

Psalm 95

Psalm 95:

The change of voice (in verse 7), may well indicate that this psalm was sung antiphonally.

First, the people offer a hymn that serves as a call to worship and prayer (verses 1-7a); then the priest or prophet answers with a warning that the worshipers must not fall prey to hardness of heart as did their ancestors (7b-11).

This ever-present tendency to harden one's heart is likewise applicable to God's revelation in Christ, as the author of Hebrews observed (Heb. 3:7-11).

Verses 1-11:

This psalm, with its references to the wilderness wanderings, may have been composed by David (Heb. 4:7), for the Feast of the Booths, or Tabernacles (compare Psalm 81).

During this feast, the people of Israel lived in booths, remembering God's provisions for them in the wilderness.

After a call to worship (95:1-7a), a prophecy in the voice of the Holy Spirit Himself (compare Heb. 3:7), breaks in and reminds the people of the dangers of rebellion and tempting God.

Verses (7b-11), are quoted verbatim in (Heb. 3:7-11).

Compare Heb. 3:15; 4:3-7, with the warning that those vacillating Jews also were in danger of missing the promised "rest" (i.e., salvation).

- I. Positive Call to Worship (95:1-7a).
- II. Negative Warning of Wrath (95:7b-11).

Verses 1-2

"Let us" reveals a corporate emphasis in worshiping God.

Praising the Lord by oneself is not sufficient; God's people also need to praise Him in community (Eph. 5:19).

Psalm 95:1 "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation."

"Rock of our salvation":

This metaphor for God was especially appropriate in this psalm, which refers (verses 8-9), to the water that came from the rock that was in the wilderness (compare Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:1-13; 1 Corinthians 10:4).

In Hebrew the 4th chapter verse 7, the penman speaks of this Psalm in David.

We can safely assume then, that this Psalm is of David.

This Psalm is an appeal to worship God in song and praise.

It is just as important for believers in Christ, as for the Hebrew children, or else it would not have been mentioned in Hebrews in the New Testament.

This Scripture is like most in the Bible.

It has a past tense, a present tense, and a future tense.

We have so much to thank God for.

It does appear from this verse above, that the object of our praise in song should be the Rock of our salvation.

Jesus is the Rock of our salvation.

We should shout it from the rooftops, that we are saved by the grace of God.

The greatest gift in all the world, that could be given to any one, is the gift of eternal life.

This is what we should be singing praises of.

Psalm 95:2 "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

Come with the sacrifice of praise, there being no other in the days of the Messiah, all ceremonial sacrifices being put an end to when his sacrifice was offered up.

So Arama observes, that the offering of thanksgiving shall remain, or either be left in the days of the Messiah.

Come with this to Christ as a priest, to offer it by him to God his Father, to whom it is acceptable through him, and with this to himself for the great salvation he has wrought out.

"To come before his presence", or "face", supposes his being come in the flesh, his being God manifest in it, and also as clear and free from the veil of types and shadows.

These all being gone now he is come, and to be beheld with open face.

And likewise, his having done his work as a Savior, and now upon his throne as a King.

Into whose presence chamber saints are admitted making their acknowledgments to him, and profess their allegiance and subjection to him, and their gratitude for favors received.

It signifies an attendance on him in his house and ordinances, where he shows his face, and grants his presence.

And intends not merely bodily exercise, or a presentation of our bodies only to him, but a drawing nigh to him with true hearts, and serving him in a spiritual manner.

"And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms":

With a melodious voice, and grace in the heart, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

This belonging to Gospel times shows that singing of psalms vocally in a musical way is an ordinance of Christ, to be performed to him under the Gospel dispensation (Eph. 5:19).

It was the custom of the Jewish people to come into His presence with singing of the Psalms.

The presence of God was with the Israelites, in a very special way, in the tabernacle that was in the wilderness.

This same presence was in the cloud and in the fire that led them.

God is omnipresent (everywhere all the time).

This however, is speaking of a special presence.

Many times in prayer, we are in that special presence of God.

We must remember to be in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving at those times.

Salvation of our soul is a free gift.

In fact, all the gifts of God are free.

You cannot purchase the things of God.

Praise causes the presence of God to be with you.

God inhabits the praises of His people.

Psalm 95:3 "For the LORD [is] a great God, and a great King above all gods."

"A great King above all gods":

This is a poetic way of denying the existence of other gods (compare 96:5), which existed only as statues, not persons (compare Jer. 10:1-10).

The Egyptians were shown, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the LORD God is above all the false gods of the earth.

God swore by Himself, because there was none greater.

Elijah proved to the prophets of Baal that the LORD, He is God.

Mark 12:30 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this [is] the first commandment."

Acts 4:24 "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou [art] God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:"

I could put a hundred Scriptures in here to show that God is God, and greatly to be praised, and that all the gods of the earth are nothing.

He is our God, our King forevermore.

Psalm 95:4 "In his hand [are] the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills [is] his also."

"The deep places of the earth":

This refers to the depths of the seas, valleys, and caverns, and contrasts with the hills.

The point (compare verse 5), is that God was not a local god like the imaginary gods of the heathens, usually put up in high places, but the universal Creator and Ruler of the whole earth (see note on Psalm 65:5).

God is God of the whole universe.

There is no mountain tall enough that He is not God of.

There is no depth (even hell), that He is not God of.

Remember, Jesus went and took the keys of Hell and death away from the devil.

He brought captivity captive out with Him.

Don't let anyone deceive you, the devil does not control the earth or anything else, God controls it all.

The devil has just as much power as God will allow him.

In all of this, He has you in His hand. He is as big as the universe, but small enough to care for you and me.

Psalms 95:5 "The sea [is] his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry [land]."

He made it, and therefore it is, and all creatures in it.

He sets bounds to it, and its waves, and restrains the raging of it at his pleasure (Matt. 8:26).

"And his hands formed the dry land":

The whole world, all besides the sea, the vast continent; he is the Maker of it, and all creatures that is in it.

Without him was nothing made that is made; and, being the Creator of all things, is the proper object of worship (John 1:2), as follows.

Genesis 1:9-10 "And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry [land] appear: and it was so." "And God called the dry [land] Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that [it was] good."

The Scripture above shows that all of this belongs to God.

It is all His creation.

The sea is at His command as we saw when the Red sea parted, and when Jesus told the sea to be still, and it obeyed Him.

Psalms 95:6 "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."

Before him who is the Rock of our salvation, the great God and great King, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the proper object of all religious worship and adoration.

Christ is to be worshipped with every part of external worship, which is under the New Testament dispensation.

Psalms and songs of praise are to be sung unto him; prayer is to be made unto him; the Gospel is to be preached, and ordinances to be administered, in his name.

And likewise with all internal worship, in the exercise of every grace on him, as faith, hope, and love (see Psalm 45:11).

"Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker":

Both in a natural and spiritual sense: Christ is the Maker of us as creatures, of our souls and bodies; we have our natural being from him, and are supported in it by him; and he is the Maker of us as new creatures.

We are his workmanship, created in him, and by him; and therefore, he should be worshipped by us (Eph. 2:10).

All of the things we have studied in this lesson should humble us before our maker.

We should bow down before Him and worship, and adore Him. He is our Creator, and we are His creation.

Verses 7-11:

Christ calls upon his people to hear his voice.

You call him Master, or Lord; then be his willing, obedient people.

Hear the voice of his doctrine, of his law, and in both, of his Spirit: hear and heed; hear and always yield.

Christ's voice must be heard today.

This day of opportunity will not last always; improve it while it is called today.

Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing.

Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all distrust of the Lord.

The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps.

The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition.

God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is very angry at sin and sinners.

That certainly is evil, which deserves such a recompence; and his threatenings are as sure as is his promises.

Let us be aware of the evils of our hearts, which lead us to wander from the Lord.

There is a rest ordained for believers, the rest of everlasting refreshment, begun in this life, and perfected in the life to come.

This is the rest which God calls his rest.

Verses 7-10:

A hardened heart is the intellectual rigidity, the willful abstinence, and the emotional unresponsiveness that blocks what the Lord wants to say to someone.

The word “provocation” is literally “Meribah” and would have reminded the Israelites of two important scenes: when Moses struck the rock instead of speaking (Exodus chapter 7; Num. chapter 20), and when the Israelites believed the report of the 10 spies and did not trust God (Num. chapter 14).

In each instance of sin, people were sentenced to die rather than enter the Promised Land.

These verses are quoted in (Hebrews 3:7-11).

Psalm 95:7 "For he [is] our God; and we [are] the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,"

Not only the God whom we worship as the true God, but One who has revealed himself to us as our God.

We worship him as God, as entitled to praise and adoration because he is the true God.

We worship him also as sustaining the relation of God to us, or because we recognize him as our God, and because he has manifested himself as ours.

"And we are the people of his pasture":

Whom he has recognized as his flock; to whom he sustains the relation of shepherd; who feeds and protects us as the shepherd does his flock (see notes at Psalm 79:13; compare Psalm 23:1-3).

"And the sheep of his hand":

The flock that is guided and fed by his hand.

"To day if ye will hear his voice":

His voice calling you; commanding you; inviting you; encouraging you (see this passage explained in the notes at Heb. 3:7-11).

The word "today" here means "the present time;" now.

The idea is, that the purpose to obey should not be deferred until tomorrow; should not be put off to the future.

The commands of God should be obeyed at once; the purpose should be executed immediately.

All God's commands relate to the present.

He gives us none for the future; and a true purpose to obey God exists only where there is a willingness to obey "now," "today;" and can exist only then.

A purpose to repent at some future time, to give up the world at some future time, to embrace the Gospel at some future time, is "no obedience," for there is no such command addressed to us.

A resolution to put off repentance and faith, to defer attention to religion until some future time, is real disobedience, and often the worst form of disobedience, for it is directly in the face of the command of God.

"If ye will hear his voice."

That is, if there is a disposition or willingness to obey his voice at all; or, to listen to his commands (see notes at Heb. 3:7).

What a humbling thought to know that our God, our Creator, has made the earth as a habitation for man.

How can anyone with the facts before them, refuse Him?

The only thing that He asks of us is that we would hear and believe.

How can we not believe?

Psalm 95:8 "Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, [and] as [in] the day of temptation in the wilderness:"

“As in the provocation”:

This is speaking of Meribah.

“Meribah” (translated “rebellion”), was the place in the wilderness where the Israelites rebelled against the LORD.

Their complaint about lack of water demonstrated their lack of faith in the LORD (Exodus 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13; Psalm 81:7).

It is hard for me to believe that the children of Israel did not believe after seeing, with their own eyes, the Red sea part.

How could they have heard the voice from heaven speaking the 10 commandments, and then still not believe?

How could they see water flow from a Rock, and still not believe?

How could they see Manna fall from the sky, and still not believe?

How can we live in the earth and then see all the beauty around us that God has provided, and still not believe?

How could we neglect so great a salvation?

Psalm 95:9 "When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work."

"Tempted me":

This is a reference to the same event (verse 8), also called "Massah" (translated "testing"), when God brought water out of the rock (Exodus 17:7; compare Deut. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8).

The writer to the Hebrews applies the principle of this event to his readers, suggesting that their inclination to doubt the LORD and return to Judaism was parallel with their fathers' inclination to doubt the LORD and go back to Egypt.

If you follow the movement of Israel across the wilderness, you will see that over and over, they fell away from God.

They murmured against the very God that saved them.

He forgave them over and over.

As we said before, there were so many miracles done in their behalf, that they became almost commonplace.

It is like Jesus.

He did so many miracles, that if they were all written down, there would not have been enough books in the world to contain them.

How could they not believe?

Psalm 95:10 "Forty years long was I grieved with [this] generation, and said, It [is] a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:"

"Err in their heart":

Their wanderings in the desert were the outworking of straying hearts.

For forty years they walked through the desert, and their shoes did not wear out.

No wonder God was grieved with them.

I wonder at people today who see the miracle of the earth just hanging out in space with nothing to hold it up, and they do not recognize the God that did this.

Why are we so blind that we do not see?

The problem with this people and the people then also, was that they had a hard heart.

They had hardened themselves against God.

God wants your heart.

He loved them then, and He loves us now.

He just wants us to love Him back.

To the carnal mind, God's ways are beyond finding out. The only way to understand God's ways, is with your heart.

Psalm 95:11 "Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

“My rest”:

The “rest” was originally the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan), where the people came at the end of Israel’s 40 year journey in the wilderness.

It was analogously applied in the book of Hebrews to salvation by grace (Hebrews 3:7 - 4:10; compare Hebrews 2:3).

God let them wander in the wilderness 40 years, until that evil generation perished.

It is such a shame that we cannot learn from them.

God's wrath is building up against those who do not know Him now.

There is very little time left to hang on the fence.

The believers in Christ will be saved from the wrath to come.

Make a decision today to love God in your heart and be saved.

Psalm 95 Questions

1. What makes us believe this Psalm is David's?
2. What is this Psalm an appeal for?

3. How do we know this Psalm is for believers, as well as for the Hebrews?
4. Who is the object of the praise?
5. What is the greatest gift anyone could receive?
6. How are we to come before His presence?
7. How was the presence of God with the Israelites in a very special way?
8. God _____ the praises of His people.
9. Who were shown beyond a shadow of doubt that God was God?
10. Who did God swear by and why?
11. In Acts chapter 4 verse 24, what did God create?
12. When did Jesus take the keys to hell away from the devil?
13. How much power does the devil have?
14. How big is God?
15. What does Genesis 1:9-10 tell us about God?
16. When were two separate times, we saw that God was ruler over the sea?
17. Why should we bow down before God?
18. God made the earth as a _____ for man.
19. What are some of the things the author thought should have been ample evidence to make the children of Israel believe?
20. How many miracles did Jesus do?
21. How long was God grieved with the children of Israel in the wilderness?
22. How is the only way to understand God's ways?
23. What did God swear in His wrath?
24. Believers in Christ will be saved from the _____ to come.