the call to praise the LORD, Yahweh (verse 1). It is His special Name in connection with His people. The people praise that Name because He is worthy of it, "for He is good". His goodness is evidenced by His lovingkindness, that is, by His covenant faithfulness. He has not been good just once, or for a certain period of time, no, He is truly, perfectly, completely and eternally good. It is His Being.

His people will experience and acknowledge this perfectly in the realm of peace. They will, while deeply impressed by His goodness, say that "His lovingkindness is everlasting". It implies that what He does is unchanging, inexhaustible, visible in all His actions, and that the results of His actions endure forever (cf. Ecc 3:14).

The first time the phrase "for His lovingkindness is everlasting" appears in Scripture is in connection with the placing of the ark in the tent that David pitched for it (1Chr 16:1). In response, David gives thanks to the LORD. At the end of that thanksgiving he says, what is written here in verse 1: "O give thanks to the LORD, for [He is] good; for His lovingkindness is everlasting" (1Chr 16:34). The same thing happens when the ark is brought into the temple by Solomon (2Chr 5:4-7,13). And here, in this psalm, it hap-

pens when the people have entered into the millennial rest of the promised land and give thanks to the LORD in the new temple (Jer 33:10-11).

God, *Elohim*, is also due all thanksgiving, for He is “the God of gods” (verse 2). The ‘gods’ are all human powers, good and wrong or false, and all chosen and fallen angels. All those powers were created by Him and are subject to Him. He is far above them. No man or angel can ever challenge His power, let alone ever remove Him from the throne and take away His power. He is the God of gods because His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Giving thanks is also due to the Lord, Adonai (verse 3). He is the sovereign Ruler in the universe He created. He governs and commands all the elements that make up the universe and all life in the universe. There may be many ‘lords’, persons of certain authority, but they are completely subject to Him (cf. 1Cor 8:6; Deu 10:17; Rev 19:16). He governs everything according to His will. He is the origin of all things and brings everything to the destination determined by Him. He does this because His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psa 136:4-9 | The Wonder of Creation

*4 To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
5 To Him who made the heavens with skill,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
6 To Him who spread out the earth above the waters,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
7 To Him who made [the] great lights,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
8 The sun to rule by day,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
9 The moon and stars to rule by night,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

When the question is asked why God created the heavens and the earth, we read the answer here: because “His lovingkindness is everlasting”. The singing of the wonder of creation begins with the observation that the

LORD is the One “who alone does great wonders” (verse 4). No one does and can do that but He “alone” (Psa 72:18).

Everything the LORD does brings the believer to amazement, yes deep amazement. Even as he contemplates creation, the space for man to live (verses 5-6) and the set times (verses 7-9), he recognizes in them the lovingkindness of the LORD.

The LORD does that “alone”. That is not “alone” in the sense of without help from others. Of course, that’s true too. But He does it especially “alone” simply because He is the Only One Who can do it. There is no one else. In addition, the great wonders are not so much an expression of His power, but of His lovingkindness which is everlasting. Power that is based on lovingkindness is not only rare, it is completely unique. Therefore, His lovingkindness is also everlasting.

He is the Only One “who made the heavens with skill” (verse 5). God, in His great wonders concerning creation, demonstrates His skill and wisdom, which He alone possesses (Pro 3:19; 8:24-31; Jer 10:12). When we look to the heavens, we see that His lovingkindness is everlasting. It is an uninterrupted demonstration of His lovingkindness to man, for He has made heaven for man with skill into what he needs.

The same is true of “the earth” which He “spread out ... above the water” (verse 6; Gen 1:9; Psa 24:1-2). He caused the earth to emerge from the water as the habitat of man and other creatures. That man and animals feel at home on the earth is the result of the lovingkindness of God. Redeemed man will praise Him for this during the realm of peace.

In verses 7-9, the psalmist turns his attention in particular to the heavens in relation to the earth. He speaks of the “great lights” that God “made” (verse 7; Gen 1:14). Through the great lights, everything on earth is illuminated and man can enjoy all that God has made.

God made “the sun to rule by day” (verse 8; Gen 1:16a) and “the moon and stars to rule by night” (verse 9; Gen 1:16b). These great lights are important to life on earth, both for nature and for orientation. They testify to God’s lovingkindness to all the creatures He has created and especially to His people.

For the LORD made these great lights and the lesser lights in the first place to serve for His people as fixed times (Gen 1:14; Psa 104:19), that is, to determine for them the times of the various feasts of the LORD (Lev 23:2). They are, as it were, the arrangements for the times of meeting between the LORD and His people.

Psa 136:10-15 | The Wonder of Redemption

*10 To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
11 And brought Israel out from their midst,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
12 With a strong hand and an outstretched arm,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
13 To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
15 But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

These verses recall Psalm 135 (Psa 135:8-9). In Psalm 135, these are acts that express God's Name and glory. These same acts are sung here as proofs of His lovingkindness, with each act resulting in a special praise.

It begins with God "who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn" (verse 10; Exo 12:29). This is a more powerful expression than "He smote the firstborn in Egypt" (Psa 135:8). Here God's judgment comes emphatically on all the Egyptians. Then their resistance broke and they let Israel go, even with many gifts. What God did to the Egyptians is a proof of His lovingkindness to His people, the result of which is forever unchangeable.

After the judgment on the Egyptians, God did the next act showing His lovingkindness: He led Israel out of the midst of the Egyptians (verse 11). After breaking the power of the oppressors, He delivered His people from their oppressors. The deliverance through the Red Sea is described in detail (verses 11-15), for it is a shadow of the coming deliverance of the faithful remnant from the power of the antichrist (Isa 43:16-21).

The people saw that God used His “strong hand” and His “outstretched arm” *against* the Egyptians and *for* them (verse 12; Exo 6:6; Deu 5:15; 7:19; 26:8; Jer 32:21). This display of power in judgment on the Egyptians and in favor of His people comes from His lovingkindness to His people. The result of deliverance can never change, it will never end, for “His lovingkindness is everlasting”.

The proofs of God’s lovingkindness does not stop at deliverance. When it seemed that they were facing an insurmountable obstacle and they would be taken captive again, God divided the Red Sea asunder (verse 13; Exo 14:21). Literally it says that He “cut in pieces” the Red Sea, which makes the power of His act even more apparent.

Then God made “Israel pass through the midst of it” (verse 14; Exo 14:22,29). What seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle became a highway. The waters, by the power of God, stood as walls as Israel passed through the sea. This is another special proof of the goodness of God that is eternal.

The concluding evidence of God’s goodness in regard to the redemption of His people is the definitive extermination of His people’s enemies (verse 15; Exo 14:26-28,30). Here it says that God “overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea”. In the description of this event in the book of Exodus, it is not explicitly stated that Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea; it is stated here. The word “overthrew” is a word used for a tree that shakes off its leaves. It is an act of God’s judgmental power.

That judgment is an act of lovingkindness will be confirmed by all who hate evil and love justice. When persistent evildoers are judged, it is a benefit to society. No injustice is done to the evildoers, for they get what they deserve.

Psa 136:16-20 | The Wonder of the LORD’s Guidance and Leading

*16 To Him who led His people through the wilderness,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
17 To Him who smote great kings,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
18 And slew mighty kings,*

*For His lovingkindness is everlasting:
 19 Sihon, king of the Amorites,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
 20 And Og, king of Bashan,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,*

The leading of His people through the wilderness is also an occasion to sing of His lovingkindness, which is everlasting (verse 16). God has wonderfully led His people through the wilderness with its many dangers, thereby caring for and protecting them. He has been their Guide all the way through that “howling waste of a wilderness” (Deu 32:11-12; 8:15; Jer 2:6; Am 2:10). When they look back on it, they burst into this praise.

In Psalm 135, the psalmist has mentioned that God has defeated nations and slain mighty kings (Psa 135:10-11), which foreshadows victory over hostile nations. As noted above, God’s actions in Psalm 135 are actions that express His Name and glory. These mighty acts of God are mentioned again here, but now each individual act is attributed to His lovingkindness:

That He “smote great kings” is due to His lovingkindness toward His people (verse 17).

That He “slew mighty kings” is due to His lovingkindness toward His people (verse 18).

The first example of this is that He slew “Sihon, king of the Amorites” (verse 19). This His people owe to His lovingkindness toward them.

As a second example of this, it is mentioned that He slew “Og, king of Bashan” (verse 20). This His people owe to His lovingkindness toward them.

Psa 136:21-22 | The Wonder of a Heritage

*21 And gave their land as a heritage,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
 22 Even a heritage to Israel His servant,
 For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

What is said in these verses is also said in Psalm 135. There it is said in one verse (Psa 135:10), whereas here it is said in two verses because each line of Psalm 135:10 is followed here by the singing of the lovingkindness of God. In verse 21 the emphasis is on the Giver of the heritage and in verse 22 on the recipient of it.

God has taken the land away from the enemies because their land, as well as all the lands of the world, belong to Him (Psa 24:1-2). Therefore, He is free to give a land to whomever He wants, in this case to His people (verse 21). He did not suddenly come up with the idea of giving His people this land, but it has been His purpose from the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34).

Therefore, He has given this land chosen by Him to His people “as a heritage” (verse 22). That people is here called “Israel His servant”. The joy with which He gave the land to His people is expressed here. The purpose also resonates here. He has given the land to His people so that they will serve Him there.

The heritage that the LORD gave to Israel in the past is a foreshadowing of the heritage that the LORD will give them in the future, during the realm of peace. The division of this psalm (see under Introduction) emphasizes that this is its culmination.

Psa 136:23-25 | The Wonder of His Attention

*23 Who remembered us in our low estate,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting,
24 And has rescued us from our adversaries,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
25 Who gives food to all flesh,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

In verses 10-20 we read about redemption in the past, while verses 23-24 are about redemption in the present. The LORD is the same yesterday and today and forever. The redemption that the LORD could do in the past, He also can do now.

In verses 23-24 we hear for the first time about the feelings of the psalmist. He speaks of “us” and then does so several more times. He is speaking on

behalf of all who belong to God's covenant people. The psalmist and the people have experienced that the LORD, Who could rescue in the beginning of Israel's history, can and has done it now. They are impressed with Who God is and what He has done – about which he has written in the preceding verses. He now says as a confession that God "remembered us in our low estate" (verse 23). They had been humbled, disaster had come upon them. But God thought of them and came to them in Christ.

This awareness makes the admiration of God's lovingkindness that much greater. It does not stop at an impressive description of God in His omnipotence and redemption. That God, Who is so great and has done great wonders, has an eye for the righteous in their "low estate". This is overwhelming and again an occasion to praise God's lovingkindness.

In themselves they had no power to deliver themselves from the power of their adversaries (verse 24). But God rescued them from their adversaries. We can think especially of the time of the great tribulation. The adversaries during that time are the antichrist in the land and the king of the North or the Assyrians from abroad. The rescue from those adversaries is a new proof of God's lovingkindness of which the effects are everlasting and therefore eternally sung about.

What is contained in these verses will be acknowledged by every believer who is aware of his origin and what he has become and received in Christ. He was in the power of sin, the world and the devil, and utterly powerless to free himself from them. Then he was rescued from all those adversaries by the power of God's love. For that he praises God. Then he was joined to Christ and allowed to share in all the consequences of His work on the cross. For that he also praises God.

Then the psalmist looks around and sees that God's attention is also on all that lives (verse 25; Psa 104:27-28). He is the One "who gives food to all flesh". This is also something we can observe every day if we pay attention. He, Who is the Creator (verses 4-9), is also the Sustainer of His creation in this verse (1Tim 4:10). It cannot be otherwise than that when we see Him in this way, we will praise and glorify His lovingkindness. He continues to give that care throughout the time of the realm of peace.

Psa 136:26 | Give Thanks to the God of Heaven

*26 Give thanks to the God of heaven,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

The psalm concludes with the call to “give thanks to the God of heaven” (cf. Gen 24:7). The name “God of heaven” appears frequently in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel. These books describe the history of God’s people when God can no longer recognize them as His people. He has had to withdraw into heaven. Even during the time when He is not visibly reigning in a representative on earth, it appears that “His lovingkindness is everlasting”.

In the realm of peace, the God of heaven is also the God of earth. He then fulfills the prayer that His will would be done as it is in heaven, so also on earth (Mt 6:10). Heaven and earth are then in harmony with each other. The blessing of heaven is spread over the earth. Then all who partake of the blessing on earth will say it: “For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

The first three verses of this psalm are a call to the people of Israel to bless. Now, at the end of the psalm, the call to give thanks to God goes out to all people.

Psalm 137

Introduction

We now come to the last series of psalms in which we find a retrospective of the tribes. Psalm 137 was written after the return of a remnant of Israel from Babylonian exile to the promised land. The God-fearing Jew looks back on that period and expresses his feelings about it.

Prophetically we see this in the Feast of Booths, the last feast of Leviticus 23. This feast points to the realm of peace. While living in the land, in this feast they commemorate the wilderness journey, including living in booths, which refers to their living in tents (Lev 23:43). In the same way, the remnant who returned from exile to the land under the leadership of Zerubbabel look back at the exile. So will the returned twelve tribes look back to their exile.

Psa 137:1-4 | God's People in Babylon

*1 By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion.
2 Upon the willows in the midst of it
We hung our harps.
3 For there our captors demanded of us songs,
And our tormentors mirth, [saying],
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."
4 How can we sing the LORD's song
In a foreign land?*

Verse 1 shows the circumstances under which the psalm was written and thereby makes clear the occasion for its writing. The psalmist writes the first four verses in the we-form. He represents all of the exiled people who had in their hearts an unceasing homesickness for Zion or Jerusalem.

Many of the exiles had adapted to life in Babylon and had no desire to return to Jerusalem when the opportunity was offered. Only a small number

of Jews went back. The prophet Jeremiah had encouraged them to settle there, however, not with the intention of living there forever, but until the time, which God had set for this discipline, would be over (Jer 29:4-7,10).

The psalmist describes the fate of the exiles who had been taken away by King Nebuchadnezzar. They remember sitting by the rivers of Babylon (Eze 1:1; 3:15). Destitute, exhausted and deeply sad, they rested, after the long walk from the promised land, by the many water channels of Babel. They gathered there with their fellow citizens and talked about Zion. When they thought about it, tears of sorrow came forth. Zion was the center of the earth for them. That was what their life was all about. That is where they went three times every year and experienced intense joy in the presence of God.

All expressions of joy had disappeared since they had been taken away as captives to this foreign land (verse 2). There was no longer any reason to be joyful. After all, they could no longer go to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts of the LORD. Therefore, they had "hung" their harps "upon the willows in the midst of it". This refers to the Levites who were used to accompanying the songs of praise to the LORD's glory in the temple in Jerusalem with their harps. But if there is no temple, then no songs can be sung and no accompaniment is needed. Then the harps can be hung upon the willows in Babylon.

Yes, those who held them captive wanted them to sing a song for them (verse 3). They were to show joy to those who had subdued them. They were to entertain them by singing "one of the songs of Zion" to them. These are songs in which they sing that the LORD reigns as King from Zion, songs of the realm of peace, such as Psalm 93 (Psa 93:1-5).

At that time, the songs and reality contradicted each other. They were in exile. How then could they sing about Zion? As if it were only entertainment, while their whole heart was full of sorrow about what had happened to Zion. In fact, it is a harassing question from the soldiers who were guarding them to rub salt in the wound.

So their response was: "How can we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?" (verse 4). After all, it is impossible to combine: the foreign, heathen land, in which they were captives, and then expressing joy about the

LORD, something that should be done in the temple in Zion. It's not that they shouldn't sing songs, but that they couldn't sing because of the circumstances they were in. They would be violating their feelings.

It were songs of worship to the LORD. They could not sing these now, for they were far from God's dwelling place in Jerusalem. They had to be sung in His presence in Jerusalem. There they could do so with the joy that was appropriate. If they did this in Babylon, where idols were served, it would seem that they had forgotten Zion and that they could also sing joyfully about the LORD here and that too to entertain their oppressors.

Psa 137:5-6 | Jerusalem Is Unforgettable

*5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
May my right hand forget [her skill].
6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
If I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.*

The psalmist now becomes personal. After the use of "us" in the previous verses, he now speaks in the I-form. He exposes the deepest feelings of his soul. He does not speak to the soldiers who were guarding him, no, he now speaks personally directly to Jerusalem (verse 5). No longer singing about Jerusalem is one thing, forgetting Jerusalem and not thinking about it is another.

The God-fearing makes it clear in strong terms how much his heart is devoted to Jerusalem. If it should ever happen that he forgets Jerusalem, then his right hand must wither and become powerless, so that he can never play the harp again. All he is saying is that it is impossible for him to forget Jerusalem.

In his thoughts, too, he is always occupied with Jerusalem (verse 6). To think of Jerusalem means to experience the supreme joy. Jerusalem rises above everything that can make someone happy. If it should ever happen that he does not think about Jerusalem, then his tongue should cling to the roof of his mouth. Then he will never again be able to sing the beautiful songs about Zion and express himself about the LORD. All he means by

this is that it is impossible for him not to think about Jerusalem. Jerusalem fills his heart and his mind. His whole life revolves around that city.

Psa 137:7-9 | Call For Judgment on Edom and Babylon

7 Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom

The day of Jerusalem,

Who said, "Raze it, raze it

To its very foundation."

8 O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one,

How blessed will be the one who repays you

With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

9 How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones

Against the rock.

Uttering curses on himself made it clear how much he loved Jerusalem. Then in verse 7 he addresses the LORD regarding the Edomites, a brother people of the Israelites. The sons of Edom have a totally opposite view of Jerusalem and harbor totally opposite feelings toward that city. This was particularly evident "on the day of Jerusalem" i.e. the day of the fall of Jerusalem.

On that day, the Edomites, full of gloating, sided with those who destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Eze 25:12; 35:5-15; Oba 1:10-12). As cheering spectators, they encouraged the destroyers with the words, "Raze it, raze it to its very foundation" (cf. Hab 3:13b). The faithful remnant says to the LORD to remember against the sons of Edom, by which they mean that He will repay the Edomites and judge them (Oba 1:15).

And then there is the "daughter of Babylon", which are the Babylonians, the ruthless destroyers (verse 8). The God-fearing addresses them on behalf of God. Certainly, they were a means in God's hand to discipline His people because of their persistent sinning against Him. However, they went far beyond God's limits of necessary discipline and in doing so committed a crime against God's people. Their crime must be justly repaid. The God-fearing blesses him who will do this recompense.

The desire of verse 9 sounds heartless, even inhuman, to the ears of the New Testament believer (cf. Isa 13:16,18). Should innocent, defenseless

children be seized and dashed against the rock? However, we must remember that this is a perfectly just recompense (cf. 2Kgs 8:12; Hos 13:16). It is a course of action that is consistent with the Old Testament rule of retribution according to the principle of “eye for eye” and “tooth for tooth” (Exo 21:24; cf. Deu 7:10; 32:35). In the future, Edom and Babylon will be totally destroyed (Oba 1:18, Isa 63:1-6; 13:19-21; 14:22).

Psalm 138

Introduction

The remnant cried out to the LORD in their distress – that is, during the exile of Psalm 137 – and the LORD answered the prayer (verse 3). Over this they break out in jubilation (verse 1), for the LORD has given them strength (verse 3b,7) to return to the promised land. We find here thanksgiving from the returning remnant in connection with the LORD's loving-kindness, the covenant truth.

Psa 138:1-3 | Thanksgiving For Salvation

1 [A Psalm] of David.

I will give You thanks with all my heart;

I will sing praises to You before the gods.

2 I will bow down toward Your holy temple

And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth;

For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name.

3 On the day I called, You answered me;

You made me bold with strength in my soul.

This is a psalm “of David” (verse 1a), the first of a group of eight psalms written by him (Psalms 138-145). He says to God: “I will give You thanks with all my heart” (verse 1b). His heart is full of thanksgiving for God. There is no room in his heart for other gods or anything else (cf. Psa 9:2). He expresses his thanksgiving openly, for, he says: “I will sing praises to You before the gods.”

The gods are the bearers of an authority given to them by God, such as earthly princes, but also heavenly rulers. Here we are talking about the heavenly rulers (cf. Psa 95:3). Starting in verse 4 we find the earthly rulers. What we have here is similar to what the New Testament church does (Eph 3:10).

He bows down toward “Your holy temple” (verse 2). This could be the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, for the temple was not yet there, but

in any case it is also the heavenly dwelling place of God. This is supported by the fact that David sings praises to the LORD in the sight of the gods (verse 1). It applies prophetically to the temple that is yet to be built in the realm of peace.

In that attitude of worship before God, he give thanks to God's Name. God has shown His glorious Name in a special way in His "lovingkindness" and His "truth". God's lovingkindness is connected with the actions of the LORD on the basis of His covenant. His truth includes the assurance that He will never deviate from His covenant.

From His actions in favor of David, the value of "Your word" is demonstrated. This is seen in the expression of "all Your Name", which is all that He is. His Word makes His Name known (cf. Psa 56:4,10). Thus He made Himself known to David in truthful lovingkindness. By doing what He promised, He magnified His Word.

The characteristics of the remnant are the Word and prayer: in them there is both trust in the word of God's promise (verse 2) and dependence expressed in calling on the LORD's help (verse 3). Both the promises of the LORD and the answer to the prayers of the remnant are based on the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Christ.

The truthfulness to His promise was demonstrated when the psalmist cried out, for then God heard him (verse 3). Thereby not only were the suffering and distress removed, but through the answer he was also strengthened by God with power in his soul.

The Lord Jesus is the incarnate Word (Jn 1:14). In Him all the promises of God are yes and amen (2Cor 1:19-20). Whatever we receive from God, it is all through and in connection with the Son Who became Man.

Psa 138:4-6 | Kings Give Thanks to God

*4 All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD,
When they have heard the words of Your mouth.*

*5 And they will sing of the ways of the LORD,
For great is the glory of the LORD.*

*6 For though the LORD is exalted,
Yet He regards the lowly,*

| *But the haughty He knows from afar.*

David says that “all the kings of the earth will give thanks to” the LORD (verse 4). Of this he is certain because “they have heard the words of Your mouth”. The words he means are the words God has spoken about His people, the promises He has made to them. They will see that God will fulfill all that He has said about His people. Then the kings of the earth can do nothing but give thanks to Him (cf. Psa 68:32-33; 102:16-18; Isa 49:23).

That God is fulfilling His words will be evident in the ways He is going with His people and all nations (verse 5). In those ways He reveals His glory, a glory that is great. When the kings of the nations see that, they will give thanks for it. They will acknowledge that the glory of the LORD is great and that their earthly glory pales in comparison. We see in both of these verses the effect of His words and His ways on the kings of the earth because in them His great glory is revealed.

Verses 4-5 show that “the LORD is exalted” (verse 6). This does not mean that He has no regard for the lowly (Psa 72:12-14), which is often the case with earthly rulers. His attention and care go out to them. In doing so, the haughty should not think that he escapes God’s attention. God knows him from afar, which is to say that He knows his plans against His people as he devises them. “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jam 4:6; 1Pet 5:5).

Psa 138:7-8 | God Accomplishes His work

| *7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me;
You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.
8 The LORD will accomplish what concerns me;
Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.*

These two verses speak the language of faith. David walks in the midst of trouble and trusts that the LORD will revive him. The deliverance from the trouble is that he can revive in the midst of the trouble, that is, he experiences fellowship with his God in it. That is the true life. The gained experience of deliverance gives confidence that God will do it again as

soon as it is necessary. Prophetically we see that the remnant on the way to the promised land is strengthened by the LORD with power (verse 3), although they are still in the midst of trouble (verse 7).

David also knows *how* the LORD will rescue him from trouble. His one hand He will stretch out like a shield against the wrath of his enemies, to ward it off. As a result, it will be impossible for them to do him any more harm. With His other hand, His right hand, the hand of strength, He saves him. This double assurance brings Him to utter the assurance of verse 8.

God has a purpose for the life of each of His own. David expresses confidence that the LORD will accomplish what concerns him, that God will accomplish His purpose with him. For God not to do so would mean that His lovingkindness would cease somewhere. That is impossible, because the LORD's lovingkindness is everlasting. Therefore, He will definitely complete the works of His hands and not forsake them.

Paul expresses the same confidence regarding God's work in the Philippians (Phil 1:6). The blessing is God's business. We may trust Him to finish His work with us. We are "the works of Your hands" and may pray that He will not forsake us. We know that He will not and so we pray Him to do so (cf. Psa 80:14-15).

Psalm 139

Introduction

In this psalm David tells of the exercises of his heart as he goes the ways of God. Prophetically, these are the exercises of God's people in the time of their trouble (Psa 138:7).

The sin of all the tribes was idolatry. From that they will have to be cleansed. With the ten tribes, this cleansing occurs on the way to the promised land in the wilderness of the nations (Eze 20:34-38). With the two tribes it happens by means of the great tribulation. For them, in addition to the cleansing from the sin of idolatry, there is also the cleansing from the sin of rejecting Christ. The latter is specifically the sin of the two tribes. Psalm 139 shows us the glory of the LORD during the purification of the whole people.

Division of the psalm

Verses 1-6 The LORD is *omniscient* (all-knowing). Nothing is hidden from Him.

Verses 7-12 The LORD is *omnipresent* (everywhere present). No one can hide from Him.

Verses 13-18 The LORD is *omnipotent* (all-mighty). Nothing is impossible for Him.

Verses 19-22 Therefore the LORD will remove the wicked from among them.

Verses 23-24 Now that they have been purified, only one desire remains with them, and that is to be led by the LORD in the everlasting way.

Psa 139:1-6 | God, the Omniscient

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

O LORD, You have searched me and known [me].

2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

You understand my thought from afar.

3 *You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
 And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.*
 4 *Even before there is a word on my tongue,
 Behold, O LORD, You know it all.*
 5 *You have enclosed me behind and before,
 And laid Your hand upon me.*
 6 *[Such] knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 It is [too] high, I cannot attain to it.*

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

Through the troubles (Psalm 138) the faithful remnant comes into the presence of the LORD. We see this in Psalm 139. David begins by noting that the LORD knows him through and through (verses 1b-2) and ends by praying that the LORD will use His knowledge and omnipotence to purify him (verses 23-24).

The presence of the LORD is like the Word of God. Its awareness works like a “two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The believer sees himself in it, as he sees himself in a mirror (cf. Jam 1:23-24). He comes to know himself through it. The LORD wants to purify the vine by His presence, that it may bear more fruit (Jn 15:1-5), which means that the believer lives more to His honor and glorification.

God knows and sees everything. There is nothing that escapes His all-seeing eye. It goes even further, for He also fathoms everything, including man, every human being. According to a United Nations estimate, there were 7.7 billion people living on earth in 2019 [www.wikipedia.org; website visited 25-11-2020]. It is estimated that over 200,000 people have been added every day so far. And that’s a snapshot. These figures are already far beyond our thinking, let alone when we think of all the people who have lived on earth since Adam.

To God, these are not statistics. He fathoms and knows every human being who has ever lived and is living at this moment. To fathom means to examine extremely precisely and closely. The result of this precise examination

is a perfect knowledge of man. Of course, for God, this close examination is not necessary. He knows man, because man is His own creature. What matters here is the deep impression David has of God through his dealings with Him. He works this out and applies it in what he says further in this psalm.

What David says here is not a factual statement, not a general confession, however true that may be, but a statement that indicates that he is deeply aware that God fathoms and knows him (Jer 12:3a). This confession is not made out of fear or under compulsion, but is done from a living relationship with and the utmost confidence in that God. It is a matter between “You” and “me”.

In the awareness of God’s omniscience, I may consider that God is present in every corner of my heart. Thereby I also know that He knows me better than I know myself (1Jn 3:19-20). To Him even the most deeply hidden places in my heart are completely in the light (verse 12; Dan 2:22). If this awareness makes me uneasy, I may be thinking of things in my heart that are not according to His will. In that case, I can remove – and if necessary, confess – my faulty thoughts and then ask Him for His will.

Knowing a person is much more than knowing facts. Knowing here has to do with knowing intimately, having a relationship with someone. It is not just that the LORD knows everything about David; it is that the LORD has a relationship with David. He knows the moments that I “sit down”, why I do it, and what I do then (verse 2). His knowledge of me is total. He also knows “when I rise up”, when I do, and why, what I intend to do (cf. Isa 37:28).

Even “my thoughts” are an opened book to Him. He not only knows what I think, but also “understands” what I think, and that even “from afar”. The latter refers not so much to distance – the LORD is always near – but more to time, that is, He knows everything about me far in advance. This is a comforting thought.

“My path and my lying down” are scrutinized by Him (verse 3). This is about daily life, from the morning, from getting up and leaving for daily work, to the evening, going back to bed. He scrutinizes how I conduct myself during those times and during those pursuits. There is nothing in

everything I do throughout the day that surprises or amazes Him, for He is “intimately acquainted with all my ways” (cf. Job 31:4).

Also, everything I resolve to say, that is, even before I take a “word on my tongue”, He knows it (verse 4). His perfect knowledge of me means that nothing can be said or done by me that surprises Him. Rather, it is my amazement at Him, at His perfect knowledge of my whole being, including what I don’t even know yet myself, but what He sees in me that makes me say: “Behold, O LORD, You know it all.”

That all-knowing God protects me and covers me with His hand, which He lovingly lays upon me (verse 5). He has “enclosed me behind and before”. The word ‘enclose’ is sometimes used for the siege of a city, so that it is completely enclosed. That is what God is doing to me. I can’t do anything outside of Him without Him knowing. I cannot take a step backward or forward, or He is there. This does not make me afraid, but gives me peace. Above all, it is His protection from enemies who want to attack me from behind or from the front. This section of verses 1-6 tells me that the omniscience of the LORD is used by Him to protect me (verses 5-6).

By “from behind” we can also think of our past and by “before” of our future. Sometimes thoughts of our past can attack us and thoughts of the future can trouble us. Then He places Himself behind us and in front of us. With this He says, as it were, that the past is in His hand and that with regard to the past everything has been made good through the work of His Son. And as for the future, everything is also in His hand. By the same work of His Son we shall be with Him forever. Next, He lays His hand upon me, with which He says to me: ‘You are Mine.’

Then we feel the reaction of verse 6 arising in us. In great wonder we say to Him: “[Such] knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is [too] high, I cannot attain to it.” The human mind falls completely short of knowing things that are beyond knowledge. There are no words to describe it (cf. Eph 3:19; Phil 4:7). The only thing appropriate here is to fall on our knees and worship Him.

Psa 139:7-12 | God, the Omnipresent

| 7 *Where can I go from Your Spirit?*

*Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.
9 If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
10 Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,"
12 Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike [to You].*

Having described the omniscience of God in an impressive way, David speaks in these verses in an equally impressive way of the omnipresence of God. It is impossible to go anywhere where God's Spirit could not reach me, or to go anywhere where I am no longer in God's presence (verse 7; Jer 23:24). The prophet Jonah tried, but he failed (Jona 1:1-17).

When David speaks of where he can go "from Your Spirit" and "flee from Your presence" he does not mean to say that he wants to. He wants to make it even more clear that God, Who is Spirit (Jn 4:24), knows everything and is present everywhere. It is impossible for man to hide from Him. There is no place in creation where He is not, because He created everything. The question is not: Where is God, but: Where is God not? He is not part of His universe, He is not a component of it, but rules over it with perfect knowledge of every detail in it.

Imagine, says David, that I ascended to heaven (verse 8; cf. Amos 9:1-2). Then I would meet You there, for You dwell there. Now if I descended to the deepest place in creation, Sheol, the realm of the dead, then I will meet You there also, for there You are as well.

In the height and in the depth, I cannot escape You. Now if I tried it in the breadth or in the length (verse 9). Let me "take the wings of the dawn" and "dwell in the remotest part of the sea". That is, he moves at the speed of sunrise, changing darkness into light – close to the equator this is very fast – and goes to dwell in the remotest place on earth.

The possibilities David mentions for escaping God are at the same moment answered by himself: it is simply impossible to go anywhere where God is not. David comes to a comforting conclusion through his questions, and that is that God's hand leads him everywhere (verse 10). And he discovers – not only that God does not let go of him, but – that God's right hand lays hold of him. The section of verses 7-12 makes it clear that the LORD uses His omnipresence to guide us (verse 10) and illuminate us with His presence (verses 11-12).

Then, if distance offers no way to escape God, it may be possible to be swallowed up by darkness, and that even the light around him would be night (verse 11). But then what happens? Then, because of God's presence with him, the night turns into the light around him (cf. Acts 12:7a). He comes into the full light. Where God comes, it automatically becomes light, because God is light.

Darkness makes things dark for us. This is also true spiritually. Many things in our life are "dark" to us; we don't understand them. For God, it is not so. It makes no difference to Him whether it is night or day, or whether there is darkness or light (verse 12). Everything is light to Him. Day and night, light and darkness, it is all created by Him and therefore nothing is hidden from Him.

Psa 139:13-18 | God, the Former of Life

*13 For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.
14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
[And] skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained [for me],
When as yet there was not one of them.
17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!*

How vast is the sum of them!

18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.

When I awake, I am still with You.

God knows everything and is everywhere because He created everything. He also knows man because He created man. For the believer is added the tremendous encouragement that God knows him in grace. The word “for” (verse 13) indicates that now comes the explanation of the above. Of course God knows everything about me, of course God is everywhere where I am, because He is my Maker. The LORD is not only the almighty Creator of heaven and earth, He is also my Creator, He made me. Therefore, He knows me thoroughly and guides me in my ways, until death and resurrection (verse 18).

In describing his own creation, David begins with his “inward parts”, literally “kidneys”. The kidneys are the innermost part of man. In the spiritual application they are associated with the deliberations that a man has. God tests the kidneys (Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Lam 3:13; Rev 2:23) to see if his conscience is clean or not. They are also seen as the symbol of wisdom, not the material part, but more the emotional and spiritual part of man (Job 16:13; 19:27; 38:26; Psa 7:9b; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; Pro 23:16).

Then he talks about how God “wove me in my mother’s womb”. That deeply hidden, dark place is light to Him. There God has artfully ‘composed’ Him. He harmoniously connected all the parts. Therefore He has perfect knowledge of man and there is nothing in man that He does not know. He put it all in place Himself in exactly the place He wanted and with the function He gave it. He has made it into one whole, with each ‘part’ supporting the other ‘part’.

Although David did not possess the medical knowledge of the origin of human life and body that we possess, he gives thanks to God because he is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (verse 14). As all of God’s works are wondrous, so is he. He is deeply convinced – “my soul knows it very well” – that God has a personal plan with him. This every one of His own may know and say with certainty (cf. Eph 2:10).

When David was made in secret, none of his “bones” [“frame” is literally “bones”] were hidden from God (verse 15). They are an integral part of

his body. The bones give strength to the body. Together with the muscles, they allow the body to move. God did not need a lamp when making the bones in man. He embroidered a work of art without light in the dark hidden because He is present as light in the hidden. "The depths of the earth" is a poetic description for "the secret". It emphasizes that these are the most hidden places, something that cannot be seen by human eyes (cf. Job 28:7).

In verse 16, David speaks of the eyes of God that saw His embryo, His "unformed substance". He has described in His "book" all the "days that were ordained [for me], when as yet there was not one of them". His name is written in the book of life of the Lamb Who has been slain (Rev 13:8). God describes in advance how a human life proceeds (cf. Jer 1:5). To Him not only darkness and light are alike (verse 12), but also the future is alike the present to Him.

God knew our thoughts long before we thought of Him (verse 2), but He also has thoughts Himself (verse 17). This goes beyond the wonders of God's omniscience and omnipresence and how He made everything. It is about the thoughts of God that are behind His works (cf. Psa 40:5). These are precious to the believer, although their number is fully beyond his thoughts. The LORD fathoms the psalmist through and through, while to the psalmist the LORD is unfathomable.

God's thoughts are innumerable, even more innumerable than "the sand" (verse 18; cf. Gen 22:17; 32:12; Heb 11:12). This does not cause doubt, but gives utter peace. The God-fearing falls asleep with the thought of God. Verses 13-16 deal with the pregnancy, when the psalmist was still in his mother's womb, before his birth. In verse 18 it is about the situation after death. If he were to awaken later, after death, he would still be with the LORD.

Psa 139:19-22 | God Will Judge

*19 O that You would slay the wicked, O God;
Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.
20 For they speak against You wickedly,
And Your enemies take [Your name] in vain.*

*21 Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
22 I hate them with the utmost hatred;
They have become my enemies.*

One who, like David and like every God-fearing, is connected to God and lives from that connection, is aware of the radical separation between him and the wicked. He will ask God to “slay the wicked” (verse 19). He says to the “men of bloodshed” to depart from him (cf. Pro 29:10). Among these people there is no respect for the life of which David has been so deeply impressed.

They are out to thwart God’s plans and prevent their execution (verse 20). The God-fearing submits this to God: “For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take [Your name] in vain.” The influence of the wicked and men of bloodshed leads to destruction of those who come under their influence. God must put an end to this pernicious influence so that no more people are dragged along the path of destruction.

The God-fearing knows the heart of God and His hatred of sin (verse 21). He cannot do otherwise than take God’s side against God’s haters. He loathes those who rise up against God – they are rebels, rebellious, who reject all authority – to keep Him from the blessing He wants to give to His own. Do we also loathe people who, in order to indulge their own lusts, deliberately go against everything God has given as a blessing? Dedication to the Lord excludes all loyalty to those who hate Him. Love for them implies that we expect them to distance themselves from such behavior.

For the God-fearing, it is not a question. He hates them with utmost hatred (verse 22). It is not about those people as such, because God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, rather He wants them to repent and live. If, however, people continue unstopably on a path of sin and drag others along with them, they prove to be enemies of God. Such people will be seen by every God-fearing as his own enemies.

Psa 139:23-24 | Search Me

*23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;*

24 *And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.*

The God-fearing hates all who stand up to God (verse 22). He does so not in a proud spirit, but out of love for God. This is also evident in his prayer in these verses. He also hates the thought that there would be anything present in himself that is not subject to God. Therefore, in these final verses he asks God for a complete ‘screening’ of his heart and anxious thoughts. After asking for judgment on the wicked and the enemies of God, he now asks for God’s judgment on himself.

These two go together. It is a separation of chaff from wheat. Also in Psalm 26 we see that the testing of the believer and aversion to a God-hostile walk are mentioned in the same breath (Psa 26:2-5).

He began the psalm by noting that God searches and knows him (verse 1). Now he asks God to search him and show him what is in his heart (verse 23; cf. Jer 17:9-10). He places himself in the presence of God and asks to try him, to test him as to the uprightness and purity of his thoughts (cf. Heb 4:12-13).

He wants nothing more than to live in accordance with the will of God. Therefore, he asks that God look at his spiritual condition and see if in him there is “any hurtful way” (verse 24). The Hebrew word for ‘hurtful’ is literally ‘idolatrous’. That is, a hurtful way is an idolatrous way, the way of the wicked who have put aside the LORD. If so, David says to God, will You let me know.

He then asks that God lead him “in the everlasting way”. The everlasting way is the old way of the righteous (Psa 1:6a; Jer 6:16). That is what his desire is for. He wants to go in the way where life from and with God is lived. That way also ends in eternal life, with Him Who is its source, God Himself. Death does not end that way, but is a final step on that way that brings him into full, undisturbed fellowship with God.

Psalm 140

Introduction

This psalm is a prayer for deliverance from evil. Prophetically, we see here Israel, the twelve tribes, connected to the LORD, but surrounded by evil men and violent men (verse 1).

The psalm teaches us, who live in the midst of ruthless and cunning wicked people, to surrender ourselves completely to the Lord. The believer cannot stand against the world with its cunning and conspiracy. But there is One Who knows the end from the beginning; to Him we must look. We can count on the help of the Lord Jesus against evil and violent people.

Psa 140:1-5 | Prayer for Preservation

1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men;

Preserve me from violent men

2 Who devise evil things in [their] hearts;

They continually stir up wars.

3 They sharpen their tongues as a serpent;

Poison of a viper is under their lips. Selah.

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;

Preserve me from violent men

Who have purposed to trip up my feet.

5 The proud have hidden a trap for me, and cords;

They have spread a net by the wayside;

They have set snares for me. Selah.

For “for the choir director” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 4:1.

For “a Psalm of David” see at Psalm 3:1.

The occasion of the psalm is clear from these verses. David, or the faithful remnant in the end time, is surrounded and treated with hostility by “evil men” (verse 1b). David asks the LORD to rescue him from them. He also asks the LORD for His preservation “from violent men.” “Evil men”

indicates what man is, namely, thoroughly evil. "Violent men" – Hebrew *hamas*, meaning violence, here in the plural, aggression – indicates that what man does is nothing but to cause misery, both by his words and by his actions.

David knows the devious in the hearts of these people, that in them they "devise evil things" (verse 2). It is not just one evil thought, but it is about "evil things", indicating that they intend to harm him in many ways. They are not spontaneous actions, but premeditated, conscious, willful actions. Nor are they engaged in it occasionally, it is not a momentary thing, but "they continually stir up wars". They are constantly plotting plans to harm him and get him out of the way. This is not a plot, but a war (cf. verse 7).

There have been repeated gatherings of kings and their counselors coming together to make war against the Lord's ambassadors. Thus, in the last days, the beast and the false prophet and their followers will come together against the faithful remnant and go to war against them. But God will prove that He is above all nations. He will reign as King forever.

Before conspirators attack David with their sword, they attack him with their tongue. The language they use in formulating their battle plans against him is quite something (verse 3). They wage a campaign of hatred and slander against him. By speaking of "sharpen their tongues as a serpent" (cf. Psa 64:3-4) and that there is "poison of a viper under their lips" David says of them that they are a mouthpiece of the devil, the old serpent. Their tongues as a serpent means a split tongue full of lies and slander, sharpened like a sword to be able to cause even more damage. Poison of a viper is a silent acting poison that results in death in a short time.

The latter is cited by Paul as evidence of man's utter depravity (Rom 3:13). Those who are characterized by it are children of the devil; they have his nature (Jn 8:44). They spread the meanest rumors about him and thereby commit what is known as 'character assassination'. The word *selah* at the end of verse 3 indicates a pause to consider the seriousness of the matter before God, to cry out again to the LORD about his distress in the next verse.

David does not defend himself against their false accusations, but takes refuge in the LORD (verse 4). He asks the LORD to keep him "from the

hands of the wicked”, in whom we recognize Saul. He also asks the LORD to preserve him “from violent men” in whom we recognize Saul’s followers. They represent the enemies of the remnant in the end time. They “purposed” to “trip up” his feet, so that he falls and becomes powerless and unable to defend himself and they can trample him.

The next character trait of the enemies is their pride, their haughtiness (verse 5). They are targeting those who go their way in faithfulness to the LORD. They want to get rid of them, because they do not want to be reminded of God and His will. They have an arsenal of evil means at their disposal to catch the righteous.

Their choice is made. They want to leave nothing to chance and deploy the most cunning, vile means: a hidden trap and cords, a net by the wayside and snares. They leave no stone unturned in their battle against the LORD and His people. They lurk on the righteous as if they were trying to catch a dangerous wild animal. Surely one of their applied means will have the desired effect, they believe.

Psa 140:6-8 | Trusting in God’s Protection

*6 I said to the LORD, “You are my God;
Give ear, O LORD, to the voice of my supplications.*

*7 “O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
You have covered my head in the day of battle.*

*8 “Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Do not promote his [evil] device, [that] they [not] be exalted. Selah.*

In contrast to the lying language that evil, violent, proud people speak about the LORD, the psalmist utters the testimony to the LORD: “You are my God” (verse 6). To Him he takes refuge. We see an example of this in Hezekiah’s response to Rabshakeh’s lying language and Sennacherib’s letter, in which they portray the LORD as an idol (Isa 36:7,18-20; 37:10-13). They totally distort the Person and works of the LORD.

Hezekiah orders the people not to answer these slanders and distortions and spreads Sennacherib’s letter before the LORD (Isa 36:21; 37:14). This is what the psalmist also does: instead of answering the lies of the enemy, he goes to the LORD in prayer and declares that God is his God and Protector.

David calls God “GOD the Lord”, Yahweh Adonai (verse 7). As “GOD” or “LORD” He is the God of covenant with His people and as “Lord” He is the sovereign Ruler of the universe to Whom all is subject and Who governs all. That God is “the strength of my salvation”. God’s strength was demonstrated in covering his head “in the day of battle” (cf. Eph 6:16).

In the assurance of the shelter of God, the God-fearing asks God that He does “not grant ... the desires of the wicked” and “not promote his [evil] device” (verse 8). If God does not intervene and let the wicked one have his way, “they”, that is, the enemies of the remnant in the end time, would “be exalted”. It is impossible that God would allow this to happen.

Psa 140:9-11 | Prayer for Judgment

9 *“As for the head of those who surround me,
May the mischief of their lips cover them.*
10 *“May burning coals fall upon them;
May they be cast into the fire,
Into deep pits from which they cannot rise.*
11 *“May a slanderer not be established in the earth;
May evil hunt the violent man speedily.”*

The demand that the evil from the lips of the head of the enemies who surround him shall cover him himself is not a personal cry for vengeance (verse 9). It is asking God to punish injustice, threats, and slander according to the rule of retribution that the evil which a person does or wishes to do to another will affect himself (Exo 21:24; cf. Est 5:14; 9:25; Psa 7:15-16; Pro 26:27; Dan 6:25).

The God-fearing also indicates what is an appropriate judgment for his enemies (verse 10). He speaks of “burning coals”, “the fire”, and “deep pits”. Burning coals must be poured out on them from heaven (Psa 11:6); into the fire and deep pits they must fall. It marks their final judgment, for this judgment must result in “from which they cannot rise”. This judgment will affect all the enemies of the believing remnant.

It is clear in the light of God’s final judgment that “a slanderer” will “not be established in the earth” (verse 11). That person is characterized not only by lying words, but also by violence, a man whose deeds cause death

and destruction. This man of violence will be speedily hunted by “evil” until he is utterly driven out.

For evil speakers and evildoers there is no future in the earth and in the promised land – the word for “earth” may also be translated “land”. They will not share in the rest of the realm of peace. Their portion is hell. In it they will be thrown in accordance with their words and deeds and in it they will gnaw their tongues because of pain for all eternity.

Psa 140:12-13 | God Will Do Justice

*12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted
And justice for the poor.*

*13 Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name;
The upright will dwell in Your presence.*

After convincing himself that God has the last word and will bring judgment on all the wicked, the psalmist speaks with certainty: “I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted and justice for the poor” (verse 12). Judgment is not God’s last word. It is for the unrepentant wicked, but not for the afflicted and the poor.

“The afflicted” and “the poor” – expressions that describe the believing remnant – have suffered greatly from all the injustice and enmity done to them by the wicked. This God has made right through His judgment. There is no longer any doubt as to their right. The afflicted is the individual believer. Above all, it is the Lord Jesus. He has been subjected to the greatest injustice, He has been hated and blasphemed more than anyone else. He has surrendered everything to God Who judges righteously (1Pet 2:23) in the certainty that He will take care of His trial. The poor are “the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3). They constitute the believing remnant.

The afflicted and the poor of verse 12 are “the righteous” and “the upright” of verse 13. They are called “the righteous” because in all uprightness they have put their trust in the LORD on the basis of the covenant ratified by the blood of Christ.

Just as the God-fearing one says with certainty “I know” in verse 12, so in verse 13 he says “surely”. There is no doubt for faith that the righteous will

give thanks to the Name of the LORD. Their prayers are turned into songs of thanksgiving.

Neither is there doubt that the upright will dwell in the presence of God. They will no longer be hunted by enemies who were constantly targeting their lives. They now dwell in the millennial sabbath rest in the presence of God (Heb 4:9). How blessed are the people who have the LORD as their God!

Psalm 141

Introduction

This psalm is primarily about uprightness of heart in the midst of trials and temptations. The desire of the God-fearing is to be close to God. This desire is not only for a safe place, for protection, but also for spiritual counsel and support.

Prophetically, in Psalms 141-143 we find the people of Israel in distress. In Psalm 140 we see the threat of the enemy, now these enemies are on their way to Israel. In Psalm 141 we find the prayer of the remnant, in Psalm 142 it has become supplication and in Psalm 143 it is supplications (plural). The need increases as the enemy approaches.

Psa 141:1-4 | Prayer in Temptation

1 A Psalm of David.

O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me!

Give ear to my voice when I call to You!

2 May my prayer be counted as incense before You;

The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.

3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;

Keep watch over the door of my lips.

4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,

To practice deeds of wickedness

With men who do iniquity;

And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

It seems that David wrote this psalm during the time when he is being chased by Saul and his henchmen. He knows that only the LORD can help him. In any case, the distress he finds himself in, the opposition he experiences, is great, which is evident in the way he addresses the LORD. He calls upon Him, he begs Him to hasten to him, he asks Him to hear his voice as soon as he calls (verse 1b).

He asks not primarily for deliverance from his adversaries, but that his prayer will “be counted as incense” before God (verse 2; cf. Rev 5:8; 8:1-5). Incense speaks of what is pleasing to the LORD. David, and this includes the remnant of which he is a type, is not himself pleasing to the LORD, nor is his prayer.

Prayer becomes pleasant because incense is added to the prayers (Rev 8:3). That incense speaks of the pleasantness of Christ before God. That is the reason that the prayer of the remnant received power and ascends to the LORD. For us too, our prayers are pleasing to God only because the prayer is sent up in the pleasing of the Lord Jesus.

David asks that “the lifting up” of his hands may be counted “as the evening offering”. The lifting up of the hands is a prayer attitude (Psa 28:2; 63:4; 134:2; 1Tim 2:8). The evening offering speaks of the work of the Lord Jesus. The evening offering is the evening burnt offering that was to be offered each day (Exo 29:38-41). It was done at the ninth hour, which is three o’clock in the afternoon our time.

At that hour, while offering that offering, Elijah received an answer to his prayer (1Kgs 18:36-38). At that hour, centuries later, Daniel also received an answer to his prayer (Dan 9:21). At the ninth hour, the hour of prayer and of the evening burnt offering, Cornelius received a visit from heaven in response to his prayer (Acts 10:1-4). It is also the hour when the Lord Jesus received no answer when He cried out (Mt 27:46). Therewith He laid the basis for God to accept every prayer as incense.

He also longs that God, under the pressure of the evil in the midst of which he lives, will set a guard over his mouth and keep watch over the door of his lips (verse 3; cf. Mic 7:5). We can in principle be honest and upright in taking sides with the Lord, but an impatient or reproachful word spoils our testimony. As a result, the enemy gets a hold of us because we are no longer in right relationship with God. He who can restrain his tongue is a perfect man, “able to bridle the whole body as well” (Jam 3:2).

David doesn’t want to get along with wicked people when it comes to responding to something he doesn’t like. From that, in verse 3, he asks the LORD to keep him. In verse 4, his request is that he will be kept from joining with wicked people in their dealings, joining with them in “any

evil thing". He prays in accordance with what the Lord Jesus teaches His disciples to pray: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Mt 6:13).

He recognizes the danger of this, the tendency toward it in his heart. David is a wise man, for he pays attention to what is in his heart (cf. Pro 4:23). An evil thing would bring him "to practice deeds of wickedness", along "with men who do iniquity". The pursuit of an evil thing brings one to act wrongly and in the company of wrong people.

These men are men of influence. They have status in the community and can present evil very attractively, as "delicacies" (cf. Pro 4:17). David asks that God ensure that he will not "eat" of the delicacies of the wicked. Eating expresses fellowship. He does not want that (cf. 2Cor 6:14).

What the wicked present to believers is like bait: it looks tempting, but it is directed against their lives (cf. Pro 1:10-19). The only means that keeps them from coming under their influence is not to be in their company (1Cor 15:33; cf. Psa 1:1).

Psa 141:5-8 | Struck Down, but Not Destroyed

*5 Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me;
It is oil upon the head;
Do not let my head refuse it,
For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.
6 Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock,
And they hear my words, for they are pleasant.
7 As when one plows and breaks open the earth,
Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.
8 For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord;
In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.*

David does not want to participate with evil people even though they present an evil work as attractive (verse 4). At the same time he is open to being corrected (verse 5). Should he go a wrong way, and "the righteous" would smite or reprove him, he would greatly appreciate it (cf. Pro 9:8b; 15:31; 17:10; 19:26; 25:12). "The righteous" is Christ. The Hebrew word for

“kindness” here is Adonai or covenant faithfulness. That is, the LORD’s disciplining is done on the basis of His faithfulness to the covenant.

The LORD disciplines His people in order to bless them. Therefore, the wound inflicted by the LORD is always treated with “oil” to ease the pain (cf. Hos 6:1) Through His disciplining, we come to know His Person and His ways (cf. Hos 6:3). Often when we are punished, we feel attacked and hurt rather than grateful. “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid” (Pro 12:1).

Often we fail to see our own mistakes. If we recognize and acknowledge that, we will be grateful for people – our wife, children, friends – who point out things we are blind to. This should be appreciated as a benefit, as a kindness, and as oil on the head.

Oil on the head is also a symbol of honor for a welcome guest (cf. Lk 7:46). When a reprimand is seen as a benefit, as a symbol of honor, it will not be refused. Then we also accept the discipline God brings upon us as evidence of His love (Heb 12:6-7,11).

The last line of verse 5 seems to be about those who pursue him, David, that is, Saul and his henchmen. Opposite the Righteous Who strikes him out of love, there is Saul who wants to kill him. David spared this ruthless enemy twice when he could have killed him (1Sam 24:1-8; 26:1-12). Saul and his followers, in all their misery – for they are the ones who are truly in misery because they want to kill God’s chosen king – have been an object of his prayer.

The judges who had been hunting him at Saul’s behest “are thrown down by the sides of the rock” (verse 6), that is, he did not kill them, but spared their lives. They heard his words, “for they are pleasant”. These are the words David speaks to Saul after he has spared Saul’s life (1Sam 24:9-17).

In contrast to David’s sparing attitude and pleasant words is the murderous action of Saul and his men toward him and his men (verse 7). It feels to him that his bones and those of his men lie just before the realm of death, “at the mouth of Sheol”. The ground on which they live he experiences as cleft and split. Nowhere is firmness, while death lurks. Prophetically, this is about the destructive attack of the king of the North with his – probably islamic – allies (Psa 79:1-3; cf. Jer 14:16; Zec 13:8; 14:2).

At the same time, the picture of the farmer plowing and breaking open the earth as he plows it is a picture of hope. After plowing and breaking open the soil, he sows new seed in the ground. It is a work of preparation to make the ground ripe for new seed (cf. Isa 28:23-25). In this way the Lord also brings us into difficult circumstances to bring us to repentance, so that the seed of the Word may take root in our hearts. His work is a work of hope. We therefore see in this verse a reference to the resurrection.

While he is in danger “every hour”, so to speak, and dies “daily” (1Cor 15:30-31), as he says in verse 7, his eyes are toward “GOD, the Lord” (verse 8). He expects his help from Him Who is the faithful God of the covenant, “GOD” or “LORD”, Yahweh, and Who is the sovereign Ruler, “Lord”, Adonai. To Him he has taken “refuge”.

With boldness he asks: “Do not leave me defenseless.” In doing so, he is asking God to fulfill His promises to him, for at the moment he is a defenseless man, although he is God’s anointed. Literally it says “do not pour out my soul”, that is, ‘do not leave me helpless and dying’. Here it literally is about life or death. The psalmist is asking here if he may remain alive.

The eyes of the robber on the cross next to the Savior are toward the Savior (Lk 23:42). He thinks not of his suffering, but of his soul, and asks the Lord to think of him when He comes in His kingdom. He takes refuge in Him and asks that his soul not be left defenseless. He receives more than he asks for: he may be with the Lord Jesus in paradise immediately after his death (Lk 23:43).

Psa 141:9-10 | Keeping and Retribution

*9 Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me,
And from the snares of those who do iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I pass by safely.*

David knows that his enemies are still there and want to do him harm. Therefore, he asks to be kept from cunning snares and traps in which, if he is not careful, he may just be caught (verse 9). He does not imagine that he will be able to outwit his enemies and that they will not catch him. The Only One Who can keep him is the LORD.

In verse 10 he turns the matter around. He asks the LORD to “let the wicked fall into their own nets”. This is to happen to all of them leaving nobody who is a danger to him. The LORD must maintain that situation until he has passed and achieved the goal God has in mind for him.

Psalm 142

Psa 142:1-4 | No One Who Regards Me

1 Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer.

I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;

I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.

2 I pour out my complaint before Him;

I declare my trouble before Him.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,

You knew my path.

In the way where I walk

They have hidden a trap for me.

4 Look to the right and see;

For there is no one who regards me;

There is no escape for me;

No one cares for my soul.

This again is a “maskil of David” (verse 1a). It is the last of the thirteen psalms called *maskil*, instruction or teaching (Psa 32:1; 42:1; 44:1; 45:1; 52:1; 53:1; 54:1; 55:1; 74:1; 78:1; 88:1; 89:1; 142:1). For the explanation, see at Psalm 32:1.

The experiences that David describes in this psalm are instruction or teaching for others. Thereby he wants to let people know that they can feel completely alone, but that the Lord is still there for anyone who wants to remain faithful to Him.

David writes this psalm when he is being chased by Saul and he has hidden himself “in the cave” (1Sam 24:3-7). Psalm 57 he wrote under the same circumstances (cf. Psa 57:1).

Prophetically, we see here the continuation of Psalm 141. The threat described there increases in this psalm. The only option for the remnant is to expect everything from above, from the LORD (cf. Isa 37:14-20). Psalm 142 describes their supplication. It is emphasized in the heading that this psalm is “a prayer” (cf. Psa 86:1).

David does not pray in his heart, but aloud, as Old Testament believers usually do (verse 1b). He raises his voice to pray and he does so in a very insistent way. He says he is crying aloud to the LORD and supplicating. The circumstances demand it. He is in great distress because he is surrounded by Saul and his men.

In verse 2 he goes on to describe his state of mind. He has concerns and pours out his complaint, his great need, before God and makes his distress known. The word 'complaint' does not mean complaining about God or people, but concerns the distress in which he is. He boldly pours out his heart before the LORD. This is prophetic of what the remnant of Israel will do in the end time, which will be "a time of distress" (Jer 30:7).

He is in bad shape. His spiritual condition is at a low point, his spirit is overwhelmed within him (verse 3). The psalmist is standing, as it were, in the middle of a minefield. A wrong step is disastrous and deadly. But – and then a ray of hope lights up in his dark circumstances – he knows that God knew his path and that He was always present. This is of great importance to him because his enemies "have hidden a trap" for him "in the way" where he walks. They also know his path and make frantic and vicious attempts to trap him on that path.

And then his loneliness (verse 4). When he looks to the right, the place of strength, where someone would be able to help him, someone who would be there for him, he finds that there is no one there. There is no one at all who regards him. He has been abandoned by everyone and is shunned like the plague. There is no one who cares for his soul. In the end time, the remnant will look around and realize that there is no one at all who can or will help.

If someone were with him, it might have been possible to escape. But now there is no one to take care of his soul, no one to encourage him, no one to take any action at all that he can stay alive. His companions in the cave do not understand him for not killing Saul now that he has the opportunity to do so (1Sam 24:4-8).

There has been no one so lonely and misunderstood on earth as the Lord Jesus. Thus many of His disciples drop out, no longer following Him (Jn 6:66). When He asks His three most trusted disciples to watch with Him at

Gethsemane, they fall asleep. When He is captured, all His disciples flee from Him (Mk 14:50).

Psa 142:5-7 | You Will Deal Bountifully With Me

*5 I cried out to You, O LORD;
I said, "You are my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
6 "Give heed to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors,
For they are too strong for me.
7 "Bring my soul out of prison,
So that I may give thanks to Your name;
The righteous will surround me,
For You will deal bountifully with me."*

When David looks around, there is no one, he has said in verse 4. Then he looks up, and there is the LORD (verse 5). He is the Only One he has. To Him he calls, for He is his refuge. That makes the threat of death go away, because whoever has the LORD as his refuge, his is his "portion in the land of the living". There is none among those living on earth to whom he can go. All living people are against him. Only the living God remains.

This is also the experience of the Israel of God (Deu 32:36; Isa 49:16). Paul also knows such experiences. He is abandoned. No one supported him in his defense before the emperor. But the Lord stood with him (2Tim 4:16-17; cf. Acts 18:9; 23:11). This has given him the strength to persevere in his trust in Him.

David has said that the LORD is his refuge. Therefore, he asks Him even more insistently to heed his cries, for he is "brought very low", that is, he is at the end of his strength (verse 6). He is constantly on the run. This is wearing him down. He cannot stand against his persecutors, "for they are too strong for" him.

David compares his situation to a prison (verse 7). It is similar to that of Hezekiah in Isaiah 36-37 and to that of the remnant in the future. He is a prisoner of the distress in which he is and asks the LORD to lead his soul

out of it (cf. Psa 25:17). He asks this not primarily to be free again, but that he “may give thanks to Your Name”. His concern is the honor of God. That is always more important than our own happiness. In the circumstances in which he now finds himself, he can only cry out to the LORD in his great need and there is no question of giving thanks to His Name.

The prayer of the remnant will begin with the words: “Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name” (Mt 6:9). The hallowing of the Father’s Name is most important. Similarly, the restoration of Joseph’s brothers begins with Judah not thinking of himself, but that he is thinking only of the feelings of his father Jacob. After that, and not before, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and their suffering is over.

David mentions as a secondary consequence of his deliverance by the LORD that “the righteous will surround” him. They will take the place of his persecutors who now surround him. In his distress he is alone, with no one to care for him. When the LORD has redeemed him, the righteous will share in the redemption. They will join him in giving thanks to the LORD for His bountiful dealing with him personally by answering his cry for help. We also see this in Psalm 1, which begins with the walk of the individual, faithful believer and ends with the fellowship of the righteous (Psa 1:1,5).

Psalm 143

Introduction

Psalm 143 is the seventh and last of the 'penitential psalms' (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). This psalm is a profound and persistent prayer in distress from which we can learn.

Psalms 141-143 are a retrospective look at the attack by the enemies of the people in the end time on Jerusalem and the feelings it creates among the remnant. In that attack, the land, the city, and the temple were destroyed and two-thirds of the people were killed (Zec 13:8). What David does in Psalm 141 and Psalm 142, spreading his distress before the LORD (Psa 142:3), is now repeated more deeply and at greater length.

The tone in Psalm 143 is deeper, the need is greater, there is urgency. It feels in verse 7 as if the funeral is already underway. The psalmist asks if the LORD will destroy the enemy without further delay. The remnant spreads its agony and distress before the LORD, as Hezekiah once did (Isa 37:14-20).

Psalm 143 bears resemblance to Psalm 140. As in that psalm, David in this psalm cries out to God to save him from his enemies who are about to kill him. We also find here, as in Psalm 140, how during his prayer David grows from despair to trust in God that He will save.

We see here, what we ourselves often experience, that after an acquired trust that God will help, which we see in Psalm 140, we will again find ourselves in need and will again cry out to God, which we see in this psalm. We will also, like David, again have the experience of His salvation.

It is also difficult for us to constantly live at the same level of faith confidence, although we know so much more of Christ and have received His Spirit indwelling. That said, such experiences give us a deeper sense of our own smallness and powerlessness and also a greater sense of Who God is.

Psa 143:1-2 | Call for Answer

| *1 A Psalm of David.*

*Hear my prayer, O LORD,
 Give ear to my supplications!
 Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!
 2 And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
 For in Your sight no man living is righteous.*

For “a Psalm of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

David is in great distress and turns to God in prayer for relief (verse 1b). For he believes in God as the listening, involved God. He asks Him to hear his prayer and to give ear to his supplications. As ground for being answers he mentions God’s “faithfulness” and God’s “righteousness”. God’s *faithfulness* is connected to His promises. God’s *righteousness* is connected to His actions. He does what He promises. His faithfulness and righteousness are based on His covenant. God is faithful and righteous toward the Lord Jesus and His blood when He answers the psalmist’s prayer (1Jn 1:9).

David is aware of God’s righteousness and of his own iniquity (verse 2). He does not appeal to his innocence here, as he does in other psalms. In those cases, it is a false accusation by men. Here he is face to face with God. This causes a soul-searching struggle in him that will also be found in the remnant. The soul struggle is evident in the question whether the LORD will not enter into judgment with them, for they are aware of their failure.

He asks God to hear him and give ear to him despite his iniquity. In doing so, he takes the place of the supplicant who appeals to the faithfulness and righteousness of God. These are based on the blood of the new covenant, that is, on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross of Calvary. There is no thought in his mind of ‘a claim’ to be answered. He comes to God as His servant, thus indicating that he claims no right, for a servant has no rights (cf. Lk 17:10).

In the end time, when the remnant is threatened by hostile powers, it will inwardly bring about an agony over their sins. It is about two great sins: the rejection of Christ and the acceptance of the antichrist (Jn 5:43). We see these sins and the torment it causes in his conscience in the life of David as a result of his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah. We also see it in the brothers of Joseph who are tormented by their rejection of their brother.

Psa 143:3-6 | Reason for Supplications

*3 For the enemy has persecuted my soul;
He has crushed my life to the ground;
He has made me dwell in dark places, like those who have long been dead.*

*4 Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;
My heart is appalled within me.*

*5 I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all Your doings;
I muse on the work of Your hands.*

*6 I stretch out my hands to You;
My soul [longs] for You, as a parched land. Selah.*

The opposition the psalmist experiences is described in general terms, which makes the psalm of general application, even for us (verse 3). He says that the enemy persecutes his soul and crushes his life to the ground, making him feel that he dwells in dark places, like those who have long been dead (cf. Jer 51:39; Lam 3:6). He no longer imagines himself in the land of the living, as one who has been given up by God and men. It does indicate how violently he is persecuted.

In addition to outward persecution, there is also inward pressure. Because of the fierce persecution, his lust to live has perished (verse 4). His spirit is overwhelmed within him; he is near despair. His heart is appalled within him. Inside him there is no hope of outcome. This is the situation in which the believing remnant will be because of the threat of their enemies.

His thoughts do not stop (verse 5). He remembers, meditates on and muses on what God has done in the past. In his mind he goes back to “the days of old” (cf. Psa 77:5), to God’s dealings with the patriarchs, the formation of His people and their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. He meditates “on all Your doings” and muses “on the work of Your hands”, where, with respect to the remnant, we can think of God’s actions for the deliverance of His own from the hands of the antichrist and the king of the North.

When the faithful remembers God in this way, and meditates and muses on what He has done, he cannot help but stretch out his hands to Him in prayer (verse 6; cf. Lam 1:17). To whom else could he go? He needs God as urgently as parched land is thirsty for rain (cf. Psa 42:1-2; 63:1).

Psa 143:7-9 | Call for Quick Answer

*7 Answer me quickly, O LORD, my spirit fails;
 Do not hide Your face from me,
 Or I will become like those who go down to the pit.
 8 Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning;
 For I trust in You;
 Teach me the way in which I should walk;
 For to You I lift up my soul.
 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies;
 I take refuge in You.*

In these verses, the righteous addresses the LORD in his distress with a wide variety of prayers. He begs for a quick answer, he sends the spiritual distress signal SOS to heaven, as it were, for his spirit is failing (verse 7). As long as God hides His face from him, he feels like “those who go down to the pit” (cf. Psa 28:1). That is, he feels like dead.

He begs God to let him hear His lovingkindness in the morning, or to let him see the faithfulness to His covenant (verse 8). Now it is night in his life, but he still trusts God. He does not give up his trust in God. After all, there is no one else to whom he can turn. And so let God teach him the way in which he should walk. With this he asks for the will of God for his life. He wants to live to the glory of God. Therefore he lifts up his soul to God. There is hope expressed in this.

At the same time, there are enemies who want to kill him to prevent him from going the way that God teaches him (verse 9). Yet let the LORD deliver him from those enemies, for he takes refuge in Him. This indicates his confidence. You only take refuge in God when you are sure to find with Him the safety and protection you seek.

Psa 143:10-12 | Request for Teaching and Leading

*10 Teach me to do Your will,
 For You are my God;
 Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.
 11 For the sake of Your name, O LORD, revive me.
 In Your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.*

*12 And in Your lovingkindness, cut off my enemies
And destroy all those who afflict my soul,
For I am Your servant.*

From that security, the taking refuge in God in verse 9, there is the desire to be taught by Him so that He may do His will (verse 10). As an additional motive, the psalmist says to God that He is his God. He is in a personal relationship with that God through the covenant. This is the basis of the psalmist's prayer in verses 10-12. This prayer begins with the acknowledgment that the LORD is his God and ends with the acknowledgment that he is the LORD's servant.

From his living covenant relationship with God, he asks Him for leading for his life by His "good Spirit" (cf. Neh 9:20). God's Spirit is a good Spirit and therefore His teaching is good and He leads in the right path. That good way runs "on level ground", ground without pits to fall into and without stones to trip over.

Because the psalmist feels that his life has been crushed to the ground (verse 3) and he is like those who go down in the pit (verse 7), he asks the LORD to revive him (verse 11). Thereby he appeals to the "Name" of the LORD. To save his soul from distress he appeals to the "righteousness" of the LORD, not his own, for he does not possess it.

The honor of the Name of the LORD is at stake. That Name is made great when the LORD answers the psalmist's prayer. That includes staying alive and his soul brought out of trouble; that also includes the enemies cut off in accordance with the covenant (verse 12).

For this, the psalmist appeals to the "lovingkindness" or covenant faithfulness of the LORD. To the righteous, the destruction of enemies is evidence of God's lovingkindness toward him. Finally, he points out to the LORD that he is His servant as a motive for the LORD to destroy all those who afflict his soul. That he is the servant of the LORD means that the LORD is his Owner and the Commander. When the enemies are destroyed, he is again in a position to serve God, which is now made impossible for him by his enemies.

Psalm 144

Introduction

Psalm 144 is a song of thanksgiving and praise (verses 1,2,9-15) in response to a tremendous redemption, with David (verses 1,10) being a type of the remnant.

The prayers of the remnant in Psalms 140-143 have been answered. The armies of the enemy have been destroyed. The enemy is described in this psalm as “aliens” (verses 7,11) who threaten to flood the promised land like a tsunami of great waters (verse 7). The LORD will nullify the threat by Himself destroying the hostile armies.

Psa 144:1-4 | God’s Power and Weak Man

1 [A Psalm] of David.

Blessed be the LORD, my rock,

Who trains my hands for war,

[And] my fingers for battle;

2 My lovingkindness and my fortress,

My stronghold and my deliverer,

My shield and He in whom I take refuge,

Who subdues my people under me.

3 O LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?

Or the son of man, that You think of him?

4 Man is like a mere breath;

His days are like a passing shadow.

For “[A Psalm] of David” (verse 1a) see at Psalm 3:1.

Verses 1b-2 are a title and a summary of the content of this psalm. David begins not with a prayer, like the previous psalms, but with a song of praise (verse 1b). He blesses or praises the LORD as “my rock” (Psa 18:46). Therefore, he is unshakable in battle. The LORD also teaches his hands to fight (cf. Psa 18:34). Therefore, he is effective in battle. The LORD teaches

his fingers to wage war. Therefore, he knows how to approach the enemy to overcome him.

David has been a warrior from his youth. He fought in the Name of God (1Sam 17:45-47). He did not go into battle without first asking God's will (1Chr 14:10,14). Thus, he was taught by the LORD to fight and wage war. That is the secret of all his victories.

We too have a battle to fight, and it is a spiritual struggle (Phil 4:3; Col 4:12; Jude 1:3). God wants to teach us how to fight. He gives the rules for this in His Word, for He wants us to fight in a lawful way (2Tim 2:5). Only when we fight like that does He give His reward. He gives us His armor, which enables us to resist the enemy and stand firm (Eph 6:10-18).

The LORD's teaching in battle and in war David sees as an expression of God's lovingkindness (verse 2). Israel's deliverance through victory over the enemy is here an expression of God's lovingkindness, God's faithfulness to His covenant and promise. The various pictures speak of keeping, of support, and of redemption.

Through the LORD's teaching, David knows how to fight. At the same time, he remains aware that he needs God's protection. God is therefore to him his "fortress", his "stronghold" (cf. Psa 18:2). From that shelter he can attack the enemy. In doing so, he counts on the LORD as "my deliverer". He does not attribute any victory to himself.

God is his shield behind which he takes shelter. What arrow or sword can then do him any harm? The enemy would first have to eliminate God. And since that is impossible, David is completely invulnerable to any weapon of the enemy. God is his refuge and therefore he is perfectly safe from the enemy.

David did not take the law into his own hands, but placed it in the hand of the LORD. Therefore, he can say of the LORD: "Who subdues my people under me." It can also, and probably better, be translated with: "Who subdues peoples to me" (cf. Psa 18:47). This is more consistent with the interpretation of this psalm.

That thought is wondrous in his eyes. So he says to the LORD: "O LORD, what is man, that You take knowledge of him?" (verse 3). Man, David him-

self, is so insignificant, and yet God takes knowledge of him. He cannot understand that God subjects peoples to him, yet he is no more than a man, a mortal, a void, impermanent man (cf. Psa 8:4).

The parallel with Psalm 8 makes it clear that the King here is also the Son of Man, Who will rule over all creation (Psa 8:7; cf. Dan 7:13). To this end, all enemies must be made a footstool for His feet (Psa 110:1).

David says it even more strongly in verse 4 than in verse 3 when he compares man to a sigh, a breath (Psa 39:5). You don't see a breath. When it is cold, you see vapor, but only for a moment and it has disappeared invisibly, leaving no trace (Jam 4:13-14). A shadow is equally elusive and quickly passing (Job 8:9; Psa 102:11; Ecc 6:12). To a shadow there is no hold.

Psa 144:5-8 | Prayer for God's Intervention

5 Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down;

Touch the mountains, that they may smoke.

6 Flash forth lightning and scatter them;

Send out Your arrows and confuse them.

7 Stretch forth Your hand from on high;

Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters,

Out of the hand of aliens

8 Whose mouths speak deceit,

And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

Realizing his own utter powerlessness and futility, he asks the LORD to act against his enemies (verse 5). He asks Him to bow His heavens, that is, to leave His dwelling place, and come down. Then He must touch the mountains, that they may smoke (Psa 104:32b). This impressive natural phenomenon shows that the LORD has descended.

David learned from the LORD how to fight and wage war (verse 1). In fact, it means that he has insight into how the LORD fights. He now uses this insight to suggest to the LORD how He should fight the enemy (verse 6). He asks the LORD to flash forth His lightning and scatter the enemy. When He shoots His arrows, His lightning (Psa 18:14), He will confuse them.

While the enemy is in confusion, the LORD is able to stretch forth His hands from on high and deliver Him (verse 7). Deliverance occurs by res-

cuing him “out of great waters, out of the hand of aliens” (cf. Rev 12:15). Great waters speak of great tribulation by the nations (Isa 8:7). The hand of aliens speaks of people who assert right to God’s land but have no connection to God. These people speak a language unintelligible to the Jews (cf. Isa 28:11; 33:19).

What characterizes these strangers is a mouth that speaks deceit (verse 8; cf. Dan 11:23). There is nothing upright in their speaking. They are untrustworthy, treacherous in what they say. In addition, their “right hand is a right hand of falsehood”. This hand is contrasted with the hand trained by the LORD in verse 1.

With the right hand, powerful deeds are done (Psa 118:15-16) and oaths are sworn to (Isa 62:8). However, there is nothing upright in all their powerful acts and in all their powerful oaths they have sworn. What they say is not honest, but false. What they do or promise to do is diametrically opposed to the truth, it is mere deceit.

Psa 144:9-11 | A New Song for a New Beginning

*9 I will sing a new song to You, O God;
Upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You,
10 Who gives salvation to kings,
Who rescues David His servant from the evil sword.
11 Rescue me and deliver me out of the hand of aliens,
Whose mouth speaks deceit
And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*

A new deliverance, ushering in a new age, calls for a new song (verse 9; Psa 33:3). In view of God’s forthcoming intervention to deliver him, David says he will sing a new song to God. He will use “a harp of ten strings” and sing praises to Him.

The first song is sung by God’s people in Exodus 15, after their deliverance from Egypt and the complete extermination of Pharaoh and his army (Exo 15:1). Here in Psalm 144 they sing a new song after all enemies have been defeated. In the Old Testament, there is mention of “a new song” seven times (Psa 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isa 42:10). The New Testament mentions it twice: in Revelation 5 the new song is sung by the twenty-four

elders (Rev 5:9) and in Revelation 14 by the faithful remnant of the two tribes (Rev 14:3).

God is the great Savior or Victor (verse 10). Kings seem to be the most powerful people on earth. When they are saved or are victorious, they may well think that they owe a salvation or a victory to their strength or cleverness. The reality is that salvation or victory comes from God, He “gives” it.

David is deeply aware of this. He is king, but he does not call himself that here. He speaks of “David His servant”. Nor does he speak of salvation or victory, but of rescue “from the evil sword”. By this he acknowledges that he is totally dependent on God. He has no power but only the power God has given him. There is no hope of deliverance but only in God.

Using the same words he used earlier in the psalm, David once again asks for rescue and deliverance out of the hand of aliens (verse 11; verses 7b-8). Last time, his request for deliverance was followed by a new song (verse 9). Here he attaches to his request for deliverance blessings for God’s people. He describes those blessings in the following verses.

Psa 144:12-15 | Blessing for God’s People

*12 Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants,
And our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace;
13 Let our garners be full, furnishing every kind of produce,
[And] our flocks bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields;
14 Let our cattle bear
Without mishap and without loss,
[Let there be] no outcry in our streets!
15 How blessed are the people who are so situated;
How blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!*

David longs for deliverance from battle and war to establish a peaceful society. What happens to the women, children, livestock and possessions during the absence of the men who go to war? These questions occupy minds in wartime and make one long for a time of peace. David sees it in his mind. He lists in verses 12-14 a number of blessings that characterize a time of peace (cf. Deu 28:3-8). This is the new song he spoke of in verse 9.

All these blessings will be the portion of Israel during the millennial realm of peace. A foretaste of them will be enjoyed during the reign of Solomon, the son of David, who is a picture of the great Son of David, the Lord Jesus. Israel will then be the most powerful nation on earth. Men then will be at home managing their houses.

The first and great blessing is that of a happy family life. This can be seen in the prosperity of the sons and daughters. There is also social prosperity. This can be seen in the garners and the flocks. Added to this is the fact that all this will take place in freedom. It is the picture of perfect happiness enjoyed in undisturbed peace.

1. When there is peace, “our sons”, the sons of the people, will not be called away for war to endure hardship in the field or even to perish (verse 12). On the contrary, they will be at home “in their youth” and “be as grown-up plants”. By high grown plants we can think of cedars and palm trees. There they are “the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified” (Isa 61:3; cf. Psa 128:3; Mt 15:13).

2. The next blessing is that “our daughters” are “as corner pillars fashioned as for a palace”. Here we are talking about a home. Corner pillars are important in a building. They give strength to the house. They are also beautiful, being “fashioned” like decorated pillars of a palace. This indicates the great value of the daughters of God’s people.

3. Next, “our garners be full, furnishing every kind of produce” (verse 13). Literally “from one kind to another kind”. It means not only a great quantity, but also a great variety. The supply of food will be so great and diverse that there will be an abundance of food in a variety of tastes for both man and beast.

4. “Our flocks” are very fruitful, they “bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields”. The flocks of sheep are large and will continually increase. The fields contain abundant green grass for the flocks which keeps the animals healthy. The flocks are there in the first place to offer sacrifices to God. Furthermore, they may also be eaten.

5. In addition to the flocks of sheep, there are also cattle or oxen. Of these, David says that “our cattle bear” (verse 14). This is because of the abundant harvest. Cattle are draught animals and load carriers. This indicates

that in a time of peace there will be much service work, all to the glory of God (cf. 1Cor 9:9).

6. Security is also fine: there is no “mishap” or “loss”. “Without mishap” is literally “without breach”, meaning no breach in the defensive walls. There are no breaches in the wall, through which the enemy could enter. “Loss” is literally “outbreak” or “disaster”. The cities are safe places to live.

7. The final blessing is that there is “no outcry in our streets”. Because the cities are safe dwelling places, there is nothing that causes wailing. Within the cities there is peace according to the established order and rules. Everyone respects the rights of the other. There are no neighborly quarrels. Everyone is also healthy. There is no cause for wailing in the squares of the city.

The people who have experienced the LORD’s salvation, protection and blessing are a happy people in two respects (verse 15). First, this people fares as described in the previous verses, with happy families and great material prosperity. David is an example of the LORD’s salvation, protection and blessing. His wish is that this may also be the case with the remnant.

Secondly and more importantly, this people belongs to the LORD, Who is their God (Psa 33:12). He is the God Who made a covenant with them. On that basis He has bestowed upon them all these blessings. As a result, these blessings cannot be taken from them and they will possess them forever. He is the source of all happiness. To possess Him is to possess everything, without any possibility of ever losing any of it.

Psalm 145

Introduction

In this psalm, we find ourselves in thought in the millennial realm of peace. The last earthly enemy has been defeated, the tribulation is over, and the complete redemption is celebrated. We hear Christ here and also the Spirit of Christ in the remnant praising God.

The situation is that the kingdom of God has been established in public (Rev 19:6). The Messiah is in the midst of Israel. The heart of Christ, seen here as Man, as Messiah, is full of praise to the LORD. He starts the song of praise (cf. Psa 22:22b). The remnant kept by God joins in the Messiah's song of praise. Finally, the whole world will join in the thanksgiving, praising the LORD's greatness, goodness, and wonder works.

This psalm is again an 'acrostic', that is, each verse begins with the next letter – all but one, the letter *nun* – of the Hebrew alphabet.

Division of the psalm

Verses 1-7 Praise because of God's works

Verses 8-13 Praise because of God's covenant faithfulness

Verses 14-21 Praise because of God's keeping hand as Sustainer of creation.

At the same time, the warning sounds that during the realm of peace all wickedness will be judged immediately (verse 20b; Psa 101:8; Zep 3:5; Zec 5:3).

Psa 145:1-3 | Praise of God's Kingship

1 [A Psalm] of Praise, of David.

I will extol You, my God, O King,

And I will bless Your name forever and ever.

2 Every day I will bless You,

And I will praise Your name forever and ever.

3 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised,

And His greatness is unsearchable.

This psalm is a psalm “of Praise, of David” (verse 1a). Other psalms work gradually toward a psalm of praise, but this psalm begins with it. It is the only psalm that begins like this. All of the book of Psalms is called a book of praises by the Jews, but only this psalm of the 150 psalms is explicitly called “[a psalm] of praise”.

In David we hear Christ as Man and Messiah singing the praises of God (cf. Psa 22:22). He calls God “My God, the King”, as it literally says (verse 1b). That God is now the King means that the LORD has returned to Zion. The realm of peace is beginning (Isa 52:7-8). He speaks of praising His God, the King, and praising His Name, “forever and ever” (cf. Psa 115:18). There will never be a time when Christ will not sing the praises of His God, the King. This He will do in a special way in the realm of peace.

He does so every day of God’s royal reign during the realm of peace (verse 2; cf. Psa 119:164). Every day is also a day of blessing for us (Lam 3:23) and therefore gives cause to praise God. Once again Christ pronounces it that He will praise God’s Name, “forever and ever”. God is connected to His earthly people Israel as King. Nowhere are God or Christ called King of the church or the individual New Testament believer. The church is connected as a bride to Christ as Bridegroom and also as a body to Christ as Head. Each individual believer is connected to Christ as Lord.

The reason for this incessant praise is the greatness of the LORD (verse 3). To underscore this, the word “great” occurs twice. First, the LORD is great and therefore worthy of praise. Second, His greatness is beyond human comprehension, and yet He wants us to praise Him.

He is “highly to be praised” and at the same time His greatness exceeds all thanksgiving and praise because “His greatness is unsearchable” (Job 5:9; 9:10; Isa 40:28). No one can fully understand His judgments and His ways (Rom 11:33). So it is for us with regard to the love of Christ. We may come to know it, while that love surpasses knowledge (Eph 3:19).

Psa 145:4-9 | Let Each Next Generation Praise the LORD

*4 One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.*

5 On the glorious splendor of Your majesty

And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.

*6 Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts,
And I will tell of Your greatness.*

*7 They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness
And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.*

*8 The LORD is gracious and merciful;
Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.*

*9 The LORD is good to all,
And His mercies are over all His works.*

Verses 4-7 can also be translated in the imperative, e.g., verse 4a: "Let one generation praise Your works to another." In the realm of peace, the children, the grandchildren, and so on, will praise the LORD in accordance with the covenant the LORD will make with Israel (cf. Isa 59:21).

What the psalmist is doing, praising and magnifying the LORD, will continue from generation to generation (verse 4). The old, rebellious, apostate generation is no more. It was judged at Christ's coming to earth. A new generation, a people made up of the righteous (Isa 60:21), has entered the realm of peace. They extol God's works and will pass it on to the next generation. For us, we are already declaring God's mighty acts to our children.

Each new generation in the realm of peace will praise God's works and declare His mighty acts, because the previous generation passed it on to them. Always through, the remembrance of God's works and His mighty acts in the past will remain alive. Enjoying the blessing of the realm of peace is not possible without thinking of its source and the way in which He wrought this wonderful blessing.

Each coming generation will meditate "on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wonderful works" (verse 5). Each new generation agrees with what Christ says. No one is better able than He to pass on the glorious glory of God's majesty and God's wonderful works. He did that in His life as Man in humiliation on earth. He will do that in the realm of peace when He reigns as Messiah.

We as New Testament believers may behold His glory (Jn 17:24) and see Him in glory, crowned with glory and honor (Heb 2:9). Of this we may speak and testify, we may declare His lordship over our lives.

The people who have entered the realm of peace “shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts” (verse 6). They will remember the awesome deliverance that the LORD wrought for them through the judgments on their enemies. The Messiah Himself will tell of the greatness of the LORD.

It is the psalmist’s wish that from generation to generation people will remember and praise God’s awesome deeds. “They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness” (verse 7). For God’s people, the judgment on the hostile powers is a proof of His abundant goodness to them. When they think about it, their mouths overflow with gratitude. They start shouting “joyfully of Your righteousness”.

God’s acts of judgment on the enemies and in favor of His people are also acts of justice. Justice means acting in accordance with the norm, with the law, in this case with the covenant. These acts are elaborated in verses 8-13.

His righteousness demands judgment on the rebellious nations. His righteousness also demands the fulfillment of all the promises of blessing He has made to His people. For His people, who, like the nations, have deserved judgment, His righteousness has been fulfilled through the sacrifice of His Son, through which the blood of the new covenant has been shed. The rebellious nations have rejected that sacrifice and therefore must pay for their sins themselves.

Because God’s justice for His people has been satisfied by His Son, the people can sing joyfully that the LORD is “gracious and merciful” and “slow to anger and great in lovingkindness” (verse 8; cf. Exo 34:6; Psa 103:8). We see that God is slow to anger in the long time He endures rebellious man, “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2Pet 3:9).

His lovingkindness, Adonai, is great because He is great. His lovingkindness is great because there is a new covenant, based on the blood of the new covenant through the great sacrifice of His Son. Because of that, He can offer a greatness of forgiveness, by which even the greatest sin can be forgiven. This is what the people of God will be aware of in the realm of peace. We will also be aware of that when we consider who we are by nature and how great and numerous the blessings are we have received.

These impressive attributes of God are not just for Israel. The power of the blood of the new covenant is so great that it enables God to give His

blessing to us in the New Testament even apart from Israel (2Cor 3:6-18). The blessing of the new covenant is not the result of Israel meeting the requirements of the covenant. That blessing comes because the Mediator bore the curse of the covenant and paid the price of the covenant with His blood. Israel will receive the blessings of the covenant by virtue of grace. And if it is grace, then God can grant these blessings to us New Testament believers as well.

In the realm of peace, not only Israel enjoys God's abundant blessing, but through Israel all creation shares in it (Rom 11:11-15). This is why Christ, and with Him all who share in the blessing, says that the LORD is "good to all" (cf. Psa 100:5) and that "His mercies are over all His works" (verse 9). On everything He has made is the seal of His mercy. It bears the testimony of Him as the mild, kind God with a heart full of love, Who loves nothing more than to bless. He takes care of creation and the creatures that suffer as a result of sin.

Psa 145:10-13 | All Works Give Thanks to the LORD

*10 All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD,
And Your godly ones shall bless You.*

*11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom
And talk of Your power;*

*12 To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts
And the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom.*

*13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Your dominion [endures] throughout all generations.*

In verse 10 comes the response of all the objects of God's mercy to His mercy. All of God's works will give thanks to Him. God has made everything to His glory, and that will be seen and heard. The thanks of all God's works will be expressed through the mouths of "Your godly ones". All who share in the blessings of the new covenant will give thanks to Him for it with deep gratitude. Through the great tribulation there were almost no more faithful, Adonai (Psa 12:1). Now, in the realm of peace, Israel has been purified and they are all faithful or godly ones. They are faithful to the covenant and receive the blessings of the covenant.

Verses 11-13 form the middle of this psalm. These verses deal with kingship, again underscoring that the theme of this psalm is that God is King in the realm of peace. God's works contribute to "the glory of Your kingdom" (verse 11). The glory of God's kingdom is God's own glory reflected through the kingdom.

They call that to mind every time they see what they enjoy. It was all brought about by Him, by His power. That is what the godly ones talk about with each other. That is their fellowship, in which God is present and watches and listens with His pleasure.

From this a testimony emanates to "the sons of men" (verse 12). His kingdom is not limited to Israel, for the LORD is "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev 17:14). Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:10-11). His power is over all nations, yes, over all creation, that is, heaven and earth (Mt 28:18). As a result, His "mighty acts" are made known everywhere, as well as "the glory of the majesty of" His kingdom. That glory of the majesty was seen by the disciples on the mount of transfiguration (2Pet 1:17).

What characterizes our conversations? If our mouth is full of God's mighty acts of grace and mercy which He has shown to us, that may make people jealous to partake of that as well. We can also testify to it by showing in our lives that we have been brought into a kingdom of radiant glory, namely the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love (Col 1:13).

The kingdom of God is not a temporary, transferable kingdom (Dan 2:44). It is "an everlasting kingdom" (verse 13; cf. Dan 4:3,34), founded on the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20). His government is an everlasting government, a government without end.

His "dominion" also includes "all generations", literally "all generation to generation". Normally, with a new generation a new ruler comes. However, Christ continues to rule even with each new generation that is born. There is no generation in the past or present or future over which He does not have absolute and perfect authority. Nothing is out of His control, although we may think so at times. Each generation has its own characteristics, but they are no surprise to Him. He is above them and has His

directions for each generation. Whoever listens to them will be blessed. Whoever rejects His directions will be cursed.

Psa 145:14-20 | What the LORD Does and Is

*14 The LORD sustains all who fall
And raises up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to You,
And You give them their food in due time.
16 You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways
And kind in all His deeds.
18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He will also hear their cry and will save them.
20 The LORD keeps all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.*

He is not only the Creator of the universe, but also its Sustainer. We will see this in the coming verses. The greatness of the LORD in His supreme administration of the universe does not prevent Him from being concerned with all the needs of men. On the contrary, it is an aspect of His greatness that He despises nothing (Job 36:5). He “sustains all who fall”, that is, all who are weak and have no strength to stand (verse 14). He also raises up all who are weighed down by a burden.

All His creatures depend on Him. The remnant, in whom is the Spirit of Christ, says to the LORD: “The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time” (verse 15; Psa 104:27). God provides for all the needs of His creatures; they all receive food at the time they need it (cf. Mt 6:26). He is the great Caretaker of His creation. He maintains His great garden with great ease and great skill, overlooking no one and nothing.

All that God has to do is to open His hand, and all that lives is satisfied (verse 16; Psa 104:28). His hand, the picture of His actions, is at work in His creation to bless all that is in it, from man to beast. His opened hand shows

that He gives mildly and abundantly (cf. Deu 15:8,11). He allows crops to germinate and grow, so that they become food or can be processed into food, and all living things can satisfy themselves with it. He does this according to their desire.

This action of God in His creation shows that He is “righteous in all His ways” and “kind in all His deeds” (verse 17). From “all His ways” that He treads to accomplish His purpose, it is clear that He is “righteous”. No one will ever be able to accuse Him of unrighteousness. On the contrary, in His ways it is evident that He is walking in a right way.

“All His deeds” show that He is “kind”, meaning that nothing of any of His works is harmful to anyone and none of it is useless. On the contrary, in His works it appears that He is kind to all His creatures. It are blessings that the LORD can give because they are based on the covenant. Everything He does makes sense and involves blessing for all His creatures. His righteousness and His lovingkindness are always in perfect harmony with each other.

If God already cares for His creation in this way, how much more will He care for those who are connected to Him. Those who are connected Him and enjoy His special care are characterized by three aspects: they are those “who call upon Him” (verse 18), “who fear Him” (verse 19) and “all who love Him” (verse 20).

Of the first category it says that they are “all who call upon Him” (verse 18). It is added as a further provision that it is “all who call upon Him in truth” (cf. Psa 51:6). All who call upon Him in truth, that is, in truthfulness, without any hypocrisy, may count on Him being “near” to them (Psa 34:19). He comes to them personally to have fellowship with them. This is what Paul experienced. While in captivity, he can say that the Lord is “near” (Phil 4:5).

The second category has as a characteristic that they “fear Him”, that is, they have reverence and awe for Him (verse 19). When they cry out to Him, He “hears their cry and will save them” (cf. Isa 65:24). He is always available to those who fear Him to fulfill their desire for salvation from their distress.

The third category includes “all who love Him” (verse 20). They are kept by the LORD so that the wicked will not harm them. The wicked will encounter Him as the God Who judges wickedness (Psa 101:8). Not one wicked person remains, for “all the wicked He will destroy”. All who love Him will have nothing more to fear from the wicked.

Psa 145:21 | All Flesh Will Bless His Holy Name

*21 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.*

In this last verse, after describing God’s greatness in His creation, in His ways and in His works, we hear Christ say that His mouth “will speak the praise of the LORD”. The effect of this mighty testimony is that “all flesh will bless His holy name”. This will not be an occasional thing, but will happen “forever and ever”, without ever ending. It is a continual praise of God, begun by Christ and in which all who are in the realm of peace will join throughout the time the realm of peace lasts.

The psalm begins in verse 1 with the psalmist’s intention to praise and glorify the LORD as God the King. Having carried out his intention in this psalm, he ends this psalm with the desire that he and all mankind will continue to praise and glorify the LORD for all eternity.

Psalm 146

Introduction

The concluding great hallel-psalms (Psalms 146-150) are sung in the daily morning service of the Jews, at least from the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

These psalms begin and end with “praise the LORD” or “hallelujah”, as do Psalm 106 and Psalm 113. The content, too, is only praise. It is a befitting ending for the book of Psalms. It speaks of that which is important to the LORD during the realm of peace.

The LORD created man for His honor and glory. The definition of sin is “to miss the goal”, which concretely means “to miss the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Now that creation has been restored, man comes to the purpose for which he was created, which is to magnify God. These five hallel-psalms represent the activity of man led by Israel during the realm of peace.

In the New Testament, too, we find the exclamation “hallelujah” only at the end, namely beginning in Revelation 19, when the Lord Jesus has accepted His earthly kingdom. For the church of Christ in this age, the Father is looking for worshipers (Jn 4:23-24). Since our Passover has been slain, we may celebrate on earth, a celebration for Him (1Cor 5:7-8). In heaven, we will sing praises to Him forever.

That songs of praise will be the hallmark of the realm of peace is because the LORD is “holy” and is “enthroned upon the praises of Israel” (Psa 22:3). Other verses that point to songs of praise in the realm of peace are found in Psalms 48; 84; 111; 113 (Psa 48:10; 84:4; 111:10b; 113:3).

Psalm 146 is in a sense an elaboration of the psalmist’s wish in Psalm 145:

Verse 2 – Psa 145:2

Verse 5 – Psa 145:15a

Verse 7 – Psa 145:15b

Verse 7 – Psa 145:14

Verse 10 – Psa 145:13

Psa 146:1-4 | Praise the LORD

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

2 I will praise the LORD while I live;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

3 Do not trust in princes,

In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.

4 His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;

In that very day his thoughts perish.

The psalm begins with the exclamation “hallelujah!”, which is “praise the LORD!” (verse 1). It is the first psalm of the last five psalms to begin with ‘hallelujah’. They all end with ‘hallelujah’ as well. These psalms form the mighty final chord of the book, a final chord brimming with praise. In this psalm, the ‘hallelujah’ is followed, as it were, in a two-way conversation with himself, by the psalmist’s response. He says to his soul, that is to himself, that he must respond to this call and praise the LORD.

To this he responds with the promise that he will praise the LORD while he lives, meaning all his life (verse 2). In doing so, the psalmist is fulfilling the purpose for which the LORD created him, and that is to praise and magnify Him.

His life is full of proofs of the LORD’s lovingkindness. All of those proofs of favor are a reason to praise Him. To this he adds that he will sing praises to his God while he has his being. Don’t we too have many reasons to sing songs of praise? So why is it that we do it so little?

There will be no ‘praise the LORD’ if people are being relied upon, which is sin in addition to foolishness (Jer 17:5). The tendency of man, including the believer, to “trust in princes” is always present (verse 3). Princes may be people of stature and influence, but they are also only human beings. The psalmist warns against trusting in such people (Psa 118:8-9; Isa 2:22).

No matter how distinguished a person is and how much influence he has, he is and remains a “mortal man, in whom there is no salvation”. That the psalmist uses the word “mortal man” underscores his perishableness (cf. Psa 8:4), which at the same time rules out the possibility that he could provide salvation or rescue.

To trust any man is to trust in uncertainty (verse 4). Man, even if he were benevolent, is perishable. Once he dies, “his spirit departs”. He is buried, “he returns to the earth”. He was made of the dust and returns to it (Gen 3:19; Psa 90:3; 104:29; Ecc 3:20). All his plans in which he trusted perish with him. Nothing comes of it. What folly to trust in something as uncertain as a human being. Those who trust in people have no reason to praise the LORD.

Psa 146:5-9 | The LORD Keeps Faith Forever

*5 How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
Whose hope is in the LORD his God,
6 Who made heaven and earth,
The sea and all that is in them;
Who keeps faith forever;
7 Who executes justice for the oppressed;
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free.
8 The LORD opens [the eyes of] the blind;
The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous;
9 The LORD protects the strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow,
But He thwarts the way of the wicked.*

Unlike man, who is dust, God is almighty. Trusting in man is foolishness; trusting in God is wisdom (verse 5). One “whose help is the God of Jacob” is “blessed”. This is the last time of the twenty-five times the word “blessed” appears in Psalms. The faithfulness of the LORD, manifest in His covenant, is now shown in what He has been able to make of the ‘raw material’ Jacob, the heels holder, namely Israel, the prince of God, who may live to the honor and glory of the LORD.

This “blessed” also applies to us. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is now also our God and Father, has made from the dead substance as we were, dead in our trespasses and sins, enemies and haters of God, to His children. Yes, He has made us worshipers of the Father, who

may draw near by the new and living way into the inner sanctuary (Heb 10:19-20). Praised be His Name forever and ever. Let's start with that now!

An appeal to 'the God of Jacob' is made by someone who feels like Jacob: an ever-failing believer. God wants to be the God of such a person. Such a person no longer has a high opinion of himself nor does he expect anything from himself. He is someone "whose hope is in the LORD his God". Help and hope belong together. They are both present in someone who has a personal relationship with God. This is the case with the psalmist. He speaks of "his God", Who is "the LORD", that is the God Who is faithful to His promises. He is fully worthy of his trust.

And Who is this God? It is the God "Who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them" (verse 6). He is the almighty Creator. Therefore, everything depends on Him. He has brought everything into being, but then He has not withdrawn from the work of His hands. This is evident from the fact that He "keeps faith forever". Whatever He has made, He also maintains in His faithfulness (Heb 1:3). He will always do so, for He is the eternally Unchangeable One (cf. Jam 1:17).

God is not only almighty, He is also good. His special concern is for various groups of people who suffer from the consequences of sin that has intruded into His creation. The first consequence is the disruption of relationships (verse 7). There are oppressed people. They are oppressed by people who despise the right of their fellow men. The oppressed are exploited. They have no human being to speak up for them. But they cry out to God and He stands up for them (cf. Jam 5:4-6). He executes justice for the oppressed (Psa 103:6).

The next consequence of sin is hunger. This can be the result of drought sent by God to make man return to Him. It can also be the result of war. Both causes result for Israel from their unfaithfulness to the covenant. The hungry cry out to God and confess their unfaithfulness. God responds by giving them food. This is true both materially and spiritually (cf. Psa 107:9; Mt 5:6; Lk 1:53).

Then there are "the prisoners". First, captivity for Israel is the result of their unfaithfulness to the covenant with God. We can then also apply it generally, that man by his choice of sin is by nature a prisoner of sin and

in its power. He cannot free himself from this captivity. Those who turn to God in confession of their sins are delivered by Him from the power of sin and set free from it.

Blindness (verse 8a) is also a consequence of sin. The coming of Christ is marked, among other things, by the healing of the blind (Isa 35:5). Nowhere in the Old Testament do we read of anyone being healed of blindness (cf. Jn 9:32).

Literal blindness is a picture of spiritual blindness. When Christ, Who is the light of the world, came into the world, the world did not recognize Him (Jn 1:5). This shows the blindness of the world. God had to send John the baptist to witness and tell people that the light had come (Jn 1:6-9).

Blindness characterizes man in his sinful state (2Cor 4:3-4). It also applies to one who professes to belong to God's people – both Israel and the church – but has no life from God (Isa 42:18-20; Rev 3:17). But "the LORD opens [the eyes of] the blind" who acknowledge their blindness.

Those who are bowed down under the burden of their sins and go to the LORD with it are raised up by Him (verse 8b; cf. Lk 13:10-17). All that is said of the LORD here, the Lord Jesus demonstrated in His life on earth. He is the LORD Who has come to His people. Because His people have rejected Him, these blessings have been delayed for the people as a whole. He will give all those blessings to His people in the realm of peace.

All who have gone to the LORD in their need have been made "righteous" by Him (verse 8c). He does this on the basis of the blood of the new covenant, through which "the ministry of righteousness", or the imputation of righteousness, can take place (2Cor 3:9). They are the new people of God, made up entirely of righteous people (Isa 60:21). They have done what is right in His eyes and continue to do so. In them He sees His own features. That rejoices His heart. To them His love goes out and He assures them that He loves them.

The LORD shows Himself to be the Protector or Keeper of "the strangers" (verse 9). Strangers are people who have no civil rights in Israel. They have nothing to which they can lay claim. But "the LORD protects [or: keeps] the strangers" who are aware of this and have joined His people. They

share in the blessing He gives to His people. Beautiful examples of this are Rahab and Ruth (Jos 2:8-13; 6:22-25; Rth 1:16-17; 4:13-17; Mt 1:5-6a).

“The fatherless and the widow” are supported by the LORD. Fatherless and widows are the most vulnerable people in society. They have no parents and husband to care for them. The LORD takes care of them. He supports them (Psa 68:6).

Against the multitude of benefits for those who have the God of Jacob for their help and have set their hope on Him (verse 5), one line is devoted to the fate of the wicked. The text about the wicked connects to the vulnerable group of strangers, fatherless and widows. This means that these wicked have taken advantage of their vulnerability.

The tragedy of their fate becomes evident. Wicked people do not turn to God, but follow their own way. It is a way thwarted [literally made crooked] by the LORD, causing their way to perish (Psa 1:6). They lose their way. Without realizing it, they start wandering aimlessly. Thus, they pursue their path in a completely different direction than they suspected. Instead of reaching their desired goals, they end up in the grave.

Psa 146:10 | The LORD Will Reign Forever

*10 The LORD will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!*

After the brief interlude about the thwarted or crooked way of the wicked, the final chord of the song of praise follows: “The LORD will reign forever.” The final chord sings of the full fulfillment of what Moses sang as a prophet at the Red Sea on the occasion of the redemption of God’s people. He concludes that song with the words David sings here: “The LORD shall reign forever and ever” (Exo 15:18).

The LORD determines not only the way of the wicked, but the whole course of history. It is the history of Zion. He is her God. He was, is, and will be, “to all generations”. Zion endures forever for all who are associated with her.

This observation leads a new “praise the LORD” or “hallelujah”, with which the psalm ends as it began. There is a difference, however. In verse 1, the psalmist exhorts himself to praise the LORD. In the last verse, he calls on everyone to praise the LORD. This is the correct order. Only after we have done something ourselves can we call others to do it too.

Psalm 147

Introduction

In this psalm we see God's people, made up entirely of righteous, in Jerusalem and Zion in the time of the realm of peace (verse 12). God, the Creator, Who cares for His entire creation, stands in a special relationship with His people. His people know Him as righteous, full of compassion and good. Thus they have come to know Him in His ways with them.

After the previous psalm sings of the LORD as God Who is King, the song of praise now continues with a song of praise for the works of the LORD. It is He Who rebuilds Jerusalem; it is He Who brings back the outcast of Israel, the lost ten tribes (verse 2); it is He Who with balm from Gilead cares for the brokenhearted of His people (verse 3; Jer 8:22).

Division of the psalm

The occasion of the song of praise is that the LORD

1. restores (verses 1-6),
2. sustains (verses 7-11), and
3. gives peace (verses 12-20).

Each section begins with an exhortation to praise the LORD:

Verse 1 "Hallelujah!" (= Praise the LORD).

Verse 7 "Sing to the LORD ..., sing praises to our God ... "

Verse 12 "Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!"

Psa 147:1-6 | God Restores and Cares For His People

1 Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;

For it is pleasant [and] praise is becoming.

2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem;

He gathers the outcasts of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds.

4 He counts the number of the stars;

He gives names to all of them.

5 Great is our Lord and abundant in strength;

His understanding is infinite.

6 The LORD supports the afflicted;

He brings down the wicked to the ground.

Before the psalmist lists the reasons to praise the LORD, he first makes it clear that it is good, pleasant and becoming to praise the LORD (verse 1). The psalm begins with the exclamation “hallelujah” or “praise the LORD”. Immediately following this, the psalmist motivates his call: “For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant.” Singing psalms to God is good for God’s people and pleasant for God. God is “our God”. This is how He has made Himself known to His people. He has delivered them from all misery and brought them into the blessing of the realm of peace. Therefore “praise is becoming”.

A pre-fulfillment of what is written in verse 2 happened after a remnant returned to Israel from the Babylonian exile. Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city. We find the description of this in the book of Nehemiah. Here we read that “the LORD builds up Jerusalem”. It is His work. He worked it all into Nehemiah’s heart and gave him the strength and wisdom to do that work. The remnant learned that the builders labor in vain at the house if the LORD does not build it.

At the same time, it is clear that it is not the complete fulfillment of what is being sung here. It is a prophetic psalm, the fulfillment of which takes place when the Messiah reigns (Psa 102:16; Isa 61:4; Jer 30:18; Amos 9:14). “The outcasts of Israel” are not yet gathered by Him. The ten tribes are still largely in the scattering up to this point, but He will gather them (Deu 30:3; Isa 11:12; 56:8; Hos 1:11; Eze 37:22; Mt 24:31). When He will have gathered them and brought them back – we have seen this in Psalms 120-121 – the happy situation described here will begin.

For this, the LORD not only brings the outcast – not only of the ten tribes, but also those of the two tribes – back to Jerusalem, but He heals them (verse 3). They are “the brokenhearted”, for they have acknowledged that

their removal from the land was justified because of their sins. Those sins are their idolatry and rejection of Christ – the latter applies only to the two tribes.

By their confession of it, they are in a mind that is after the heart of God. With them He wants to dwell, in their heart and in His city (Isa 57:15; Hos 6:1; Lk 4:18). They have suffered much, but now God relieves their suffering with His love. He binds up the wounds that He Himself had to cause (Job 5:18).

That God is able to bring back every member of His people is evident from the fact that “He counts the number of the stars” and “gives names to all of them” (verse 4; cf. Isa 40:26). He told Abraham that He would make his descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven in multitude (Gen 15:5).

He, the mighty Ruler of the universe, knows exactly where this offspring, scattered as it is, is. He knows their number and knows the name of each one. The LORD is omniscient; He does not overlook any star. Therefore, He will never overlook the suffering of His own (verse 3) either.

That God knows the number of stars and the name of each star shows that He is “great ... and abundant in strength” (verse 5). He is called here “the Lord”, that is Adonai, the sovereign Ruler of the universe. Everything outside of Him is created by Him and limited, even though their number or size is so great that we cannot count or calculate it. However, He Himself is unlimited: “His understanding is infinite.” The number of stars is bounded, the stars are countable, although we do not see their boundary and cannot count them. He, however, is immeasurable or ‘uncountable’.

If a human being feels small in anything, it is in comparison to the immeasurable universe with its countless stars. That overwhelming universe was created by God. He is not a part of it, but is exalted above it and sustains it by the word of His power.

In His unlimitedness, He bows down to the little man who bows before His majesty. As He supports the universe, He supports the afflicted or meek (verse 6). The meek have learned of Him, for He is meek and humble in heart (Mt 11:29). As a result, they are like Him. Therefore, they have not taken the law into their own hands, but have endured suffering and waited, like Christ, for God’s time for blessing. They have been supported

by God, and now they may share with Christ in the blessing of the realm of peace.

With “the wicked” He deals very differently. The afflicted have humbled themselves under the powerful hand of God. The wicked have exalted themselves and sought to enrich themselves at the expense of the afflicted. Now the time of retribution has come. The afflicted are exalted, while God “humbles the wicked to the ground” (Lk 14:11; 18:14).

The LORD uses His omnipotence (verse 5) to support the remnant, represented in the afflicted, in the midst of the heaviest tribulation, while He humbles the wicked, that is, the antichrist and the enemies of the people, to the ground.

Psa 147:7-11 | God’s Care for His Creation

*7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praises to our God on the lyre,
8 Who covers the heavens with clouds,
Who provides rain for the earth,
Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.
9 He gives to the beast its food,
[And] to the young ravens which cry.
10 He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.
11 The LORD favors those who fear Him,
Those who wait for His lovingkindness.*

A second call to sing to the LORD follows (verse 7; verse 1). The occasion is the faithfulness of the LORD, both toward creation and toward those in Israel who fear Him. The psalmist now says to do so – as the original shows – in a turn on turn song of thanksgiving. One group sings a question about God’s actions and the other group sings a response to it. It reinforces the thanksgiving. The lyre support gives the whole a lovely sound. Everything happens from the relationship that exists with “our God”. The hearts are full of Him and focused on Him.

It is becoming for the righteous to sing psalms to Him because His majesty is great. Of this His creation testifies. It can be said of no one else but of

Him that He “covers the heavens with clouds” (verse 8). Then from these clouds He provides rain for the earth, by which He “makes the grass to grow on the mountains”.

In this way He gives “to the beast its food” (verse 9). He also gives food “to the young ravens which cry” (cf. Job 38:41; Mt 6:26; 10:29-31). God provides all that wait on Him with what they need. He delights in giving this care to His creatures (Psa 145:15-16).

Those who count on other strength, represented in “the strength of the horse” (verse 10), and expect their provisions from it, need not count on His support. In them He does not delight. Also “in the legs of the man”, that is, in people who count on their own strength and attribute everything to their own merit, He does not take pleasure (cf. Amos 2:14-15).

The strength of the horse and the legs of the man are needed during battle. Man is inclined to rely on other resources than God. Therefore, a king of Israel was not to possess many horses (Deu 17:16), so that he would not put his trust in his own strength, but in the LORD (cf. Psa 20:7).

What the LORD does find delight and takes pleasure in are “those who fear Him” and “those who wait for His lovingkindness” (verse 11). He “favors” them because they are in awe of Him, without fear of Him. It is an awe that goes along with trust in His lovingkindness, that is, in His faithfulness toward His covenant and His promise, without claiming it. It is His joy to give.

Psa 147:12-14 | God’s Care for Jerusalem

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

13 For He has strengthened the bars of your gates;

He has blessed your sons within you.

14 He makes peace in your borders;

He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat.

The third call to praise is made to Jerusalem and Zion (verse 12; verses 1,7). Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Jerusalem means ‘city of peace’. Now that the Prince of peace is King over Israel, Jerusalem finally lives up

to her name. The true Melchizedek, who is called king of Salem, which is king of peace (Heb 7:1-2), reigns.

That city He has chosen to dwell there in order to rule from there in righteousness in accordance with the promises made by the LORD to His people. All glory is for the LORD alone. Zion is also Jerusalem, but more connected to grace as the foundation upon which the city can be the dwelling place for God's people. Zion is called to praise her God, for the inhabitants of the city have been brought in there by God's great grace.

The occasion of the glory and praise, indicated by the word "for", is multiple (verse 13). First of all, God takes charge of the protection of the city. As a result, the safety of all who are in it is completely guaranteed.

Nehemiah literally restored the walls, gates, and bolts of Jerusalem; here, figuratively, the LORD does so (Zec 2:5). Gog, the prince of Great Russia, is blind to this protection by God. He sees that the cities of Israel are "without walls and having no bars or gates" and therefore dares to attack Israel, to his own detriment (Eze 38:11,22).

The first to benefit from the LORD's protection – and this is a second reason to praise and glorify Him – are the sons within the city. They are blessed by Him.

A third reason for praising and giving thanks to God is that He makes "peace" to reign in their area (verse 14). The Lord Jesus is the Prince of peace. Through Him, peace reigns in the realm of peace. He has made that peace possible through His work on the cross. That is the basis for all peace, personally, in the intercourse among believers, and later, in the realm of peace, worldwide (Rom 5:1; Eph 2:14-17; Col 3:15; Isa 9:5-6).

The fourth reason for praise is mentioned that God satisfies them "with the finest of the wheat" (cf. Psa 81:16). In this salutary atmosphere of peace, "the finest of the wheat" is enjoyed. The wheat brings to mind the life of the Lord Jesus that has become the portion of all who are united to Him through His death on the cross. He is the grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died, resulting in a rich harvest of those who received Him as their life (Jn 12:24).

Psa 147:15-20 | The Working of God's Word

*15 He sends forth His command to the earth;
His word runs very swiftly.*

*16 He gives snow like wool;
He scatters the frost like ashes.*

*17 He casts forth His ice as fragments;
Who can stand before His cold?*

*18 He sends forth His word and melts them;
He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.*

*19 He declares His words to Jacob,
His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.*

*20 He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.
Praise the LORD!*

Verses 15-18 are about 'freezing' (verses 15-17) and 'melting' (verse 18). This section tells us that what man cannot do, God in His omnipotence can do. God does that by sending His Word. That same Word the LORD sends to Israel and to no other people (verses 19-20). It is the mighty Word of God doing His work in the hearts of man.

God established heaven and earth by His Word (Psa 33:6,9; Heb 11:3). By that same Word He works on earth (verse 15). His Word is His act. When He sends His command to earth, it is for the benefit of man in general and His people in particular. Every command is carried out immediately without hesitation: "His word runs very swiftly." His Word is represented here as a messenger who carries out his master's command instantaneously (Isa 55:11). His Word is not static, but dynamic, even for us (1Thes 2:13; 2Thes 3:1).

When it snows and the earth is covered as with wool, it is done at His command (verse 16; Job 37:6; cf. Isa 55:10-11). When He commands, the frozen dew is scattered like ashes. Similarly, He casts "His ice as fragments", where we can think of hailstones, on the earth (verse 17). The second part of verse 17 is asked as a question. It is a question to which no answer is expected. For everyone knows that against the coldness of ice, which is "His cold" because He causes it to come by His word, no one can stand.

He can also send His word to put an end to the snow, hoarfrost and ice (verse 18). Then His word works to melt everything and make His coldness disappear. Then He causes "His wind to blow". This causes everything that has melted and become "waters to flow", so that wherever the waters come, it provides refreshment.

These natural phenomena symbolize God's dealings with His people. He had to bring His cold judgments upon them because of their rebellion against Him, as He foretold in His Word. Hailstones are used by God to strike the earth (Exo 9:18-25; Job 38:22-23; Eze 13:13; Hag 2:17; Rev 16:21). He also brought those judgments to an end. His people, that is, those who acknowledged the justice of His judgments, He then brought into the refreshing blessing of the realm of peace. After the icy wind of His wrath, they now felt the gentle breeze of His love.

As for Israel, we might add the following. The LORD sent His mighty word to transform the ice into water (verse 18). He is also mighty to send His word to transform Jacob into Israel (verse 19). The same effect the Word of the LORD has on the remnant of Israel, which He thereby transforms into His people, the true Israel (Jer 31:33). He has done this only with Israel and with no other nation (verse 20).

God's Word is not only a Word of commands, but also a Word of announcements. "He declares His words to Jacob", that is all Israel, all twelve tribes, that is, He communicates to His people what His plans for them are (verse 19). "Jacob" is the name for the people that recalls the aberrations of God's Word. There is also mention of "Israel", which is the name for the people as blessed by God. God makes known to Israel "His statutes and His ordinances".

He has favored Israel more than any other nation by giving them His revealed truth (Rom 9:4). There is no nation in the ancient world as privileged as Israel, which has the revealed will of God: the written Word of God. This Book with its good laws, customs, morals, intelligence, social life, purity, charity, prosperity, exalts this people above all other nations and spreads around them blessings that can come from nowhere else. The highest benefit that can be done to any people is to give them the Word of God in their own language.

In nature, in creation, God makes Himself known to all nations (Rom 1:19-20). In His Word, He makes Himself known to His people in a special way. His Word is His revelation to His people as their God. "He has not dealt thus with any nation" (verse 20). That God has given His people His 'Word revelation' (Deu 4:6-8; Rom 3:2) underscores their enormous privilege as God's people.

God has given to His people "just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments" (Neh 9:13). Because the peoples do not know "His statutes" in His Word, they are subject to all forms of evil to which they are led by demonic powers (cf. 1Cor 12:2). The great contrast with the nations who do not know God's statutes does not make God's people haughty, but very grateful. They are no better than the nations. This realization leads them to the exclamation with which the psalm concludes: "Hallelujah!" All praise belongs to the LORD alone.

Psalm 148

Introduction

Christ has now taken His rightful place and is seated on His own throne (Rev 3:21). Just as creation has been subjected to futility and corruption through the fall of man in sin (Rom 8:20-21), so creation will be set free from these consequences of sin through Christ. The longing of creation is now fulfilled (Rom 8:21). All creation, heaven and earth and all their inhabitants, share in the revealed glory.

In this psalm, two mighty choirs are formed. First, the heavens and all that is in them are called to participate in the great “hallelujah” to praise the LORD. He created the heavens and all that is in them and keeps everything in its place (verses 1-6).

Then He calls the earth and all that is upon it to join in that praise. It is about praising Him whose Name alone is highly exalted and whose majesty is over heaven and earth (verses 7-13).

Finally, God’s special relationship with Israel is sung. They are “His people”, “His godly ones”, “a people near to Him” (verse 14). The people of Israel are here the place where heaven and earth meet to praise the LORD.

Psa 148:1-6 | Praise the LORD From the Heavens

*1 Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!*
*2 Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!*
*3 Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all stars of light!*
*4 Praise Him, highest heavens,
And the waters that are above the heavens!*
*5 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.*

*6 He has also established them forever and ever;
He has made a decree which will not pass away.*

The psalm, like the previous two psalms, begins with “hallelujah!”, “praise the LORD!” (verse 1), with “praise the LORD” again immediately in the next line. It is not a mere repetition, however. We hear the tone swell. The praise becomes more and more extensive. It begins “from the heavens”. There, “in the height” in creation (cf. Job 16:19), the LORD is to be praised.

There, in His throne room, are “all His angels” and “all His hosts” (verse 2). They were created first; they were present at the creation of heaven and earth and rejoiced (Job 38:4-7). They are also present at the re-creation, to which all of God’s ways with the earth culminate, and then they rejoice again. This begins as early as the coming of Christ to earth, when there was “a multitude of the heavenly host praising God” (Lk 2:13).

In this psalm the elect angels, the non-fallen angels, are addressed (1Tim 5:21). The fallen angels also have access to the throne room (1Kgs 22:19-23; Job 1:6-7; 2:1) – this is the case until Revelation 12, for then satan is cast out of heaven (Rev 12:8) – and cannot do anything but what God commands them to do. They will be forced to confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:10-11).

Then the psalmist turns to what is in the sky: the “sun and moon” and “all the stars of light” (verse 3). To them, too, the call to “praise Him” is heard. Sun and moon were placed in the heavens by God as “the two great lights” to control the day and the night (Gen 1:16-18). They are of great significance to man’s life on earth. The same is true of the stars, especially “the stars of light” that provide orientation for people at night. All these impressive heavenly bodies are there to sing the praise of God.

They were created first of all as signs of fixed times (Gen 1:14), that is, the times appointed by the LORD for His people to celebrate a feast with Him (Lev 23:2). The LORD’s appointed times are determined by the sun and the moon. Second, they tell something of God’s glory, they show something of His eternal power and divine nature (Rom 1:20). They proclaim without words a silent message of majesty, of impressive power, perfection and beauty (Psa 19:1-7).

Even the “highest heavens, and the waters that are above the heavens” are called to “praise Him” (verse 4). The “highest heavens” or the ‘heaven

of heavens' is the highest division of the created heavens from which the LORD rules (Psa 68:33; 1Kgs 8:27). The water that is above the heavens is the water of the clouds of the sky. This whole high region, from the highest heaven of the angels to the lowest sky, where the water is, and where man cannot come and look into, proclaims the praises of God.

Everything in the universe above the earth is told to "praise the name of the LORD" (verse 5). The reason for this, represented by the word "for", is that He is their Creator. Only by commanding did He create them (Psa 33:6,9). The re-creation will be the result of what He has spoken in His Word (Isa 65:17-25).

He has also established everything, He gave it a fixed place in His creation (verse 6). Nothing stands where it stands by chance. That place is established "forever and ever". No one can change that. Everything also stands in its proper relationship to everything else. He has made a decree which will not pass away, He has given everything an order, which none of them shall transgress. No change takes place in the order He has given. This will find its perfect fulfillment in the realm of peace.

The first reason to praise the Name of the LORD is because He is the Creator (verse 5), the second reason to praise the LORD is that He upholds and sustains creation by the word of His power (verse 6; Heb 1:2-3). That He upholds creation is evidenced by the laws of nature and the order of creation that He has established. In them also we recognize the majesty of God, they proclaim without words His glory to the praise of His Name.

Psa 148:7-13 | Praise the LORD From the Earth

*7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
Sea monsters and all deeps;
8 Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
9 Mountains and all hills;
Fruit trees and all cedars;
10 Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and winged fowl;
11 Kings of the earth and all peoples;*

*Princes and all judges of the earth;
12 Both young men and virgins;
Old men and children.
13 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above earth and heaven.*

Then the earth is called to join the “praise the LORD” from heaven (verse 7). “Praise the LORD” is also to sound from the earth. “Praise the LORD” sounds once at the beginning of this section and then no more. All and sundry who are called to praise the LORD form a whole, as it were.

It is all earthly and on earth and everything, inanimate and animated, forms one mighty, harmonious chorus praising the LORD. The order here is reversed compared to the order of heaven. Here it begins at the deepest point and ends with man, the crown of creation.

The first to be addressed to praise the LORD are the “sea monsters and all deep”. These are beasts and areas that awe man and are unfathomable to him. God created the sea monsters, as well as all the deep waters, which are the areas in which they live (cf. Job 38:16). He knows everything through and through, everything is under His control and reflects His majesty and thus expresses His praise.

Then it is the turn of “fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind” (verse 8). The fire or flaming lightning, the deadly hailstones, the all-covering snow, the elusive vapor or mist, the destructive storm wind or hurricane, all are impressive and uncontrollable phenomena to man. They are manifestations of His majesty that magnify His praise. They are under the complete control and authority of God, which He exercises through “His word”. We see here again the power of His Word (Psa 147:15,18; 2Pet 3:5-7).

Next we come to the earth itself. There are the “mountains”, the symbols of unshakability, which defy the ages, “and all hills”, which cover the landscape in a rolling way and on which the flocks graze (verse 9). We also see the “fruit trees and all cedars”. From the fruit trees man may eat and the cedars he may use to build houses, among other things. From the lofty mountains, rolling hills, and useful trees, the “praise the LORD” sounds.

Then the animal world also mingles with the chorus that sings the praises of the LORD (verse 10). "Beasts and all cattle; creeping things and winged fowl" raise their voices. Again, like the previous groups, it is a voice without words, but unlike the previous groups, it is the sound of living creatures.

Fruit trees and cedars represent cultivated (planted) and uncultivated (unplanted) trees, respectively. The beasts and all cattle represent non-tame and tame animals, respectively. The categorization of plants and animals in Genesis, and again here, is connected to the relationship to man.

Finally, humanity is called to praise the LORD (verses 11-12). Various groups of people, named according to status, quantity, gender, and age, are called upon to join in the praise of the LORD. "Kings of the earth", those who hold the highest positions of authority on earth, and who have so often opposed God, sing the praises of God in the realm of peace (verse 11). The same is true of "all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth". They have worshiped other gods or attributed divine attributes to themselves. They have also taken advantage of God's people. Now they honor God and bring Him their praise.

After the high-ranking and all the nations, even "both young men and virgins; old men and children" hear the call to praise the LORD (verse 12). The young men and virgins point to youthfulness, the new beginning of what God has given. Old men and children point to the unity between the two groups, there is no generation gap.

All creation, heaven and earth, is to "praise the name of the LORD" (verse 13). The name "LORD", Yahweh, recalls His connection to man and His covenant with His people Israel. For the sake of man and His people, He has worked this "regeneration" (Mt 19:28) of the earth. He has done everything, and therefore "His name alone is exalted" and "His glory is above earth and heaven".

In the realm of peace, heaven and earth will be brought together under one Head, which is Christ (Eph 1:10). Then everything will be subject to Him. There are two exceptions to this. The first exception is God, Who has subjected all things at the feet of Christ (1Cor 15:27). The second exception is the church, for she is joined to Christ, the Head, as His body (Eph 1:22-23).

Psa 148:14 | A People Near to Him

*14 And He has lifted up a horn for His people,
Praise for all His godly ones;
[Even] for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him.
Praise the LORD!*

The great Creator, Whom heaven and earth must praise, is the God of Israel and Israel is His people. In the midst of creation, heaven and earth, He has “lifted up a horn for His people”. Christ is the “horn of salvation” of God’s people (Lk 1:69). Through Him, God’s people have become the head of the nations. He is the “praise for all His godly ones”. The godly ones praise Him because of His undeserved favors.

They are “the sons of Israel, a people near to Him”. Because of their sins, He has had to reject them for a time. He had to call them “Lo Ammi”, which means “not My people” (Hos 1:9). Now they are “Ammi” again, “My people” (Hos 1:10-11; 2:1). They are no longer distant from Him, but brought close to Him. They may dwell in His presence. With that comes a new “hallelujah”, “praise the LORD”. All praise belongs to the LORD.

In summary, we can say that Israel has three reasons to praise the LORD:

1. Israel is the LORD’s people. That people is His possession and He has lifted up its horn, that is, given it strength and power.
2. Israel is the LORD’s godly one, that is, His covenant people. That people, by virtue of the covenant, through the blood of the new covenant, receive the rich blessing of the LORD.
3. Israel is the people near to the LORD, which speaks of fellowship. The LORD dwells in their midst and they have access to draw near and sing praise to Him and glorify Him.

Who can remain silent in the face of such glory? Therefore, the psalm concludes with the exclamation “hallelujah!”

We, New Testament believers, have also been brought close to God, but in a more exalted and also more intimate way. Our home is not earth, but heaven. We have been set in Christ in the heavenly places and there in Him blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3). We are of God’s household and know Him as Father, to Whom we have free access (Eph 2:18-19). The

response that becomes us is worship the Father in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23-24).

Psalm 149

Introduction

In the previous psalm we heard how all of creation, the heavens and their inhabitants, the earth and all its inhabitants, are called upon to praise the LORD as their Creator. That psalm ends with three reasons for the people of Israel, the godly ones of the LORD, who are in close fellowship with Him, to praise the LORD. This call is answered in Psalm 149.

While in Psalm 148 the LORD is magnified as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (cf. Rev 4:11), in Psalm 149 the LORD is magnified as the Redeemer (cf. Rev 5:9-14) of Israel. Israel's exalted, impressive redemption can only be praised with a new song. Just as the first song of the Bible and of Israel came about after their redemption from Egypt (Exo 15:1), so the faithful remnant of Israel, after victory over the enemy, goes on to magnify the LORD with a new song (cf. Rev 15:2-3).

The division of the psalm is in accordance with the two reasons to praise the LORD:

Verses 1-4 review: redemption through Christ.

Verses 5-9 preview: reigning with Christ.

Psa 149:1-4 | Gods Godly Ones Sing

1 Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

[And] His praise in the congregation of the godly ones.

2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker;

Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.

3 Let them praise His name with dancing;

Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.

4 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;

He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.

The psalm begins with “hallelujah”, “praise the LORD”, the hallmark of the last five psalms (verse 1). Then follows the call to “sing to the LORD a new song”. This new song is consistent with the new period that has begun for God’s people, a period of undisturbed peace and joy with new blessings not enjoyed before. The LORD is the object of the new song, for He has wrought all these blessings for His people. The church is already singing a song of praise on earth (Heb 13:15; Jn 4:23) and will soon sing a new song in heaven (Rev 5:9). Israel is singing the new song on earth.

It is a new song because it is now about the new covenant. It is sung “in the congregation of the godly ones”, the *chasidim*, which are those who are faithful to the covenant with the LORD. It is also a new song because redemption is something totally new (Isa 43:19), so the words of the older songs are not sufficient to put the new redemption into words (cf. Psa 96:1; 98:1).

The new song is not sung by the few here, but “in the congregation of the godly ones”. They are the redeemed whom God has kept as His people. Through them, as the congregation of the godly ones, His praise is sung. They are the covenant people, the congregation of the righteous.

The fact that they are called God’s “godly ones” here underscores the fact that their song is motivated by the awareness that all the blessings they have received are on the basis of the new covenant. This covenant is based on the coming of the Mediator Who shed His blood. This allows the LORD to give His blessing, which is the inheritance, to the godly ones. It is grace because it is not based on the people’s own righteousness, but on the basis of the accomplished work of Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant.

“Israel”, the people made up of godly ones, is called to “be glad in his Maker” (verse 2). This again emphasizes that the LORD is the origin of His people. He made them (Psa 95:6; 100:3; Isa 44:2). They owe their creation and existence to Him.

They are also called “the sons of Zion”. This is a reminder that they are no longer associated with Sinai, the mountain of the law, but with Mount Zion, the mountain of grace, which is represented here as the mother (Isa 66:8). They have come to Mount Zion (Heb 12:19-25), which means that by grace they are what they are. With Mount Zion is also connected the

kingship of the Lord Jesus (Psa 2:6). Therefore, they are called to “rejoice in their King”, Who rules over them in benevolence. He dwells in their midst, He leads them and protects them and blesses them with an abundant blessing.

The purpose of salvation is to celebrate a feast with the LORD (cf. Exo 5:1). It cannot be otherwise than that they will “praise His name with dancing” and “sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre” (verse 3). Dancing is here a dance performed by a group of persons, who dance in a round dance. It emphasizes communal joy. We also see the round dance, the timbrel and the singing after the earlier deliverance of God’s people, that from slavery in Egypt (Exo 15:1,20-21). It underscores the strong connection between that event and the deliverance of God’s people in the end time.

This King, their Messiah, is the LORD Himself (verse 4). He dwells with His people and “takes pleasure” in them. He finds His joy in them, for they are in the right mind. They are “the afflicted” or “the meek” (Darby Translation). They have become that through His work in and on them in the great tribulation, Christ Himself being their Example and Master (Mt 11:29). That time of distress, when they were trampled on by the nations, is over. The LORD has made them the head of the nations (Deu 26:19). As a result, they now enjoy being beautified “with salvation”.

The time of suffering with Christ is necessary in order to reign with Him. The followers of David who followed him during the time of his rejection by King Saul will reign with David during his kingship. So it is with the believing remnant and so it is with us (Rom 8:17b).

We find the time of glorification in verses 5-9, which is when they will reign with Christ. It is the fulfillment of the Lord Jesus’ promise to His disciples: “And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel”” (Mt 19:28).

Psa 149:5-9 | God’s Godly Ones Rule

| *5 Let the godly ones exult in glory;
| Let them sing for joy on their beds.*

6 [Let] the high praises of God [be] in their mouth,
 And a two-edged sword in their hand,
 7 To execute vengeance on the nations
 And punishment on the peoples,
 8 To bind their kings with chains
 And their nobles with fetters of iron,
 9 To execute on them the judgment written;
 This is an honor for all His godly ones.
 Praise the LORD!

As “the godly ones”, they may “exult in glory” (verse 5). As the objects of His favor or grace, God’s honor – Hebrew *kabod* –, God’s glory rests upon them like a crown. The time of *ikabod* – means “away is the honor” – is over, the time when the honor of God’s people was gone (cf. 1Sam 4:21). The LORD has given His people “grace and honor” (Psa 84:11). They have been glorified by Him, made glorious, before the eyes of the nations (Isa 55:5; 60:9). There is every reason to “sing for joy” (Isa 61:10).

This is the time when the remnant, who suffered with Christ in the time of the great tribulation, is glorified with Christ and will reign with Him. And they may do so with an abundance of joy, their “cup overflowing” (Psa 23:5c). We too, when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, may take the cup of thanksgiving in anticipation that we too, who are now suffering with Christ, will one day, that is, very soon, be glorified with Him.

The remnant may do so “on their beds”. The beds were the places during the great tribulation where they sought the LORD’s face with tears (Psa 6:6). In those places they wrestled with the question marks of life during sleepless nights (Psa 77:5-8). Now the time of tears is over, the tears have been wiped away (Isa 25:8; Rev 21:4). All questions have been answered. They know in some respect as they are known (1Cor 13:12). The beds are now no longer wet with tears, no longer churned over from sleepless nights. They have become places where the believer cannot stop the rejoicing of the day, even in bed he continues to rejoice and praise the LORD.

God, according to His promise, has brought His people into the rest. Previously, the people had come into the land, but not into the rest (Heb 4:9). Each time they forfeited the promised rest through their unfaithfulness to

God. But the Messiah, the Man of true rest (1Chr 22:9), through His work on the cross, first gave rest to their consciences. And now they have entered into the rest outwardly as well.

The godly ones of God are also singing and victorious warriors (verse 6). Out of their mouths sound "high praises of God", while there is "a two-edged sword in their hand". The first is a testimony of trust in God, while in that trust the sword is taken up to defeat the opponents, leaving no doubt about the outcome of the battle. We see these two aspects in the battle of Jehoshaphat: He puts singers first, then the armed men follow, after which the LORD gives the victory (2Chr 20:21-22).

The struggle of us Christians is not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12). Therefore, we do not fight with a two-edged sword of iron in our hand, with carnal weapons, but with spiritual weapons that are but Divinely powerful (2Cor 10:4). Our sword is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12; cf. Isa 49:2).

The praise of God is incompatible with the evil with which the nations have ruled over God's people. The battle is necessary "to execute vengeance on the nations" (verse 7). It is the vengeance of God that He executes on the nations through His people because of the enmity of those nations against His people (Isa 41:14-16; Jer 51:20; Mic 4:13; 5:7-8; Zec 9:13). His people are the remnant for whom the foretold time to reign has come (Dan 7:22).

It is over and done with the rule of the kings of those nations who have repeatedly besieged, humiliated, hunted down and killed God's people (verse 8). The kings are deprived of all freedom of action by binding them "with chains." Also "their nobles", who have been guilty of robbing His people, lose their freedom and thus their prestige. They are bound "with fetters of iron".

Vengeance is not a sudden act of retaliation by one who feels that he has been wronged, but takes place "to execute on them the judgment written" (verse 9; Deu 7:1-2; 31:5; 32:41-43; Isa 26:9-10). It is a perfectly just judgment carried out in accordance with what is written long beforehand. The criminals will have no choice but to acknowledge its righteousness. This righteous retribution will be "an honor for all His godly ones".

All of God's actions in judgment, including the judgments He executes through His own, assure His own of His love. Therefore, at the conclusion of this psalm a new "hallelujah!", "praise the LORD!" is appropriate.

Psalm 150

Introduction

In this psalm we find the reign of Christ as the true Melchizedek, the true King of righteousness – that is the meaning of the name Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-2; Isa 32:1). When He reigns, all the promises of God are fulfilled (2Cor 1:20). This is the time when creation is back in the hand of God as a result of the Lamb’s victory at Calvary (Rev 5:1-13). Now all creation can praise the LORD. As soon as the “Hallelujah” of Psalm 150 sounds, the whole creation will undoubtedly rise. Then everything that has breath will praise the LORD (verse 6).

The words of the angels’ praise at Bethlehem at the birth of the Lord Jesus are then fulfilled: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased” (Lk 2:14). The song of praise to the glory of the LORD will continue to ascend, for all eternity. Amen.

Division of the psalm

Verses 1-2 Call to praise and the reason for it:

- a. WHERE (verse 1) and
- b. WHY (verse 2)

Verses 3-5 Call to praise with musical instruments:

- c. WITH WHAT

Verse 6 Final chord:

- d. WHO

Psa 150:1-6 | Praise God!

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in His mighty expanse.

2 Praise Him for His mighty deeds;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.

*3 Praise Him with trumpet sound;
Praise Him with harp and lyre.
4 Praise Him with timbrel and dancing;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe.
5 Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with resounding cymbals.
6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD!*

The last psalm is one big call to praise God. It begins and ends with “hallelujah!”, “praise the LORD!” (verse 1; verse 6). First the places where God is to be praised are mentioned: “in His sanctuary” and “in His mighty expanse”. The sanctuary here is the place the LORD has chosen to establish His Name there for His dwelling (Deu 12:5). This is about the temple as the meeting place between heaven and earth. During the realm of peace, people are to travel to the temple in Jerusalem to praise the LORD (Zec 14:16).

The heavens, which span the earth, also praise Him. The heavens and the earth, created by Him in the beginning, are full of His praise here. Everywhere, throughout His creation, He is praised. How wonderfully beautiful it is that heaven and earth are united in a harmonious song of praise to magnify the LORD. We also see this in Revelation 5, where men and angels together magnify the Lord Jesus (Rev 5:11-13).

Next are the reasons for praising God. He is praised “for His mighty deeds” and “according to His excellent greatness” (verse 2). Among His mighty deeds are His work of creation and its upholding, but certainly also the redemption of His people. That redemption concerns above all the redemption of their sins, and then also their redemption from the power of their oppressors. In all His mighty deeds, His excellent greatness is revealed. What reasons to praise Him!

Then a selection of wind, string and percussion instruments are mentioned to be used, to which the round dance is added as a physical expression (verses 3-5). Music and dancing are expressions of joy for blessings obtained after a time of misery due to straying from the place of blessing (cf. Lk 15:21-25).

The trumpet is an instrument for the priests. The harp, lyre and cymbals are instruments for the Levites. Timbrel, stringed instruments and pipe are instruments for the common people. In other words, all the people are called to praise the LORD. It is all about the heart turned toward the LORD; the instruments are merely tools to support the songs of praise.

Music is not made to entertain a particular audience (cf. Gen 4:19-21), but to glorify God. Every musical instrument serves to increase the praise of God. It is to be done “with trumpet sound” and “with harp and lyre” (verse 3). The music begins with the “trumpet sound”. This recalls the Feast of the blowing of trumpets, the feast of a new beginning, the feast that prophetically announces the restoration of Israel (Lev 23:24). That restoration is now a reality.

The trumpet is not really a musical instrument. It is blown at the beginning of a new moon or a feast (Psa 81:3). It is mentioned here to emphasize that the priests also sing along. The trumpet is also mentioned first, possibly as a starting signal.

The blowing of the trumpet also recalls the year of jubilee (Lev 25:8-13). In that year the trumpet sounds not only on the first day of the seventh month, but also on the tenth day, which is the day of atonement. The trumpet is heard throughout the land (Lev 25:9), which means that all the tribes are back in the land and each tribe lives again in the inheritance that God has assigned to it (Lev 25:13). This is the “restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:21). Through the coming of the Lord Jesus, that time has arrived.

After the trumpet sound, the praise is enhanced by “harp and lyre”. The harp and lyre are stringed instruments. They add to the clear sound of the trumpet the feeling through the lovely tones of a stringed instrument. At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, which prophetically also refers to the time for which the LORD is praised in this psalm, harp and lyre sound among other instruments (Neh 12:27).

Praising the LORD is also to be done “with timbrel and dancing” (verse 4; Psa 149:3). The timbrel is a kind of hand drum with bells or small pieces of metal, which ring, when one swings or strikes it. This instrument is used on festive occasions, such as celebrating a victory (Exo 15:20; Jdg 11:34;

1Sam 18:6). It is notable that it is mentioned several times in the hands of women. The dance, i.e. a round dance, is consistent with its use.

To this is added the use of “stringed instruments”, which does collectively refer to the use of all kinds of stringed instruments.

The “pipe”, which is mentioned next, is, like the trumpet, a wind instrument. Unlike the trumpet, the flute can be used to play a melody. It is a kind of pan flute, an instrument made up of straws of different lengths.

The list of instruments concludes with the “loud cymbals” and “resounding cymbals” (verse 5). The cymbal is a percussion instrument that in Bible times consisted of two round metal discs (cymbals) that were struck against each other. They indicated the beat, as is done by clapping hands.

Finally, it is said who “praise the LORD”: it is done by “everything that has breath” (verse 6). Man and all living beings are characterized by breathing (Gen 7:22; Psa 104:29; Isa 2:22). It begins with God’s people, the Israelites, God’s godly ones. Then it happens through all the nations. Even the animals participate in their own way in singing the praises of God:

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, [be] blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped” (Rev 5:13-14).

Just as the Word of God is food for the believing heart, prayer and praise are the breathing of that same believing heart. The book of Psalms is the breathing of the believing heart of all ages and is an encouragement and comfort to all believers, including 21st century believers, to cultivate a living relationship with the Lord Jesus and praise to God.

The book of Psalms concludes with a final “hallelujah!”, “praise the LORD!” This “hallelujah” reverberates on, without dying away. It reverberates on forever ...

It is our wish and prayer that the contemplation of this rich book of Psalms will also have this effect on us: that this “hallelujah!” will continue to reverberate in your and our heart.

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