

**International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
January 8, 2017**

**Lesson Text: Psalm 96:1-13
Lesson Title: All Creation Joins in Praise**

Introduction

Psalm 96 is a hymn of praise celebrating God's lordship over all creation. It is also a Messianic psalm that points to the coming salvation of the Messiah. There is no author attributed to the psalm, but it is believed to have been penned by David. If David, therefore, is the author of this psalm, it is likely he recomposed his words of praise in 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. There, David composed a psalm of praise when the ark of God was returned from the house of Obed-edom. First Chronicles 16 and Psalm 96 bears striking similarity.

Because God alone is Creator, all creation should worship and praise him. Psalm 96 emphasizes that truth with references to nature and all kinds of people. As you study the psalm, notice the references to different kinds of people. "All the earth" (verse 1, 9); "the heathen" (verse 3, 10); "all people" (verse 3); "kindreds of the people" (verse 7).

The Call to Praise (Psalm 96:1-3)

Verse 1

"O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth."

The word "sing" is mentioned three times in this verse emphasizing the urgency of praising the "LORD" in "song." "Sing" is used in the imperative numerous times throughout the psalms (Psalm 9:11; 30:4; 33:3; 47:6; 66:2; 68:4, 32; 81:1; 98:5; 105:2; 147:7). Singing is a natural way to praise and worship the Lord. Psalm 5:11 is the first of more than 70 references to singing in the Psalms.

"New song" suggests a fresh realization of the Lord's attributes and activities. If "new" mercies have been received, then it is imperative man respond with fresh praise and worship. "Sing unto the LORD, all the earth" is an expression of the psalmist's desire that everyone who has life and breath would come by faith to Jesus Christ, believe the gospel, and thus praise and worship the living God.

Verse 2

"Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day."

This verse is almost identical to 1 Chronicles 16:23, “Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation.” “Bless his name” means “to kneel, to adore.” Everyone should bow before the Lord and adore God for Who He is.

“Shew forth his salvation” may have originally referred to what God had done to save His people in times of danger. Everyone, Jew and Gentile, saved or lost, are recipients of God’s delivering mercy and grace and should openly praise the Lord (2 Timothy 3:11; 4:17). Believers in Christ not only praise the Lord for deliverance from temporal dangers, but also praise the Lord for deliverance from sin (2 Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

“From day to day” means continually. Worship and praise should not be some sporadic or occasional response to a religious service or spiritual environment. Our worship and praise to the Lord for His salvation and delivering grace must go forth “from day to day,” never ceasing.

Verse 3

“Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.”

“Declare” means “to score, mark, or tally.” God’s “glory,” is the sum total of all He is. His “wonders” refers to His works which distinguish Him from all others. “His glory” and “his wonders” are to be published, not only in Israel, but “among the heathen,” a reference to the Gentile nations. Commenting on this verse, Doctor John Phillips writes, “We mass our choirs, have song-fests, publish hymnbooks to provide new phrases and melodies for our services of worship and praise—not that we should not do that. But how can we do that week after week without a thought for those who have no song at all? (*John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Psalms, Volume Two: An Expository Commentary.*)

Note: The psalmist’s call to worship in verses 1-3 teach us both the urgency of worship and a missionary desire as we worship and praise the Lord. Worship and praise must not be confined to Sunday mornings and must not remain behind the four walls of the church. We must worship with a desire to see all the earth.

The Cause of Praise (Psalm 96:4-6)

Verse 4-5

“For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.”

The “LORD,” Jehovah, the Jewish national name of God, is “great” (Psalm 77:13). The reason we praise and worship God is because of the greatness of God Himself. If you know “the LORD is great” you will worship Him!

God's own greatness is the cause for our worship. One of the reasons our worship is sometimes so dull is because we do not really believe the Lord is “great.” Often there are other things from which we get more satisfaction, more delight, more joy, than the Lord. If “the LORD is great,” He is “greatly to be praised.” God is worthy of praise and adoration. Whatever is “great” results in our admiration, and naturally results in “great praise.”

“He is to be feared above all gods” means Jehovah God is to be revered above all the pagan gods and idols of the world (Exodus 18:11). The Hebrew word for “gods” the psalmist uses in verses 4 and 5 is similar to the Hebrew word for “God” in the scriptures. While the two words “gods” and “God” are similar, they are totally different in meaning. When the psalmist uses “gods” he is referring to good for nothing idols. The “gods” of this word are good for nothing. In comparison, “the LORD made the heavens.” Jehovah God is the cause for our worship and praise.

Note: A true mark of genuine saving faith is a renunciation of the false gods of this world and worship and praise of Jehovah God (Galatians 4:8-9).

Verse 6

“Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.”

When the psalmist used the words “honour and majesty,” he is describing the royal significance of the Lord (Psalm 21:5; 45:3). God dwells in the presence of His own glory and splendor. “Strength and beauty” are “in his sanctuary.” The place of God’s dwelling is a place of power and beauty.

The Content of Praise (Psalm 96:7-9)

Verse 7-9

“Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.”

The content of our praise involves acknowledging who God is, acknowledging that He deserves our praise, and offering Him what He deserves. Three times in

verses 7-8 the psalmist says, “give.” “Give” means “to ascribe” (Psalm 29:1). To “give” to the Lord does not mean you are giving Him something He is not or does not already have. It means you are giving to Him something He already is.

“Bring an offering, and come into his courts” redirects our worship and praise from the heavenly realm to the earthly. While we are commanded to “Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name” by vocally praising Him, we must also literally “bring an offering” to the Lord’s house. Worship is more than mere acknowledgment. Why should anyone “offer” anything to God? Because He is Almighty and deserves to be offered to. The whole point is when you come to worship acknowledge God, for He deserves to be worshiped. If you do not, your heart will not be in worship.

“O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” speaks of how worshippers should approach Him. In the Old Testament, the priests wore special garments to go into the temple or the tabernacle of the Lord. When the people of God worshiped, they had to be consecrated in special ways as they came in God’s presence. God does not require us to wear special clothing or even our Sunday best, although there are many good reasons to do that. This is a command to clothe yourself in the adornment of “holiness” as you come to worship God. God is holy and requires we enter His presence in holiness. This shows us why the gospel is necessary for worship: because we are not holy separated from the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are going to worship, we must believe the gospel.

The Context of Praise (Psalm 96:10-13)

Verse 10

“Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.”

The words “the LORD reigneth” reinforces the fact Jehovah is both Creator and coming King. We should worship and praise the Lord in the presence of “the heathen” because one day Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of David and rule the nations. When the Lord returns to judge and reign on earth His reign will at last be “established” with righteousness. It will be a kingdom “that shall not be moved.”

When “the LORD reigns,” there will be no more famine, pestilence, war, crime, and heartache. Everything will finally and fully be secure. Praise the Lord for His reign!

Verse 11-12

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice.”

The psalmist calls upon all nature and all God’s creation to “rejoice” and “be glad” when considering the promise of the Lord’s righteous reign. The entire creation of God will “rejoice” and “be glad” when He reigns. Creation is under a curse, animals, man and every living thing has been affected by the fall of man in the garden of Eden (Romans 8:18-23). But someday the curse will be lifted and everything the Creator has made will “rejoice” and “be glad.” In all the manifestation of the character of God, whether made in “heaven” or in the “earth,” it is right for all of it to magnify and praise the Lord (Psalm 148:7-13).

Verse 13

“Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”

“Before the LORD: for he cometh” speaks of Christ’s Second Coming to bring judgment and establish peace on the earth. Certainly, there will be terror and great calamity upon sinners and nations that do not know the Lord. However, the judgment the psalmist has in view in this verse is not a retributive, but a gracious judging, by which all trouble and evil are prevented, and the law of love is introduced into the life of His people once for all.

“And the people with his truth” means all the nations on the face of the earth will be dealt with by the faithfulness of God. No more crooked politics or man-made religion. No more preferential treatment or deception. After all is fulfilled, Jehovah God will govern in righteousness, mercy, and faithfulness. Praise ye the Lord!

Conclusion

Psalm 96 and other psalms must have been uplifting and encouraging for the psalmists as they have been for believers of all ages. Many psalms express a longing for the Lord to destroy wickedness and establish righteousness on the earth. Like the psalmist, Christians should have no difficulty praising and worshipping the Lord.

True worship and praise glorifies the Lord, edifies the saints, and is a powerful witness to unbelievers.

Amen.