

PSALM 105

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION: Psalm 105 is a psalm praising Jehovah for His faithfulness to Israel. It is set in the context of a recitation of some of the marvelous works of the LORD on behalf of Israel in history, from God's covenant with Abraham to His provision for the nation during the wilderness wanderings; it should be taken together with the other two major historical psalms, Psalms 78 and 106.

The first fifteen verses of this psalm are found in 1Chr16:8-22. There they are designated as a psalm composed by King David and delivered to Asaph the chief song leader to use in corporate worship. The circumstances of the writing of this psalm were David's bringing of the Ark to be placed in the tent at Jerusalem (1Chr16:1,7), thus identifying Jerusalem as the permanent place the LORD had chosen to manifest His presence and receive worship (Deut16:16; Ps132:13).

A CALL TO WORSHIP

[1] To "make known His deeds among the peoples", that is among the Gentile nations, was the divine duty of Israel (Ex19:5-6; Deut4:5-8; Rom3:1-2). While historically she largely failed in this duty, restored and regenerated Israel will yet fulfill this calling in the Millennial Kingdom (Isa61:4-9; Zech8:20-23). For this reason, the context of this psalm may well be Millennial.

[2] The Book of Psalms is the hymnbook of Israel which contains divinely-inspired songs. These songs are to be sung both in praise and worship to God Himself, as well as for a testimony of God to men.

Note that one of the purposes of worship songs is to "talk ye of all His wondrous works"; that is, to know of God's miraculous works in history and to testify to them in praise.

[3] Another purpose of our songs is to "Glory ye in His holy name". Here, "glory" is the Hebrew verb *halel*, more often translated "give praise". The "name" of God is used throughout the Scriptures as a designation of His nature and character. Thus, to praise the name of God is to exalt God's nature and character; thus, a study of the attributes of God is vital to knowing Him and being able to appropriately worship Him.

[4] To "seek His face" is a Hebrew idiom meaning 'to know God in a personal, intimate way' (Cp., Ex33:11). Notice that the command is not to seek God, but "Jehovah" (i.e., the personal name of God revealed to His covenant people; Ex3:14).

[5] To remember the works, wonders and judgments of the LORD, and to pass those memories on to subsequent generations, was God's charge to the nation of Israel. Throughout the Book of Deuteronomy, God's word to the nation entering the Land, Moses reminded the

nation to "remember" (Deut7:18; 8:2; 24:9; 25:17; 32:7, and many others), and "forget not" (Deut8:11; 9:7).

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO ISRAEL BASED ON HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

- [6] The "seed of Abraham", through his grandson Jacob (that is, the nation of Israel), is God's chosen people. This does not mean that all Jews individually down through history have been saved; actually, it has generally been true that only a minority of Jews at any particular time were true believers (Rom9:6), this group of Jewish believers within the nation being called "the remnant" by the prophets (note Rom11:5).

Nevertheless, Israel as a nation was chosen by the LORD as His unique vehicle of revelation to the world (Deut4:5-8; Rom3:1-2; 9:4-5).

- [7] All the nations surrounding Israel were polytheistic, but each had its own national 'patron' god. The God of Israel was *Jehovah*, but His sovereignty extended over all nations of the earth. It was Israel's divine duty to be a witness to all nations that Jehovah was the only true God (Isa43:10-11; 44:6-8; 45:21-22; 46:9-11; 48:3-5).

- [8] The absolutely unique aspect of the relationship between Jehovah and His chosen nation is that He has entered into covenants (i.e., binding legal contracts) with them. Whereas the covenant God made with Israel through Moses was explicitly noted to be a conditional covenant (i.e., God's promised blessings were contingent upon conditions that had to be fulfilled by Israel), most of God's covenants with the nation have been unconditional (i.e., God's promises are not conditioned on the behavior of Israel). As a righteous, just, holy and faithful God, Jehovah must keep the commitments He has made in His unconditional covenants with Israel (Num23:19). The promises of God, backed up by His righteous character and His omnipotence, is the foundation of the believer's faith (Rom4:19-21).

This verse is synonymous parallelism. Thus, "forever" and "a thousand generations" are set in parallel, meaning 'all generations'.

- [9] The covenant in view in this psalm is the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18.). God's faithfulness to this covenant is the basis for all the wonders and works performed on behalf of the nation of Israel, which will be enumerated in part in the verses to follow.

This covenant was reconfirmed with Abraham's son Isaac (Gen26:2-5, 24), to the exclusion of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham (Gen17:19-21).

- [10] This covenant was also reconfirmed with Isaac's son Jacob (Gen28:13-15), to the exclusion of Esau. It was also reconfirmed with all 12 of Jacob's sons (Gen49). Thus, the party to the Abrahamic covenant are the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which we today call 'Jews'.

- [11] The first provision of the Abrahamic covenant was a "land" (Gen12:1, 7), the boundaries of which were very carefully defined as extending from the Nile river to the Euphrates river (Gen15:18-21). The most prominent people in the Promised Land were the Canaanites, so the Land was known as Canaan prior to being given to Israel.
- [12] When the LORD covenanted with Abraham to give him the Land, there were already great and powerful nations in possession of it. Initially, it was just Abraham, Sarah, and the promise of a son to come. In the early years following the covenant, it would have been 'easy' to wipe out Abraham and his family, and by doing so make it impossible for God to keep his promise. For this reason, God supernaturally protected Abraham and his descendents during these early years so that the nation promised to come from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would grow in number.
- [13] Prior to the possession of the Promised Land, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and their families from time to time sojourned in Canaan, Egypt, Philistia, and Syria.
- [14] But wherever they sojourned, they were always supernaturally preserved by God (e.g., Gen12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-16; Jacob with Laban; Joseph, and eventually entire family, in Egypt).
- [15] In context, "mine anointed" are the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph; that is, those in possession of the promises of God, though not yet in possession of the Promised Land. For this reason, they were uniquely protected by the LORD.

THE LORD'S PRESERVATION OF ISRAEL IN EGYPT

- [16] There are 13 famines mentioned in the Bible, and Scripture indicates in all that God orchestrated them for His purposes. In this instance, the famine was the LORD's mechanism for driving Jacob and his family to Egypt, that there they might grow to a great number while awaiting "the iniquity of the Amorites" to become full (making those nations occupying the Promised Land ripe for the just judgment of God). All this had been prophesied to Abraham 400 years before (Gen15:13-16).
- [17] All the circumstances of Joseph's life were part of God's gracious plan to preserve Israel (Gen45:5-8; 50:20).
- [18] In Egypt, Joseph was unjustly imprisoned for more than two years (Gen39:7-20; 41:1).
- [19] Joseph's imprisonment in Egypt was orchestrated by God simply so that he would be in a position to be remembered by those who would have access to Pharaoh at the appointed time (Gen41:9-14).
- [20] When Joseph provided Pharaoh with the God-given interpretation to his disturbing dream (Gen41:16), Pharaoh recognizes the Spirit of God in him and releases him (Gen41:38-39).

- [21] Not only was Joseph released from prison, he was exalted by Pharaoh to the position of prime minister (Gen41:41-44), second only to Pharaoh himself in Egypt (Gen41:40), which at that time was the greatest national power in the world.
- [22] Thus God placed Joseph in a political position from which he would be able to preserve his family for years to come (Gen45:5-8).
- [23] Note that Egypt is called "the land of Ham". The Egyptians are not ethnically Semitic, and are therefore not 'Arabs'. The ancient name for Egypt is Mizraim (meaning 'two masters', and reflecting the historical division of the nation into semi-autonomous upper and lower Egypt), who was a son of Ham (Gen10:6). The reason many today falsely identify Egypt as 'Arab' is because the religion of Islam forces the culture of 7th century Arabia onto any people that embrace it.
- [24] While in Egypt, Jacob's family of a mere 70 members (Gen46:27) grew to more than 600,000 men (Ex12:37), making the Hebrews that would come out of Egypt in the Exodus a nation of easily over 2 million.
- [25] But in a generation subsequent to Joseph, a new Pharaoh was raised up who hated the Hebrews (Ex1:8-14). This Pharaoh was simply the first in a long line of Satanically-driven world leaders (e.g., Haman, Hitler, today's Muslim imams and ayatollahs) having a goal of exterminating the Jews (Ex1:15-16).

In this verse, it is God Who is said to have turned the heart of Egypt to hate the Hebrews; but surely the extermination of the Jews was a Satanic, not divine, plot. This is but another example of God working all things (even the evil devices of wicked men and the malevolent demonic host) together in a way that advances His 'good' purpose. The LORD allowed Satan to raise up a Pharaoh bent on exterminating the people of God, knowing He would preserve His people, and yet using this attack as the mechanism to drive the Jews (who had become complacent and content in Egypt prior to their persecution) back to the Promised Land.

- [26] As part of His plan, God raised up Moses and Aaron to deliver Israel (Ex3:7-10; 7:1).
- [27] In the ten supernatural plagues that the LORD would bring upon Egypt (Ex7-12), the LORD would bring Pharaoh and the Egyptians face to face with the reality that JEHOVAH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, was God Almighty (Ex8:10), and that their so-called 'gods' (which included Pharaoh himself) were impotent (Ex12:12).

The Egyptians at the time of Moses were a wicked, perverted, and demonically-possessed/influenced people worshipping a host (80+) of pagan gods; as with the Amorites, Egypt well-deserved the judgment of God that came upon them. Remember as well, that as persecutors of the chosen seed of Abraham, they fell under the promised divine curse (Gen12:3).

- [28] A supernatural "darkness which may be felt" for three days (Ex10:21-23) was the ninth plague brought on Egypt. This showed

one of the greatest of the Egyptian gods, the sun-god Ra, to be impotent before Jehovah.

- [29] Turning the waters of Egypt (especially the Nile River) to blood was the first plague; not only did this plague limit their sources of fresh water, it destroyed all the fish, an important source of food to Egypt (Ex7:19-21).

More importantly, the Nile River was symbolically the heart of the nation of Egypt. Whereas most other nations of this time were dependent upon timely rains for agricultural production (making them susceptible to periodic famine), the Nile River made Egypt appear to be immune to seasonal weather patterns (which is why when famine comes in the Bible, people immediately headed for Egypt). With a word, the LORD took from Egypt not only their source of strength, but what the Egyptians would have regarded as the source of life itself. Furthermore, a multitude of the Egyptian gods were intimately linked, in one way or another, to the Nile. The psychological impact of this plague should not be underestimated.

- [30] Frogs covering all the land of Egypt was the second plague (Ex8:5-6). The Egyptian goddess Heqt took the form of a frog, and for this reason frogs were considered sacred animals that could not be intentionally killed.

- [31] Lice and swarms of flies were the third and fourth plagues (Ex8:21-24). This plague seems more directed toward the priesthood of Egyptian paganism, which prided itself on being physically clean (a requirement in their religious rituals).

- [32] The raining down of hailstones mixed with fire was the seventh plague (Ex9:22-25). By this plague the flax and barley crops of Egypt were destroyed (v31), suggesting this plague occurred during late January to early February. Agricultural production was linked to the Egyptian deities Isis, Seth and Nut, so this plague showed their impotency in the face of Jehovah.

- [34] Alluded to in vv33-35, the devouring of all the vegetation remaining in the land of Egypt following the hailstorm by locusts was the eighth plague (Ex10:12-15).

- [35] The LORD's plagues on Egypt cut off their supply of fish, killed their livestock, and destroyed their crops, vines, herbs and fruit trees. The devastation wrought on Egypt by Jehovah is almost unimaginable; the mere survival of the nation after this was only by the grace of the LORD.

- [36] The tenth and final plague was the death of all the firstborn of Egypt (Ex12:29-30). In one night not only was the population reduced by ~25%, but the heart of the nation and its leadership (both at a national level and within families) was eliminated.

- [37] Upon their departure from Egypt after the tenth plague, the Hebrew slaves asked of their Egyptian masters and were given all manner of gold, silver, jewels, and raiment, and in this way "despoiled the Egyptians" (Ex12:35-36). The Jews had been forced to labor without pay for hundreds of years in Egypt, so from their

perspective this was merely just compensation; from God's perspective, this was a final judgment on the nation of Egypt, which had been prophesied in advance (Gen15:14; Ex3:21-22). This treasure would be the materiel needed for the construction of the Tabernacle.

The impact of the historical event of the LORD's plagues on Egypt should not be underestimated. The destruction of the national assets of Egypt in the plagues, and this plundering of their wealth by the Jews in the Exodus, left Egypt in ruin. Egypt as a nation is of no significance for the next 500 years; not until the days of Solomon does Egypt recover.

- [38] So devastating were the plagues on the Egyptians, they not only released the Hebrew slaves but gladly paid them to leave.

THE LORD'S PRESERVATION OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

- [39] The LORD's supernatural work on behalf Israel did not end with their deliverance from bondage to the nation of Egypt. For the next 40 years, God miraculously sustained 2+ million Israelites. Jehovah provided a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night; not only did these provide divine direction for the nation (Ex13:21-22; Neh9:12), but also protected them from the heat of the day and cold of the night in the desert.
- [40] The LORD daily fed His people with "quails" (Num11:31-32; Ps78:27-29) and the "bread of heaven" (Ex16; Ps78:24-25). Not that while the people called it "manna" (Ex16:15), the LORD always refers to it as "bread from heaven" (Ex16:4; Jn6:31-32).
- [41] The LORD supplied water the people need from a rock (Ex17:6; Num20:11).
- [42] The supernatural deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and their miraculous preservation in the wilderness for 40 years, was all because of God's promise to Abraham (Gen13:7; 15:13-16). This was pure grace; Israel did not deserve God's blessing (Cf. Ex32:11-14). But the LORD made a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the very nature and character of God prevents Him from being anything other than absolutely faithful to do all that He has said He will do.

ISRAEL IN POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

- [43] We worship a God Who delights in making, and keeping, promises.
- [44] When God brought the fourth generation of Israelites after Abraham into the Promised Land, He fulfilled part of His promise to Abraham (Gen15:13-16), but not nearly all of it. Israel has never in history possessed all the Land promised by God, from the Nile river to the river Euphrates (Gen15:18). Furthermore, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were promised by God to personally possess the all of the Promised Land (Gen13:15, 17; 26:3; 35:12), never possessed any of it (Heb11:13). For this reason, the LORD must resurrect the patriarchs and all the OT saints (Dan12:1-2) in

order to finally inherit all of the Land promised to them during the Millennial Kingdom that Christ will establish at His return (Deut30:1-6; Dan2:44; Ezek34:11-31; Rev20:1-6).

- [45] Jehovah's purpose in calling out the nation of Israel was to be a witness to the nations of the righteous character of God (Deut4:5-8). That will be true in the Millennial Kingdom as well. A restored and regenerated nation of Israel in possession of the Promised Land and all the covenanted blessings of God promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David will be the greatest of all witnesses to the sovereignty and faithfulness of the LORD (Jer23:3-8). For this, Jehovah deserves praise indeed!