

Psalm 105

God's wondrous works in behalf of Israel

Psalm 105: One of two historical psalms (see chapter 78), this psalm traces the history of Israel for its didactic value in the psalmist's own day. It could also be classified as a hymn of praise since it includes the characteristic threefold content: a call to praise (verses 1-6), a cause for praise (verses 7-41), and a conclusion (verses 42-45). The call to praise is unmistakable with its 11 imperatives directed toward God's people: "give thanks, call upon, make known, sing, talk", and so on. The cause for praise constitutes a brief historical survey of what the Lord did for Israel in the past. He made an unconditional covenant with Abraham and reaffirmed it to Isaac and Jacob (verse 7-11). He protected Joseph and used him to sustain His people (verses 12-22). He delivered His people from Egypt (verses 23-38). He provided for them in the wilderness (verses 39-41). In light of such a faithful, promise-keeping God, the psalmist concludes with a summary of God's blessings (the Abrahamic covenant, the Exodus, and the Conquest), and an appropriate call to praise (verses 42-45).

Verses 1-45: Just as Psalms 103 and 104 were matched pairs; so are (Psalms 105 and 106), as they look at Israel's history from God's perspective and then Israel's vantage respectively. This psalm possibly originated by command of David to Asaph on the occasion when the Ark of the Covenant was first brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:12-19; 1 Chron. 16:1-7; Psalm 105:1-15 repeats 1 Chron. 16:8-22).

- I. Rejoicing in God's Works for Israel (105:1-3).
- II. Remembering God's Works for Israel (105:4-6).
- III. Recounting the Work of God for Israel (105:7-45).
 - A. Abraham to Joseph (105:7-25);
 - B. Moses to Joshua (105:26-45).

Verses 1-7: Our devotion is here stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God. Seek his strength; that is, his grace; the strength of his Spirit to work in us that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be sought. Seek to have his favor to eternity, therefore continue seeking it while living in this world; for he will not only be found, but he will reward those that diligently seek him.

Verses 1-5: Ten imperatives call Israel to a time of remembering, celebrating, and spreading the report abroad of the work of God on Israel's behalf as a result of God's covenant with Abraham.

Verses 1-3: The psalmist seeks to excite the people's gratitude by recalling God's goodness to them in former times (1 Chron. 16:34).

Psalm 105:1 "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people."

The design here is to show that thanks should be given to the Lord in view of his dealings with his people, as stated in the subsequent portions of the psalm.

"Call upon his name": More literally, "Call him by his name." That is, Address him by his proper title. Ascribe to him the attributes which properly belong to him; or, address him in a proper manner.

Make known his deeds among the people": What he has done in former times. The allusion is to his acts in behalf of his people in delivering them from Egyptian bondage, and bringing them to the Promised Land. The word "people" here refers to the Hebrew people; and the exhortation is, that the knowledge of these deeds should be diffused and kept up among them. One of the ways of doing this was that proposed by the psalmist, to wit, by a psalm of praise. By recording and celebrating these acts in their devotions. One of the most effective modes of keeping up the knowledge of what God has done in our world is by songs of praise in worshipping assemblies.

We read that the first 15 verses of this Psalm were used in song of praise when the Ark was moved from the house of Obed-edom. Probably, David was the penman. The psalmist here, is encouraging those around him to praise and worship the LORD. We are told in the Scriptures that we have not, because we ask not. We are also, told to ask and it shall be given unto you. In the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples, He taught them to magnify God first and then ask. He is more apt to be receptive to our prayer, if we tell of His wonderful deeds to our acquaintances.

Psalm 105:2 "Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works."

Both vocally and instrumentally, with the voice and upon instruments of music, as were used in David's time. Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, are to be sung now, even the song of Moses, and of the Lamb. The wondrous things God had done for his people were sufficient matter for a song; and these were to be put into one, to be transmitted to posterity. It was usual in ancient times to hand down the history of memorable events by a song.

"Talk ye of all his wondrous works": All the works of the Lord are wonderful. What David elsewhere says of himself may be said of them. That they are wonderfully made, even the least and most inconsiderable of them. And especially his works of grace, when it is observed for whom they are performed. Or on whom they are wrought; sinful creatures, enemies to God, and deserving of his wrath. These are to be talked of freely and frequently, in friendly conversation, in order to gain a further knowledge of them, and warm each other's hearts with them. And to lead into adoring and admiring views of the love and grace of God in them. And all of them deserve notice, none should be omitted, all are worthy of consideration and contemplation. For so the words may be rendered, "mediate", "on all his wondrous works". Here is a large field for meditation; and when the heart is in a proper frame for it, meditation on the works of God is sweet, pleasant, and profitable.

There is something about singing praises to the Lord that adds enthusiasm to our praise. We should never stop proclaiming to the world the wonderful works of the Lord.

Psalm 105:3 "Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD."

In the knowledge of it, as proclaimed in Christ. In being called by his name, and in having the honor to call upon his name. In the holiness of it; and in Christ being made sanctification as well as righteousness, in whom all the seed of Israel are justified and glory. As they may also of interest in him, and communion with him.

"Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord": While he may be found, and where he may be found. Who seek him in Christ, and under the guidance and direction of his Spirit. Who seek him with their whole hearts, diligently and constantly. The Targum is, "who seek doctrine from the Lord." Such may and should rejoice in him, and in him only. And that always, as they have reason to do, even in their hearts, since they that seek him find him. And whether it be at first conversion, or afterwards, or when he has for a time hid his face; it must be matter of joy to them. Even to their very hearts, to find him whom they seek.

We should never be ashamed to tell others of our God. If we are to boast of anything, it would be that we should boast of our God. We are what is in our heart. If our heart is rejoicing, it would be because we sought the Lord and found Him.

Psalm 105:4 "Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore."

Seek strength from him. Seek that his strength may be imparted to you. Seek him as a Being of almighty power; as One by whom you may be strengthened. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, "Seek the Lord, and 'be strengthened." Strength comes from God, and it is only by his strength that we can be strong. Only by our making use of his omnipotence in our own behalf that we can discharge the duties, and bear the trials of this life (compare the notes at Isa. 40:29-31).

"Seek his face evermore": His favor. His smiling upon us. His lifting up the light of his countenance, is synonymous with his favor (see Psalms 24:6; 27:8; compare the notes at Psalm 4:6).

I am weak, but He is strong. In my weakness, He is strong. The desire of every believer is to be in the presence of the Lord. To look upon His face is reserved for our heavenly view of Him. I do not believe the Scripture above means to look upon His face. On this earth that would be certain death. What it is saying, is to seek the will of the Lord in your life.

Psalm 105:5 "Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;"

The works suited to excite wonder. Call them to remembrance in your psalm; seek the aid of music and song to impress the memory of them deeply on your hearts.

"His wonders": His miracles (see notes on Psalm 78:43 and Isa. 8:18).

"And the judgments of his mouth": That is, properly, the judgments which he pronounced on his enemies, and which were followed by their overthrow. The word does not refer here, as it often does, to his statutes or commands.

So many people are so quick to forget the things that God has done for them. It is as if they are saying, what have you done for me lately? I think if we would look back over our life and see the marvelous things that God has done for each of us, there would be so many things that it would fill a book. Why do we not fill our mouth with praise of the marvelous things He has done for us? Judgments of His mouth, could be the Scriptures in the Bible that are printed in Red. Jesus Christ is the written Word. He is also, the spoken Word as well. God said, "Let there be", and there was. This is the spoken Word. His judgments are right, and true, and righteous. The startling thing to me, is how quickly the followers of Jesus forgot the miracles and wonders that He did in their presence.

Psalm 105:6 "O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen."

"Seed of Abraham ... children of Jacob": Those who were to obey the commands of 105:1-5, i.e., the nation of Israel.

These are two different groups. The first mentioned here, the seed, singular is the spiritual house of Abraham through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Galatians 3:29 "And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The children (plural), of Jacob. His chosen are the physical house of Israel (Jacob). These are the Hebrews.

Verses 7-15: The "covenant" promised Canaan as Israel's inheritance. "My anointed" and "my prophets" refer to the patriarchs.

Verses 7-12: This section rehearses the Abrahamic Covenant.

Psalm 105:7 "He [is] the LORD our God: his judgments [are] in all the earth."

His name is Yahweh, the true God. And this God is ours (see the notes at Psalm 95:7).

"His judgments are in all the earth": More properly "in all the land;" that is, in every part of the land he is honored as our God. His institutions are established here; his laws are obeyed here; his worship is celebrated here. No other God is worshipped here; everywhere he is acknowledged as the nation's God.

He is the God of both physical Israel and spiritual Israel. He is not just the God of the Hebrews; He is the God of the Christians as well. God is the absolute authority in all the earth. Notice the possessive (our), in speaking of God. He is God of the masses, one at a time.

Verses 8-23: Let us remember the Redeemer's marvelous works, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth. Though true Christians are few in number, strangers and pilgrims upon earth, yet a far better inheritance than Canaan is made sure to them by the covenant of God. And if we have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, none can do us any harm. Afflictions are among our mercies. They prove our faith and love, they humble our pride, they wean us from the world, and quicken our prayers. Bread is the staff which supports life. When that staff is broken, the body fails and sinks to the earth. The word of God is the staff of spiritual life, the food and support of the soul. The sorest judgment is a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. Such a famine was sore in all lands when Christ appeared in the flesh. Whose coming, and the blessed effect of it, are shadowed forth in the history of Joseph. At the appointed time Christ was exalted as Mediator; all the treasures of grace and salvation are at his disposal. Perishing sinners come to him, and are relieved by him.

Psalm 105:8 "He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word [which] he commanded to a thousand generations."

“A thousand generations”: A reference to an exceedingly long time (a generation is normally 40 years), which would encompass the remainder of human history, i.e. forever (compare Deut. 7:9; 1 Chron. 16:15).

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he [is] God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;"

This goes a little farther than going to our grandchildren. The covenant, spoken of in both of these verses, is the covenant God made with faithful Abraham. All of the faithful will be blessed through this covenant.

Verses 9-10: The original covenant that God had made with Abraham. He later renewed it with Isaac and then Jacob (compare Abraham; Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 17:1 – 22:15-19; Isaac 26:23-25; and Jacob 35:9-12).

Psalm 105:9 "Which [covenant] he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;"

Or made it known unto him, and showed him his particular interest in it; promised that he would be his God, that he would bless him. And that in his seed, the Messiah, that should spring from him, all nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12:2; compare with Luke 1:72).

"And his oath unto Isaac": He made known to Isaac the oath which he swore to Abraham, and promised to perform it (Gen. 26:3). Or concerning Isaac; in whom his seed was to be called, and in whose line from him the Messiah was to come, the grand article of this covenant.

Abraham had faith in God, and that was counted unto him as righteousness. This promise came through Abraham's son of the promise, Isaac. This was not a covenant through the flesh, but

through the Spirit. Abraham had a son Ishmael, but he was a son of the flesh. The promise did not come through the flesh, but through the spirit.

Psalm 105:10 "And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, [and] to Israel [for] an everlasting covenant:"

“An everlasting covenant”: From the time of the covenant until the end. Five Old Testament covenants are spoken of as “everlasting”:

- (1) The Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9:16);
- (2) The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19);
- (3) The Priestly Covenant (Lev. 24:8);
- (4) The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 23:5); and
- (5) The New Covenant (Jer. 32:40).

In our study on Leviticus we found that the 40 year wanderings in the wilderness were the birthing of the law to a single nation. This nation was the house of Jacob. We found that Jesus Christ ministered 40 days in the earth after He rose from the grave setting up the grace of God through His church. The law was to the physical house of Israel. The everlasting covenant came to all mankind through the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalm 105:11 "Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:"

Alluding to God's promise to Jacob (Gen. 28:13). Out of the whole storehouse of the promises of God, only one is prominently brought forward, namely, that concerning the possession of Canaan (Psalm 105:11). Everything revolves around this. The wonders and judgments have all for their ultimate design the fulfilment of this promise.

"The lot of your inheritance": Or, that shall be the lot of your inheritance; or, what you shall inherit. The margin is, "the cord." The Hebrew word “chebel” means a cord, a rope; and then, a measuring-line. Hence, it means a portion "measured out" and assigned to anyone as land (Joshua 17:14; 19:9; compare Psalm 16:6). The meaning is, that the land of Canaan was given by promise to the patriarchs as their lot or portion of the earth; as that which they and their descendants were to possess as their own.

The physical house of Israel would receive the land of Canaan as their Promised Land.

Psalm 105:12 "When they were [but] a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it."

“Very few”: God promised Abraham that He would multiply his small number of descendants to be as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the seashore (compare Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 6; 22:17).

This is speaking of the family of Jacob that went into the land of Egypt. Seventy went into the land, not counting Joseph and his family and God kept them alive while they were strangers in this land.

Psalm 105:13 "When they went from one nation to another, from [one] kingdom to another people;"

“Nation to another”: Abraham had migrated from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran and finally to Canaan (Gen. 11:31). Later, he visited Egypt (Gen. 12:10 – 13:1).

God brought them out of Egypt with His mighty Hand through 10 plagues. Each country that they came up against, God won the battle for them.

Psalm 105:14 "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes;"

“He reprov'd”: The Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues when Sarai was taken to his quarters (Gen. 12:17). Abimelech, king of Gerar, was also rebuked by God (Gen. 20:3-7).

After the incident at the Red Sea, the kings that they came in contact with, gave up to them. The kings were not afraid of the Israelites; they were afraid of the God of the Israelites. Look at this wonderful promise made to those who have ways that please God.

Proverbs 16:7 "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Psalm 105:15 "[Saying], Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

“Touch not ... no harm”: No one passage in the Old Testament records this exact statement. The psalmist most likely is summarizing several occasions, such as (Gen. 20:7; 26:11).

“Mine anointed ... my prophets”: With poetic parallelism, God’s prophets are termed those whom He chose to represent Him on earth. In (Gen. 20:7), Abraham is called a prophet. This title could also apply to Isaac and Jacob.

David believed so strongly that you were not to touch the anointed of God, that he ran from Saul instead of killing him, because God had anointed Saul king over Israel. Abraham was like a priest before God. The very same thing came down through Isaac and Jacob. These Israelites were the chosen of God. God fought their battles for them. To come against them would be like coming against God. The prophets of God were an anointed group of people. Again, to do them harm, would bring the wrath of God down upon you.

Verses 16-25: The history recorded in (Gen. chapters 37-50), is in view. Verses (16-22), refer to Joseph’s experience in Egypt (compare Gen. chapters 37-41), while (verse 23), looks to Jacob’s

trek to Egypt that resulted in a 430 year stay (Gen. chapters 42-50; compare Gen. 15:13-14; Exodus 12:40).

Verses (24-25), give an overall summary of Israel's experience in Egypt (compare Exodus 1:7-14).

Psalm 105:16 "Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread."

On the land of Egypt; or rather on the land of Canaan, where Jacob and his sons sojourned. And which reached to all lands (Gen. 41:56). And calling for it, it came, being a servant at the command of the Lord (see 2 Kings 8:1).

"He brake the whole staff of bread": So called, because it is the support of man's life, the principal of his sustenance. As a staff is a support to a feeble person, and which, when broke, ceases to be so. The staff of bread is broken, when either the virtue and efficacy of it for nourishment is taken away or denied. Or when there is a scarcity of bread corn; which latter seems to be intended here (see Isa. 3:1).

The only thing that would have caused Jacob to take his family into Egypt would be to save their lives. This is just what happened. Famine was throughout the land, and the only food available was in Egypt.

Psalm 105:17 "He sent a man before them, [even] Joseph, [who] was sold for a servant:"

Who, though but a lad of seventeen years of age when he was sold into Egypt, yet was a grown man when he stood before Pharaoh, and interpreted his dreams of plenty and famine to come. And advised him to lay up store in the years of plenty, against the years of famine; by which he appeared to be a wise man, as the Targum here calls him (see Gen. 37:3). Him God sent before into Egypt; before Jacob and his sons went down there, to make provision for them, to support them in the time of famine, and preserve their lives. God is said to send him, though his brethren sold him out of envy; there being such a plain hand of Providence in this matter. And which is observed by Joseph himself over and over again (Gen. 45:5). In which he was a type of Christ, in whom all provisions are made, and by whom they are communicated unto his people; who all receive out of his fullness, and grace for grace.

"Who was sold for a servant": Either "to a servant": as to Potiphar, as Aben Ezra, who was a servant of Pharaoh's. Or rather to be a servant, as Joseph was in his house. He was sold for twenty pieces of silver, as Christ, his antitype, for thirty; the price of a servant (Gen. 37:28). And who not only appeared in the form of a servant, but did the work of one. And a faithful and righteous servant he was to his Father, and on the behalf of his people.

Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, was sold into Egypt as a slave by his brothers. He became a servant in Potiphar's house. Of course, all of this happened to fulfill the prophecy that they would be slaves in Egypt 400 years. God took the terrible act of Joseph's brothers and turned it into a blessing for all of their people.

Psalm 105:18 "Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:"

In (Gen. 40:3); it is said of Joseph that he was "bound" in prison. It is not improbable that his "feet" were bound, as this is the usual way of confining prisoners.

"He was laid in iron": Or "the iron" (or, as the Targum, "the iron chain"), "went into his Soul"; his body. It ate into him, and gave him great pain. Or rather, as it is in the king's Bible, "his soul went into the iron chain"; there being, as Aben Ezra observes, an ellipsis of the particle and which is supplied by Symmachus, and so in the Targum. That is, his body was enclosed in iron bands, so Buxtorf. In all this he was a type of Christ, whose soul was made exceeding sorrowful unto death. He was seized by the Jews, led bound to the High Priest, fastened to the cursed tree, pierced with nails, and more so with the sins of his people he bore. And was laid in the prison of the grave; from whence and from judgment he was brought (Isa. 53:8).

We know this refers to the time Joseph spent in jail, after Potiphar's wife lied about Joseph. He was in chains, but soon they were removed. Joseph became the second in command in all of Egypt after interpreting Pharaoh's dream.

Psalm 105:19 "Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him."

Either the word of Joseph, interpreting the dreams of the butler and baker, till that came to be fulfilled. So the Syriac version, "till his word was proved by the event": or rather till the fame and report of that came to Pharaoh's ears (Gen. 41:13). Or else the word of the Lord, concerning his advancement and exaltation, signified in dreams to him (Gen. 37:7), as it follows:

"The word of the Lord tried him": It tried his faith and patience before it was accomplished. And when it was, it purged him and purified him, as silver in a furnace, and cleared him of the accusations and slander of his misery. For, even in the view of Pharaoh, he appeared to be a man in whom the Spirit of God was (Gen. 41:38). Some think that Christ, the essential Word, is intended, who came and visited him, tried and cleared him.

Joseph was kept in prison, until one of his fellow prisoners told the Pharaoh that Joseph could interpret dreams accurately.

Psalm 105 Questions

1. When were the first 15 verses of Psalm 105 sung?
2. We have not, because we _____ .
3. What did Jesus teach the disciples to do first in their prayers?
4. What does singing praise add to it?
5. What would be the only thing permissible to boast of?

6. I am weak, but He is _____.
7. When can we look upon His face?
8. What does verse 5 tell us to remember?
9. Instead of remembering the wonderful things God has done for us in the past, what do many say?
10. What are the judgements of His mouth?
11. Who is the written and the spoken Word?
12. Who are the seed of Abraham?
13. Who are the children of Jacob, his chosen?
14. What do these 2 have in common?
15. Who is the absolute Authority in the earth?
16. He is God of the masses ____ at a time.
17. Who had God made the covenant with?
18. Which son did the covenant oath come through?
19. And confirmed the same unto _____ far a _____.
20. And to _____ for an everlasting covenant.
21. What land was Israel's inheritance?
22. What is verse 12 speaking of, when it speaks of few in number?
23. How did God bring His people out of Egypt?
24. Why did the kings not fight Israel?
25. How did God get Jacob and his family to go to Egypt?
26. Who had God sent ahead to Egypt to prepare the way for Jacob and his family?
27. How did Joseph get to Egypt?