

Week 11 – Psalm 105

A Salvation History Psalm

Psalm 105:1-6 – An Invitation to Praise God for His Care of Israel

- This Psalm begins with an invitation to praise the LORD and to bear witness to the nations of God's work in preserving Israel – i.e. “what he has done” (v1).
- Praise involves a variety of activities.
 - o Singing (v 2)
 - o Telling of God's wonderful acts (v 2).
 - o Glorifying in God's name (v 3).
 - o Seeking/Rejoicing in his presence (v 3)
 - o Looking to the Lord for strength (v 4)
 - o Seeking his face (v 4)
 - o Remembering what he has done for his people (vv 5-6).
- The rest of the Psalm (vv 5-45) becomes an exercise in remembering.
 - o Other Psalms follow this pattern (see Psalm 78, 106...)
 - o This Psalm differs from the rest in that it omits any reference to Israel's faithlessness as it recalls God's faithfulness.
 - o Also notable, this Psalm does not mention the Davidic dynasty.
- Verses 1-15 show up in 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 along with Psalm 96 and parts of Psalm 106.
 - o Goldingay notes the similarity in vocabulary between this Psalm and the book of Chronicles.
 - o Chronicles was a second retelling of Israel's history (after Samuel/Kings) and it focuses on encouraging those who are living through “those disappointing times after the exile” (Goldingay, 205).
 - o This Psalm serves a similar purpose. Even when our circumstances are less than inspiring, we can recall God's activity in the past and, thereby, look forward to his action in the future.

Psalm 105:7-11 – Remembering the Promise

- The Psalmist remembers that Israel's God (the LORD our God) is sovereign over all the earth, not just Israel (v 7).
- God remembers the covenant he made to Abraham and his children forever (v 8).
 - o He made a promise to Abraham (and confirmed it with Issac and Jacob) to have an everlasting covenant with Israel (vv 8-10).
 - o In the ancient world a sworn promise carried far more weight than it does in ours.
 - o By the time of the Psalm 20-30 generations have passed.
- Outside of a reference to the God of Abraham in Psalm 47:9, this is the only reference to Abraham in the Psalter.
- God promised to give them the land of Canaan as their portion of the earth.
- Again, the emphasis is completely on God's promise, not on Israel's response.

Psalm 105:12-15 – The Wandering of the Patriarchs

- In the first of a pattern, the Psalm describes a season of trouble or difficulty that the Lord saw them through.
- The Patriarchs were small in number and wandered through “from nation to nation” (vv12-13).
- Even though they were vulnerable, God watched over and protected them (vv14-15).
- This season of wandering, and being small among the nations, held similarities to those small bands that returned to Israel after the exile.

Psalm 105:16-24 – God Raises Up Joseph

- The Psalmist recalls the time of famine in Egypt.
- God raised up Joseph, sold as a slave (v 17), to a high position in Egypt so that he might rule with wisdom and provide for Israel (Jacob) and his family (v 23).
 - o The Psalmist goes into great detail to remind his listeners of Joseph’s troubles.
 - o What others mean for evil, God can use for good.
- What appeared to be a time of difficulty, led to the fruitful multiplication of God’s people (v 24).

Psalm 105:25-38 – The Exodus

- The Psalmist recalls that Israel’s success created a new kind of trouble when God turned the Egyptians hearts against his people (v 25).
- God raised up Moses and Aaron to perform signs and miracles and lead his people out of Egypt.
- The Psalmist recounts the ten plagues that culminate in the death of all the firstborn of Egypt.
- The Egyptians, filled with dread, send out Israel loaded with Egyptian riches (vv 37-38).
- The first recipients of this Psalm faced their own external oppressors. They could look forward to the day when God filled their oppressors with dread.

Psalm 105:39-45 – Journey to the Promised Land

- The Psalmist recalls God’s provision on the way to the Promised Land. God guided them by day and night, provided quail and manna as food, and water from the rock to drink (vv 39-41).
- God remembered his promise to Abraham and brought his people into the Promised Land.
- He did so that they might keep his precepts and obey his laws (vv 44-45).
- The final lines are a reminder to praise God, and to obey him. God has delivered Israel in the past. He would again. In every case, it was so they may obey his ways.

Other Salvation History Psalms

- Psalm 78 – A song about Israel’s faithlessness and God’s faithfulness.
- Psalm 106 – A cry for mercy that recalls Israel’s faithlessness and God’s faithfulness.
- Psalm 136 – A song that remembers “His love endures forever” by recalling God’s past actions.

Sources

- o Davidson, Robert, *The Vitality of Worship* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1998).
- o Goldingay, John, *Psalms*, Volume 1: Psalms 90-150, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2008).
- o May, James L., *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville KY: John Knox, 1994).