



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

PSALMS: SONGS FOR LIFE TOGETHER • PSALMS OF PRAISE •

PSALM 135 • 4/23/2023

MAIN POINT

The goodness and greatness of God, shown through His enduring love for His people and His superiority over all other gods, should propel Christians to praise Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What does it mean to praise God? How does the act of praising God present itself in someone's life?

What are some things in your life, whether past or present, that cause you to praise God?

In many ways, Christians have put the word “praise” into a box that is only opened during times of musical worship, or perhaps in times when we are thankful for something turning out well. We mean well when we say it, but reducing the phrase,

“Praise God” to a pithy response of good news can diminish our realization of what and how we are to praise. The Bible reminds us that we serve a God who displays His greatness in creation, redemption, and divine superiority; therefore, He is worthy of all praise.

UNDERSTANDING

Psalm 135 is often called a “Hallelujah Psalm.” It was written to encourage the Jewish people to exalt God to a high place of praise by reminding them of God’s goodness and greatness, while at the same time encouraging them to remember God’s mercy in rescuing them. The first and final words of the chapter (“Praise the Lord” or “Hallelujah”) give us a glimpse into the type of response we should have when we think about and remember how good God has been—and continues to be.

READ PSALM 135:1-7.

God is described as both good and great in these first seven verses. What reasons did the author give for the goodness and greatness of God?

Verses 5-7 explain God’s sovereignty over creation and His power over all other gods. How do these truths motivate you to praise?

If this psalm was written to encourage the Jewish people to be continually renewed in their faith and praise of God, then it accomplished it well in the opening verses. We see the greatness of God displayed in His power to do as He pleases, His ability to move creation elements (heaven, earth, clouds, lightning, rain, wind), and His exaltation over all other gods. What other response do we have but to bow in worship and give Him the praise that He alone deserves?

READ PSALM 135:8-14.

These verses are an historical reminder to the people of the things God did to rescue them from slavery. What victory in your life can you look back upon and be compelled to offer up praise to God?

All throughout the Old Testament, we see God's people forgetting the things God had done for them and, at times, even turning their backs on God. How important is it to remember the things God does in our lives? How does this remembrance strengthen us as we go through life?

The writer of the psalm reminded them of all the things God did to move them out of slavery and from under the rule of Pharaoh. God's power and divinity were once again on display, and they were consistently drawn to praise Him (see v. 13). A good habit to follow is to have an attitude of remembrance for all that God has done and will continue to do for and through us.

READ PSALM 135:15-21.

What are some ways we see the inferiorities of the idols in verses 15-18?

What should these inferiorities cause you to feel toward those who worship today's idols (money, power, etc.)?

Verse 18 says that those who make and follow the idols of man will become like them. What does it mean to become like the idol you follow? How should this compel you to become more like the God you worship?

Life has a way of making us become like the things we follow. If you follow a certain thing close enough, you will eventually become like it. When it comes to idols in our lives, we will eventually find out that they leave us empty because they themselves are empty. We can chase the almighty dollar in pursuit of riches, but when we become rich like we hoped we would, we still feel empty. God has created us to be satisfied only in Him; when we understand that He is sufficient for us, then we will feel complete only in Him.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How do these passages in Psalm 135 drive you to praise? What are some ways you can be consistent to offer up your praise to God?

What are some practices that help you remember all the things that God has done in your life so you can trust Him in difficult situations? Brainstorm some ideas for keeping track of and being reminded of answered prayers, moments of grace and mercy, and God-sized miracles in your life.

What are some idols in your life, and how do they measure up to the joy and love that you receive in Christ? How can you keep your eyes focused on Him as you pursue the things He has given you to pursue in family, work, school, and hobbies?

PRAYER

Pray that the Father would help you offer up your life in worship and praise to Him. Pray that you would be committed to recognize Him as the great and good God that He is, and that you would live a life that is pleasing to Him.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 135

135:1. Three times in the opening verse believers are called upon to praise the Lord . Repeating something three times raises what is said to the superlative degree. Thus, praising God is to be one's highest goal, greatest passion, and noblest activity. The word translated "praise" (hallel) is the intensive form of the Hebrew halal, which means "to boast." Praising God means boasting in the Lord or bragging upon him.

135:2. Especially is this praise to come from you who minister in the house and courts of the house of our God. These are the ones who serve God in the temple complex area (cp. 134:1-2). The primary expression of this praise is in the public gathering of God's people, who come together in the house of the Lord.

135:3. What follows are several reasons for God's people to praise the Lord . The first reason is because the Lord is good (tob, meaning "beneficial, positive, giving what is needed, dealing bountifully with"). God's beneficial acts toward his people call for praise. God's name represents his holy attributes and perfect character. They should sing praise to his name because God is pleasant. Both the act and object of worship are lovely.

135:4. Second, God should be praised because he has chosen Jacob for himself. Here is the pride-crushing truth of God's sovereign grace and electing love, which is sweet and satisfying to the spiritual man. For reasons known only to himself, God chose his own people for himself unto eternal life. From the depths of such soul-lowering humility arises the height of God-honoring praise to God.

135:5-7. Third, praise belongs to God because he is great in his authority to rule and reign over all. God alone is greater than all gods. This is demonstrated by the fact that he does whatever pleases him, a clear declaration of his sovereign authority and power. One example of God's absolute sovereignty is his control over the weather. He makes clouds rise, sends lightning, and brings out the wind.

135:8-12. Fourth, praise should be rendered to God who struck down the firstborn of Egypt in the days of the exodus. This is a reference to the ten plagues with which God struck the Egyptians when Pharaoh refused to let God's people go. Signs are clear evidences of God's character. Wonders leave a sense of awe and terror in their hearts. In the display of his wrath, God struck down many nations, not just Egypt. He killed mighty kings in addition to Pharaoh. Many peoples felt the fury of God and were sent staggering to the grave, all because they turned away from the true God to serve false gods. Under this divine anger, Moses and Israel defeated Sihon king of the Amorites (Num. 21:21,32) and Og king of Bashan (Num. 21:33-35). Further, all the kings of Canaan were devastated during Joshua's conquests of the land (Josh. 6-12). God took the land from the Canaanites and gave it to his people Israel, as he had promised Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21).

135:13-14. Fifth, God should be praised because his name, his character, endures forever. He is forever the same, never diminishing, never changing. His divine person is renowned through all generations, immutable and fixed. Even when God's people are faithless, needing to be disciplined, he remains unchanging in his compassion. Even so, God is unchanging in his relationship with his people.

135:15-18. Sixth, God is to be adored because he is the living Lord. How infinitely superior God is when compared to the dumb idols of the pagan nations. They are silver and gold, and tarnished, corrupted, and needing polish. These false gods cannot hear. They are lifeless, and those who make them will be like them, that is, dead.

135:19-21. This psalm concludes by calling all believers to praise the Lord. Addressed to all who are assembled at the temple, this call to worship is extended to all who fear God, or to all who know him.