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Bible Study Notes  
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Psalms 117  
Hallelujah for the Universal Praise of God  
Calling all People to Praise the Lord

Psalms 117 is short and sweet and is in no doubt the reason why we sing it so often because of its shortness but, if we rightly understood and considered it, we should sing it often for the sweetness.

This Psalm is exceedingly large in its spirit; for, bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of the Lord. It may be worth noting that this is the shortest chapter of the Scriptures and the central portion of the whole Bible (C.H.S.)

KJV Psalm 117:1 O Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

117:2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth forever. Praise ye the Lord

MSG Psalm 117 Praise God, everybody! Applaud God, all people! His love has taken over our lives; God's faithful ways are eternal. Hallelujah!

An anonymous writer composed the shortest psalm and in three brief sentences it encompassed the whole world. This Psalm is an

invitation to people everywhere to turn to the Lord and join with believers everywhere in praising God. This Psalm helps us appreciate four privileges that belong to God's people and that is: 1. Worshipping God (vs.1a), 2. Sharing the Gospel (v.1b). 3. Depending on God's Great Love (v. 2a) and 4. Resting on Divine Assurance (v. 2b)

**Worshipping God:** The psalm opens and closes with "Praise the Lord," for praising the Lord ought to be a mark of every believer today as it was of the Christians in the early church (Acts 2:47). The first "praise" translates the familiar Hebrew word Hallel which gives us "hallelujah praise the Lord. The second "praise" is shavah which is "to boast, to extol and laud (which is to say praiseworthy things about the person)." When we praise the Lord, we are not only telling Him of His greatness, but we are also "bragging on Him" to those who hear our songs. Worship and praise are the highest occupations to which we can dedicate our voices; these activities will occupy us for all eternity.

This is a Hallel Psalm and Hallel songs were sung at three great feasts of the nation of Israel: The Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. At the Feast of Passover, the cup was passed seven times and between each passing those gathered would sing one of these hymns. Some say that Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the meal and Psalms 117 and 118 were sung after the meal. It doesn't matter how you arrange them; the important thing is that they were sung.

**Sharing the Gospel:** The word translated “nations” is often translated “Gentiles,” that is all people who are not of Semitic origin. (meaning: relating to the peoples who speak Semitic languages, especially Hebrew and Arabic). The Hebrew word translated “peoples” refer to the diverse nationalities in the world (Rev. 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.]. You find the phrases “all the earth” and “all peoples” frequently in the book of Psalms. What I learned is that the Jewish people were supposed to be separated from the Gentiles but not isolated from them, for God called Abraham to found a nation that would bring blessing to all the earth (Gen. 12:1–3; Rom. 4:17–18; Gal. 3:8). Israel fell and became guilty of imitating the Gentiles instead of illuminating the Gentiles with the light of God’s truth (Isa 42:6; 49:6).

If we are worshiping people, praising the Lord, then we will be a witnessing people, telling others how wonderful He is.

**Depend on God’s Great Love:** We must remember it is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed. We have been saved by grace, not by our good works (Eph 2:8–9) and were it not for God’s merciful lovingkindness, we would still be in darkness and death. Some Jewish leaders became proud of being God’s chosen people and began to look down upon others. They even called the Gentiles “dogs”.

But God's people today are just as guilty of the same sin. "His lovingkindness is great towards us, so we have nothing to boast about. "Not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:9). If we are humble before the Lord, He can use us to reach others, but if we are proud, He will reject us. "God resist the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). We are saved by grace, and we live by grace, depending wholly on the Lord's generosity in Jesus Christ. A proud church is a weak church. To enjoy the praise of men is to lose the blessing of God.

**Resting on Divine Assurance** is that we are saved by faith and live by faith, but our faith would mean nothing were it not for His faithfulness that endures forever. The word translated "truth" or "faithfulness" in Hebrew is to be firm and unshakable. God's character cannot change, and His promises will not change. So why are we fretting about the feelings within us and the circumstances around us? Why do we hesitate to obey Him when He abounds in faithfulness (Ex. 34:6)? If God calls us to do something, He is faithful to help us do it (1 Thess. 5:24). Here is the thing to rely on our faith is to put faith in faith, but to rely on God's faithfulness is to put faith in the Lord. Our assurance is in the Word of God and the God of the Word.

These two verses are remarkable and should not be passed over hurriedly. "Praise the Lord, all ye nations" is obviously prophetic. It looks to the future when all nations and races and tribes and

tongues on every continent and in every nation will join in praising Jehovah and will worship Him as Lord. Questions for you to ponder. Is there anything like that in the world today? Do you see any evidence of this in your neighborhood? Can you see that the world is turning to God?

There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it (Rom. 15:11), where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and laud him, all you people. Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people, by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm.

Here are the seven precepts of Noah's sons:

- Do not worship idols.
- Do not curse God.
- Do not commit murder.
- Do not commit adultery, bestiality, or sexual immorality.

- Do not steal.
- Do not eat meat from a living animal.
- Establish courts of justice.

I. The vast extent of the gospel church, v. 1. For many ages in Judah only was God known and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations praised gods of wood and stone (Dan. 5:4), while there was no devotion at all paid, at least none openly, that we know of, to the living and true God. But all nations are called to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old-Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood, and because, unless the people of the land became Jews and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition-wall is taken down, and those that were afar off are made nigh. This was the mystery, which was hidden in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. 3:3, 6. Observe here,

Eph. 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,)

Eph. 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

1. Who should be admitted into the church—all nations and all people. The original words are the same that are used for the heathen that rage and the people that imagine against Christ (Ps. 2:1); those that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, Mt. 24:14; Mk. 16:15. All nations shall be called, and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be disciplined.

2. How their admission into the church is foretold—by a repeated call to praise him. The tidings of the gospel, being sent to all nations, should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God; and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly favoured whom God invites by his word and inclines by his Spirit to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a name and a praise, Jer. 13:11. See Rev. 7:9, 10.

II. The unsearchable riches of gospel-grace, which are to be the matter of our praise, v. 2. In the gospel, those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most brightly in themselves and most comfortably to us; and the apostle, where he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God (Rom. 15:8, 9), for the truth of God and for his mercy. We that enjoy the gospel have reason to praise the Lord,

1. For the power of his mercy: His merciful kindness is great towards us; it is strong (so the word signifies); it is mighty for the pardon of mighty sins (Amos 5:12) and for the working out of a mighty salvation.

2. For his truth: The truth of the Lord endures forever. It was mercy, to the Gentiles, that the gospel was sent among them. It was merciful kindness prevailing towards them above their deserts; and in it the truth of the Lord, of his promise made unto the fathers, endures forever; for, though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts and his truth the foundation of all our hopes, and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

You see Simeon declared how God at did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. (Acts 15:14). You see what God is doing in our day is taking out a people from among the Gentiles. He making up His church from all races and tribes and tongues and bringing them together into one body. After, He takes his church out of the world He will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down and will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things (Acts 15:15-17).



As you can see this Psalm looks to the future when every creature on this earth will render praise unto God. There is no evidence that everyone will turn to God. However, the time is coming when “God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him: (PS. 67:7).

The fulfillment of this psalm will come during the Millennium when Christ reigns on the earth and not before. Oh what a glorious time that will be! “Praise ye the Lord” Hallelujah!

Resources:

Warren W. Wiersbe

David Guzik

J. Vernon McGee

Charles H Spurgeon

Message Bible

King James Bible