

Meditations on the Psalms

Volume Ten: Psalms 91-100

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1. Psalm Ninety-One

He Who Dwells in the Secret Place of the Most High

1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.

4 He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,

6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

7 A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.

8 Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.

9 Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place,

10 No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

11 For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.

12 In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

14 "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him.

16 With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation."

There are numerous Scriptures that inspire a preacher with awe. He fears that he would detract from their beauty when attempting to explain them. This is how I feel about Psalm 91,

as well as many other Scriptures.

This psalm describes the tranquillity of the godly man who is preserved by God from the perils that threaten him spiritually, physically, emotionally, ideologically and socially. In spite of their abundance and seriousness, they do not destroy the believer, although they do bother him sometimes. But all of them combined are nothing in comparison with the heavenly power and the divine love shown to the believer. Perils are numerous, but the divine care is by far greater. This compels the believer to say, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

The believer finds himself up against spiritual perils that threaten his relationship with God and try to destroy his morals. The apostle Peter describes our spiritual enemy, the devil, as walking about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). Yet the Lord grants the believer victory over the devil and his soldiers, so that he might hear the encouraging words of the angel: " 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain!'" (Zechariah 4:6,7). Then the believer will say in response, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Besides, he will reiterate Christ's words: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven"(Luke 10:18). No matter how harsh the spiritual difficulty that the believer comes up against, it never frustrates him, but through the grace of God, it turns into a help that pushes him upward. It becomes a blessing for both himself and those around him, as was the case with Joseph when his brothers sold him into Egypt. Joseph said to them after he had risen to the top, "Do not therefore be grieved ... because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life ... to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God ... you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20).

The believer also comes up against physical perils; his enemies assault him either to hurt him or murder him, but he says, "Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident" (Psalms 27:3). Sickness takes him, but he knows that the Lord will heal him (Exodus 15:26). He may heal him through medication as it happened with Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:21), or through a miracle as was the case with Bartimaeus and many others (Mark 10:52). The Lord may also give him sufficient grace to endure his sickness the way He did with Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9). Believers will be in perfect health after they have gone to be with the Lord, where there will be no more sickness or pain (Revelation 21:4). The enemies, however, will fall and pay for their sin.

The believer also comes up against ideological perils; he may have doubt or be bewildered. He may dread the future, anticipate failure, or fear his enemies, so he cries out, "LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they

who say of me, "There is no help for him in God" (Psalms 3:1,2). God's grace holds him up; he exclaims, "But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head" (Psalms 3:3), and obeys Christ's command: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34).

The believer comes up against perils in his society. He may suffer persecution, get fired from his job, or be betrayed by those nearest to him. Yet he responds, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulations, or distress, or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

The difficulties that engulf the believer in all the stages of his life are numerous, and each life stage has its own temptations and troubles. But the divine promises hold him up in all of them, granting him victory over them. At such times in life his response to the Lord would be: "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust." If we love Him He will deliver us. The church today may be undergoing an experience like that of Israel in Egypt, but we will come out of it by the grace of God. We may go through an experience like the Babylonian captivity, but the Lord will certainly bring back our captivity. And when this happens we will return home without anything that may weaken our relationship with God, and the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former one. " 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts" (Haggai 2:9).

This psalm is made up of sixteen verses; the first half is a discourse about the believer's experiences with the Lord, and the second half is God's discourse for the believers.

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The psalmist's discourse of himself (verses 1,2)
- Second: The psalmist's discourse to his neighbour (verses 3-8)
- Third: God's discourse to the psalmist (verses 9-16)

1.1. First: The Psalmist's Discourse about Himself

(verses 1,2)

1. **A general rule:** "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"(verse 1). These words are not catch phrases to set people's minds at ease, but rather truths and life experiences. Those who claimed that "religion is the opium for the nations" have given way and come to an end. But God's words are living and steadfast truths, experienced by the believers down the ages, and they will be there for them to experience and trust in until His kingdom comes. They are not a matter of the past, but are ever present as a daily reality. The psalmist says that he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The one

who dwells is the one who lives peacefully, and abides under His shadow and protection. It is he whose life is in Christ, who has known what it means to live in victorious resurrection and to sit with Christ in the heavenly places (Philippians 1:21; 3:10; Ephesians 2:6).

1. **The believer dwells and abides:** "He dwells" means that he takes up lodgings, and he abides (Heb.: spends the night) because as a member of the household he spends the night in the safety of his Father's house. After having been adopted by God he now dwells in the house of the Lord "forever" (Psalms 23:6). He dwells in sweet fellowship among the believers, and shuts his eyes to sleep in safety because a watchful eye guards him, the eye of the loving God. Therefore he exclaims, "I lay down and slept; I awoke for the Lord sustained me.... I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety" (Psalms 3:5; 4:8).
2. **The Lord is the Almighty and Most High:** He is Most High above all that are high, who looks down from His heavens and sees all things; nothing is hidden from Him. Both past and future are present before Him, and He knows the need of the believer even before he asks (Matthew 6:8). He not only knows it but fulfils it. The Most High God is Lord of all the earth, the inhabitant of heaven, who looks down from heaven upon mankind to see "if there are any who understand, who seek God" (Psalms 14:2). "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). He is the Almighty to whom Jeremiah prayed, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You" (Jeremiah 32:17). Christ also said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). To Him the triumphant believers shout, "Great and marvellous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" (Revelation 15:3).
3. **The believer is covered and overshadowed:** The Lord covers the believer with His own covering, giving him access to His shelter and protection. Thus no evil or enemies can approach him. He overshadows him so that no plague can come near him, nor troubles from people, nor from the unclean spirits. No troubles from his enemies who plot and scheme against him will harm him, nor his friends who may corner him with their useless pieces of advice! The world, for its part, tries to humiliate the believer, but humiliation cannot penetrate his soul, since his motto is: "In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock" (Psalms 27:5). "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance" (Psalms 32:7). "The LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David" (Zechariah 12:8). "How precious is Your loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings"

(Psalms 36:7). "The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand"(Psalms 121:5). Evil men try to harass the believer, but he does not get irritated, because the grace of the Lord drives away all irritation away from him, and so he overcomes. And his victory is the result of knowing that he does not deal with men, but with the Lord of men.

2. A personal experience (verse 2):

- 1. The psalmist is a man of prayer:** "I will say of the LORD"(verse 2a). The loving conversation and intellectual communication with God through prayer is the beginning of living by faith; it is also a public declaration for the glory of God that leads others to the way of faith and repentance. When a penitent sinner prays, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13) heaven's gates open wide to send the response immediately, justifying the penitent sinner. When Saul of Tarsus met the risen, living Christ, it was said of him, "Behold, he is praying"(Acts 9:11). Heaven continues to respond to the penitent sinner and the Lord says of him, "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). God's godly children are characterized by conversing with God continually, out of confidence and dependence, adopting the motto: "But I give myself to prayer" (Psalms 109:4).
- 2. The psalmist has a personal relationship with God:** "He is my refuge and my fortress; my God"(verse 2b). A refuge is a fortress built on a mountain, surrounded by high walls, making it difficult for an enemy to reach it or climb up to break into it. The Lord is truly a wall of fire around the believer and a strong tower to which the righteous run and are safe (Proverbs 18:10). In Him there is no variation or shadow of turning (James 1:17). The Lord is the great maker of heaven and earth, and yet He gives the believer a special place in His loving heart, so the godly person cannot help but call Him "my God." "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song of Solomon 2:16). "The God to whom I belong and whom I serve..." (Acts 27:23).
- 3. The psalmist has a confident relationship with God:** "In Him I will trust"(verse 2c). How great is the confidence of the believer who has come to know God and experience Him, who has been reassured of his belonging to Him and has begun to act on what he knew and experienced. This part "In Him I will trust" builds on the previous facts. To put it in other words: "Since You are my refuge, my fortress, and my God, I will trust in You, especially in times of need. You alone are worthy of trust and I feel secure with You." "The LORD redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned"(Psalms 34:22).

1.2. Second: The Psalmist's Discourse to his Neighbour (verses 3-8)

1. **The psalmist tells his neighbour what God does:** "Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler"(verses 3,4).

1. **"He shall deliver you":** "From the snare of the fowler": A fowler is a hunter. The biggest hunter of all, who sets traps for the children of men, is the devil. He gathers around him an army of men whom he has deceived. The psalmist portrays them as follows: "Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, and plan deception all the day long"(Psalms 38:12). The apostle Paul told his disciple Timothy to humbly correct those who are opposed to him, "if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will"(2 Timothy 2:25,26). The devil assumes the role of a lion to carry out his evil purpose of taking people captive, and he roars to frighten the believers (1 Peter 5:8). Yet he is not a true lion. When the believer is within the Christ's pale, the unseen hunter cannot harm him. The devil cannot reach him or get to him, because he is protected by the Lord who keeps him. To him the word is fulfilled: "No weapon formed against you shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17). And he says with Ezra, "And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road"(Ezra 8:31). All the devil can do is suggest a rebellion against God's thoughts, because he cannot actually force anyone to practice evil. He cannot snatch the believer out of God's hand, as long as the believer himself is holding on to it. So let us be alert to refuse the devil's tempting suggestions and offers, in order not to get caught in the fowler's snare.

"From the perilous pestilence": There are pestilences and diseases from which the Lord heals the believer, but the most perilous pestilence is that of sin, which corrupts man. It corrupts society, too, when sin becomes the norm and godliness becomes the exception! Truly "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:43).

2. **He will overshadow you:** "He shall cover you with His feathers"(verse 4a). Those feathers are the soft, small coverts that cover the bases of the longer feathers under the wings. A little nestling cannot stand the roughness of big feathers, therefore God provided birds with coverts to cover their fledglings so that they would not be hurt by the bigger feathers. How great is God's consideration, which does not discriminate between young and old. When somebody is hurting on the inside or the outside, He binds up his wounds with utmost love.

3. **He will give you shelter:** "And under His wings you shall take refuge"(verse 4b,c). It is as if the Lord has great wings with which He protects the believer from the evils in the world, the hurtful sun of temptations, and the attack of the enemy. Boaz said to

Ruth the Moabitess, "The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge" (Ruth 2:12). A bigger bird may come and try to snatch away the small nestling, but the father or mother bird hurries and stretches out its wings to protect the young one. The eagle also teaches its young ones how to fly by using its great wings. "As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings" (Deuteronomy 32:11).

The believer finds shelter in God's revealed truth, which is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Soldiers in the old days used to protect themselves with a big shield and a smaller shield, buckler. Shields were made of wicker, or of leather soaked in oil, to keep them from cracking, and were stretched over wooden frames, with handles on the inside. The soldier would carry the shield with his left arm to ward off the arrows, which would sink into the wooden frame. Soldiers often wrapped a burning piece of cloth round their arrows, and the shield protected the soldier carrying it from burning and bleeding. The soldier would pull the arrow out of his shield and redirect it toward his enemy; thus the arrow of the enemy will bounce back to him. The New Testament confirms that the shield which protects the believer is the shield of faith, believing in the divine truth, with which the believer quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16). The more often the enemy attacks us, the more frequently do we resort to God's revealed truth in the Bible, so that we may not lose our sound mind due to the attack, but rather obtain a sound mind from the truth of God. For "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Do you have any doubt in the Lord's love for us? Many times we pray and God does not grant us what we pray for, so we imagine that He does not hear. But the LORD says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). And the psalmist says, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry" (Psalms 40:1). The Lord listens when we call upon Him; sometimes He hears our request and rejects it because it is not the best for us. At other times He may take time to answer us in order to grant us what we need at a better time. He may also grant us what we ask for. This is the truth that protects us from doubts. Christ said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The truth is that God is love. This is what the prodigal son discovered. For on his way back to his father, he was afraid of being rejected by him. But he soon learned the truth about his father's love for him, and that he waited for his return every day. This freed him from all doubts concerning his father's acceptance of him. We, too, must be confident that the heavenly Father does not desire that the sinner remain in the Far Country; but return to Him and live. Therefore never despair of the love of your heavenly Father, because His heart is open wide for

- you. The father said about his prodigal son as he returned, "Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:23,24). This is the truth that liberates from sin, fear and doubt.
2. **The psalmist speaks to his neighbour about what a neighbour should do (verses 5-8):**
1. **He must not fear:** "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday"(verses 5,6). The eyes of the Lord watch the believer everywhere, by day and night, in the darkness and at noonday. The Jews used to divide the day into dawn and noon, sunset and midnight. So the psalmist reassured his fellow believer that he should not be afraid at any hour of the day from disease and pestilence that may come, or the enemy who might attack us by night. Sometimes all this together happens by day. Under all these circumstances there is no need to fear or fret. Let us ask of the LORD to fulfil to us His promise: "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught" (Proverbs 3:24-26). Some expositors stated that the night and darkness stand for the time of failure, and that daylight and noonday stand for the time of success. There are some perils that threaten us at the time of failure, causing us to collapse and fall under pressure. But the times of success may be more dangerous to our spiritual life, causing us to forget God and think that our success was due to our own intelligence. We may stray away from the Lord because we start to depend on money, friends, scholarly accomplishments or the influence of our families. We must not fear the terror by night, or the arrow that flies by day. Let our prayer be: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8,9).
 2. **He will see the fall of the wicked:** "A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked"(verses 7,8). The psalmist makes it plain to every believer that he is distinguished and kept by the power of God for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:5). "Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3:18). The Lord has set apart the godly one for Himself, for at the time of the exodus water was turned into blood in all the land of Egypt except in the land of Goshen (Exodus 7:20), darkness swept over the land of idolaters, while the people of God had light in their homes (Exodus 10:21). Screams were heard in every house except in the houses of those who took shelter under the

blood and the destroying angel passed over them (Exodus 12:23). The people of God crossed the Red Sea in peace, while thousands of the enemies were drowned in it (Exodus 14:30,31).

So let us be alert and learn our lesson. Let us repent so that we might escape the destiny of the wicked who fall into the pit which they dug for others. Let us pray, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" that our sins might be forgiven and have the pledge of everlasting life as Job said, "Put down a pledge for me with Yourself" (Job 17:3). Let us have a trusting faith in God and His promises, so that we may become like Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh who said that the Lord will make good His promise to his people. Those two received their reward, while the dead corpses of all those who did not believe fell in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua saw with their own eyes the punishment of the wicked who did not believe in the promise of their Lord (Numbers 14:36-38).

1.3. Third: God's Discourse to the Psalmist

(verses 9-16)

- 1. The Lord promises the believer that His protection will continue:** "Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling"(verses 9,10). The believer takes courage from the truth of the Lord's words with which he began the psalm, saying, "Because You have made...."The believer did not love God in word only, but in deed and in truth. He told the truth when he said, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."He told the truth when he encouraged his neighbour with the thought that thousands would fall around him, while no evil would befall him. The believer testified about his experience, and spoke with his neighbour about the goodness of the LORD, so in turn God testified about the believer that he was faithful and trusting. "Whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance"(Matthew 13:12). Therefore, the Lord confirmed His assurance to the believer that He would continue with him, and that no evil shall befall him personally, nor shall any plague come near his dwelling, namely his body, family, church or society. Christ entered the ship of the believer's life, therefore it could not sink regardless how strong the tempest or how high the billows may rise! Christ said, "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4). No harm would befall the branch that abides in the heavenly vine, and no plague would come near his house. If God allows a plague to afflict the believer, it is because "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). The Lord will turn the plague that He has permitted to come near the home of the believer into a blessing that will make its foundation deeper and increase its stability and strength.
- 2. The LORD promises the believer an angelic service:** "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest

you dash your foot against a stone. You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot"(verses 11-13). Angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). The believer seldom sees the angels with his physical eyes but they are there around him nonetheless. The angel opened Hagar's eyes to see the well of water in order to give Ishmael to drink and not die of thirst (Genesis 21:19). The angels reassured Jacob, the father of the Israelite tribes, as he was sleeping in the desert all alone (Genesis 28:12). The angel of the LORD came to Elijah in the desert with a cake and a cup of water. He drank and slept from the intense fatigue, and was later awakened by the angel in order to have yet another meal (1 Kings 19:4-8). Daniel said in the den of lions, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths" (Daniel 6:22). The angel opened the prison gates for Peter, woke him up and let him out to freedom (Acts 12:7-10). The angels ministered to Christ after His triumph over of the three temptations of the devil in the desert (Matthew 4:11). The angels rejoice over a penitent sinner (Luke 15:10), as well as carry the soul of the believer to heaven (Luke 16:22), and in the last day they will be the harvesters of men's souls (Matthew 13:39). "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalms 34:7). Even Satan knows of the angels' ministry to the believers; for Christ quoted verses 11 and 12 of our psalm when He was tempted to cast Himself down from the mountain, so that the angels might preserve Him, and that men might follow Him (Matthew 4:6).

God's angels protect the believers from the obvious dangers which the psalmist points at using the figure of the lion and the young lion, as well as the hidden dangers such as the cobra and the snakes. The Bible describes Satan as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) and the serpent of old (Revelation 12:9; 20:2) but "the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20). Let the believers rest assured, because the seed of the woman, who crushed the head of the serpent, will deliver them from both lions and snakes and give them the opportunity to tread on them. The word "tread on" has a military significance. A victorious leader used to put his foot on the neck of his defeated opponent, and that would be a declaration of the surrender of the defeated party and the triumph of the conqueror. And in Christ we can say, "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

"For thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed; on her sides shall you be carried, and be dandled on her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you'"(Isaiah 66:12,13).

3. The Lord promises the believer an intimate relationship (verses 14-16):

- 1. The believer loves God and therefore He delivers him:** "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him"(verse 14a). The believer sets his love upon the Lord because the Lord has set His love upon the believer. He simply loves

the Lord because the Lord first loved him (1 John 4:19). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"(1 John 4:10). Moses said to the people of God, "The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day" (Deuteronomy 7:7; 10:15). And they say in response, "You shall surround me with songs of deliverance"(Psalms 32:7). King Darius told the truth as he said, "He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" (Daniel 6:27). It was also the Lord Himself who delivered Joseph from Pharaoh's prison and set him up on the throne (Genesis 41:14; 41-44), and delivered David from the hand of Saul to give him kingship over His people (2 Samuel 1:4). And it was also the Lord who delivered Mordecai from the conspiracy of Haman (Esther 3-8).

2. **The believer knows God and therefore God sets him on high:** "I will set him on high, because he has known My name"(verse 14b). Because of the divine revelation about the character of God and the work on the Holy Spirit in the heart, the believer knows the LORD in a personal way, and in doing so the statement is fulfilled in him: "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You" (Psalms 9:10). The believer goes on say, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death ... Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"(Philippians 3:10,12). At this point the LORD lifts up the believer, making him reach higher levels of holiness and nearness to God, so that his head might be lifted up above his enemies around him. "The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground" (Psalms 147:6). "He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2:8).
3. **The believer calls upon God and He answers him:** "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him"(verse 15a). The believer loves the Lord and speaks with Him in the intimate way a son would speak to his father, "Our Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). God answers and grants him the blessings of both heaven and earth.
 1. **He delivers him from trouble:** "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him"(verse 15b). The LORD says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me"(Psalms 50:15). And the believer answers, "But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the LORD with my voice, and He heard me from His holy hill" (Psalms 3:3,4).
 2. **He gives him a long life:** "With long life I will satisfy him"(verse 16a). This is a fulfilment of the divine promises, "That you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and

the length of your days" (Deuteronomy 30:20). The inspired scholar said: "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you ... Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honour" (Proverbs 3:1,2,16). This is unlike the situation of the wicked who will "fall at your side," whom the Lord will punish according to their wickedness (verses 7,8). By "long life" God does not mean many years, because one may have many long years but no fruit and no productivity. And on the other hand one may have few years that leave a blessed impact. Christ spent 33 years on earth, and the final three years of His public ministry were by far the richest. Let us use our days for the glory of God, and let us ask of Him to restore the years which the swarming locusts have devoured (Joel 2:25).

3. **He will show him His salvation:** "And show him My salvation"(verse 16b). The psalmist asks for the Lord's salvation to His people from captivity, from war, from the enemies, from famine and from disease. The gospel, however, presents us with a deeper meaning of salvation, namely salvation from sin through the redemption of Christ who died for us on the cross. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"(John 3:16). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"(1 Peter 1:3,4). Christ's salvation is not confined to deliverance from sin; it is complete and comprehensive.

Come, let us dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, so that He might show us His salvation.

1.4. Questions

1. In verse 2 the psalmist gives three descriptions to his personal relationship with God. What are these descriptions?
2. God does three things to the psalmist's neighbour. What are these three?

2. Psalm Ninety-Two

An Invitation to Praise on the Day of the Lord

1 A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day. It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;

2 To declare Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night,

- 3 On an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound.**
- 4 For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.**
- 5 O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.**
- 6 A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this.**
- 7 When the wicked spring up like grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever.**
- 8 But You, LORD, are on high forevermore.**
- 9 For behold, Your enemies, O LORD, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.**
- 10 But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil.**
- 11 My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; my ears hear my desire on the wicked who rise up against me.**
- 12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.**
- 13 Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.**
- 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing,**
- 15 To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.**

This psalm is a praise for the Sabbath day, on which the psalmist praises the LORD, using all different types of stringed musical instruments (verse 3) to add more joy to his delightful praise. It is an optimistic psalm of joy, because it praises the Most High God (verse 1) who is on high forevermore (verse 8), who looks down from the height of the heavens and sees all the needs of the believer, and extends His great and loving hand to meet them all. It is also a praise to the just Lord who scatters all the workers of iniquity (verse 9) and grants the believer the spiritual fruit to "flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (verse 12). The believer also praises the LORD who watches the sinner, punishes him and cleanses the earth from his evil deeds, as well as shows mercy on those who receive His mercy, and cleanses them and prunes them to yield much and permanent fruit in all the stages of their lives. "They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing" (verse 14) and not fear old age because they will spend it with Christ who said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Let us join with the psalmist in praising God who created us in His image, according to His likeness, because man was created in the image of a Merciful One. But as man corrupted his beautiful image by his disobedience to God, God planned his redemption and the atonement of his sins to restore to him the first image, which sin disfigured. Every believer born of God testifies to this truth, since "through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin,

and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:12,17). Then they will proclaim that the LORD is just, without iniquity, and tell that He is the rock of the believer on Whom he rests and in Whom he finds protection (verse 15).

Let us join the psalmist in praise on the day of the LORD, on which the people of old celebrated the consummation of the act of creation, and on which Christians celebrate the consummation of the act of redemption by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. For Christ was crucified on Friday, and rose from the dead on Sunday, "For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation" (Isaiah 12:2).

The psalm includes the following:

- First: The righteous praises God (verses 1-7)
- Second: The righteous rejoices in God (verses 8-15)

2.1. First: The Righteous Person Praises God

(verses 1-7)

The commencement of Psalm 92 is similar to that of Psalm 33, in describing the beauty of singing to the Lord with accompaniment of instruments.

1. Description of singing (verses 1-3):

1. **Singing is a duty:** "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High"(verse 1). The Lord is God, who created us, He is also the Lord of all the earth. He is the Most High above everyone who is exalted in all the earth. He holds everything under control, and is the one invested with full authority and power. Therefore He alone is worthy of our singing to Him, "For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful" (Psalms 147:1). So let's praise Him at all times, because He takes care of us and provides for our needs. Let our motto be: "What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD" (Psalms 116:12,13).

Singing is also good for the believer for when he sings he is relieved of his pains. In the midst of troubles try to thank God, and you'll find out that you have been revived. Say, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:2). Martin Luther used to say, "Come, let's us sing a psalm to drive away the demons" because the spirit of praise, thanksgiving, and joy disperses despair, grief and frustration. Then we shall say, "Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing" (Psalms 126:2). Through praise we rise above the troubles of the

world and focus on the Lord, the King of the kingdom, for He is our heavenly Father Who showers us with blessings, and out of the eater brings something to eat, and out of the strong something sweet (Judges 14:14). He encourages us, saying, "Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them"(Isaiah 3:10). Let us try thanksgiving and praise, and not focus our thoughts on the troubles that face us, because He will grant us victory over them and their aftermath. Then that our souls will fill with thanksgiving to the King of kings, and everyone around us will hear "The voice of rejoicing and salvation Is in the tents of the righteous" (Psalms 118:15). How lovely it is to hear the voices of the triumphant believers as they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Revelation 15:3). Moses sang as he led the people of God to political freedom, but the song of the Lamb is the song of spiritual freedom and the taking away of the sin of the world.

Singing is great because it is the language of nature, as it praises God: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). And as we gaze into the fields we say, "The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing" (Psalms 65:13).

Praise is good because it is the language of angels. How lovely the praises were that filled the skies above the earth right before the birth of Christ, which were concluded by the great song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"(Luke 2:14). And how lovely was the song of the angels which Isaiah the prophet heard, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3).

2. **Singing is a testimony:** "To declare Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night"(verse 2). In the morning as well as in the evening the psalmist declares to all those around him the mercy and faithfulness of God, and his declaration is made through singing and thanksgiving. At the beginning of every day and at the end of it he testifies to God's faithfulness. The mosaic Law demanded the offering of a sacrifice to the Lord in the morning and the offering of another one in the evening (Exodus 29:38,39). The psalmist said, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice" (Psalms 55:16,17). In the morning he sings to declare God's mercy which preserved him in peace throughout the night because "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalms 30:5). "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness"(Lamentations 3:22,23). And in the evening he sings to declare that the faithful God walked with him throughout the day.
3. **Singing is delightful:** "On an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp"(verse 3). The psalmist sings his psalm with delight accompanied by musical

instruments, joining all God's creation in singing and praising God. For the trees of the woods shall rejoice (1 Chronicles 16:33), the morning stars together, and all the sons of God (Job 38:7), as well the valleys sing (Psalms 65:13). The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing (Isaiah 55:12). In the Book of Revelation one reads of the singing of the 144 thousand believers upon whose foreheads the name of the Lord is written. They will play on their harps and sing a new song before the throne (Revelation 14:1-5). Musical instruments will accompany the singing to add beauty to it. There will be harps, ten stringed lyres, which were the best musical instruments in the time of the psalmist. But even if there aren't any instruments to play, the believers will sing hymns and spiritual songs in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19). In this praise there is similarity as well as newness: "Sing to Him a new song; play skilfully with a shout of joy" (Psalms 33:3).

2. Two motives to singing (verses 4-7):

- 1. To thank the Creator:** "For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep"(verses 4,5). The Lord's works are ever increasing in magnitude. They continue to help man and work for the good of mankind at large. They are all holy. How great are His works and how delightful are they to the believer - in creation, in redemption and in daily providence. Let us meditate on nature and its beauty, the mountains and their magnificence, the seas and the magnitude, and together with these let us meditate on the lilies of the fields with their splendid colours and unique leaves. They were all wisely created! Meditate also on His works in the atonement, the redemption and forgiveness. Ponder over how He clothed our first parents after they were stripped naked by disobedience and unable to cover themselves, and how He redeemed Isaac the son of Abraham by His great sacrifice, which foreshadowed Christ, who was to redeem mankind. Only in the cross of Christ do we see mercy and truth, as the psalmist said, "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed"(Psalms 85:10). Likewise, meditate on his unique providence as He feeds the birds and clothes the flowers! His providence encompasses everything. How lovely are Christ's words: "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). The living Lord is at work among us; He works miracles without end, because our needs continue and because He does not change, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). But it is strange that there are those who deny the occurrence of miracles today. It seems that they have become self-sufficient, complacent, satisfied with their scientific and material capabilities which are supposed to solve every problem. Or perhaps they believe that God is no more willing to work miracles. The truth is that scientific progress has revealed to man the scope of his ignorance, and any true scientist is a humble man. God still loves mankind and will continue to do so. He wants to lend them a hand at all times.

2. **To stay away from foolishness:** "A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring up like grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever"(verses 6,7). Man is senseless and foolish unless he looks up to learn from God. A wise man is the man who asks God to teach him, instruct him and train him (Psalm 25), and hears the LORD saying to him, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Psalms 32:8). After the LORD had opened the eyes of the psalmist to the truth, he refused to walk in the ways of the wicked, even if he saw them prospering in the affairs of this world, because of pride and posterity will soon fade away. They are like grass that grows quickly but dries even quicker. "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb" (Psalms 37:1,2). It is quite odd that the wicked who are intelligent in the matters of the world are foolish in the matters of God, for they are not aware of the miracles of creation, redemption and providence. They assume that their wealth is an outcome of their own intelligence and perseverance, forgetting the grace of God that saves from sin. Although it is available to them, they do not enjoy it, because they deny it or reject it. "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." (Psalms 14:1). It is true that "whoever believes in Him should not perish" (John 3:16) but those who refuse must perish, their memory must be blotted out from the earth, and hell must be their final home. They are like chaff carried away by the wind, no matter how lush and prosperous they may seem (Psalm 1:4). The wicked are grass (verse 7) but the believer is a palm tree and cedar (verse 12). So which do you want to be?

2.2. Second: The Righteous Person Rejoices in God

(verses 8-15)

In this part of the psalm the psalmist expresses his joy in the Lord's justice, for He punishes the sinner for his wickedness. The righteous may seem to be harsh on the wicked, but the truth is that the wicked incurred that wickedness on himself. As to the righteous, he must rejoice in the blessings of His loving God who justified him.

1. **The righteous rejoices in God's justice which punishes the sinner:** "But You, LORD, are on high forevermore. For behold, Your enemies, O LORD, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered"(verses 8,9). In these two verses the psalmist speaks to his high and uplifted LORD, who sees all things and nothing is hidden from Him, and who must reward each and every one according to their work (Matthew 16:27). The psalmist uses two adjectives to describe the sinners; he calls them "the enemies of the Lord", and "workers of iniquity". Can someone dare antagonise the Lord, as exalted and eternal as He is? He must have lost all good sense, because "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). The apostle Paul

explains to us the cause of such folly when he says, "...whose minds the god of this age (the devil) has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them"(2 Corinthians 4:4). Their antagonism to the Lord is not caused by the Lord's vague revelation of Himself to them, but because Satan has blinded their hearts and minds. God sent them prophet and apostles, and even Christ came to them as a Saviour, yet "although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:21). Christ said to the people of Jerusalem who rejected Him, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:37,38). Those who work iniquity fulfil Satan's will, and they're the sons of the devil. They must pay the price for their deviation and receive the recompense of their evils, "For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation" (Isaiah 51:8).

2. The righteous rejoices in God's justice which rewards the believer (verses 10-15):

- 1. God grants him victory over his enemies:** "But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil. My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; my ears hear my desire on the wicked who rise up against me"(verses 10,11). The horn is a symbol of strength. A wild ox uses it to attack its enemy, and to incapacitate that enemy. Likewise, the Lord gives the believer invincible power to be always victorious. It makes him stand safe and says, "All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted"(Psalm 75:10). The Lord gives the believer "fresh oil" for anointment. This oil is extracted from olives. The LORD anoints the believer with it to honour and refresh him. This is a symbol of the divine grace with which the Lord anoints us every day. When you feel weary and spiritually dry, go into your room, shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly by a real refreshment (Matthew 6:6).

Spiritual dryness makes our spiritual muscles stiffen, causing us to be defeated by the little temptations. But the anointing of the Holy Spirit gives us the power to face the temptations of life triumphantly. For that reason, let us ask the Lord for "fresh oil" because Christ said, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). Again He said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

The wicked spy on the believer in order to accuse him or attack him. They spy because they don't have the courage to confront. They're weak and powerless

compared with his moral strength. They must be punished and the eyes of the believer must see, and his ears must hear of the disaster that waits for them. He does not avenge himself on them, but he sees and hears that the Lord, the just God, has done it. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves...for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). "The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14). "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

2. **God plants him in His house:** "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God"(verses 12,13). The believer loves the house of the LORD and wants to dwell in the house of the LORD forever (Psalms 23:6). The psalmist must have been thinking of a palm tree and a cedar planted in the court of the temple. As he saw them day by day, he saw himself in them.

Palm trees and cedars are evergreens, even when water around them is scarce and the climate is harsh. The palm tree will grow even in the heart of the desert, and the cedar will rise up even on the mountains in midst of snow. They both grow slowly, but they rise up straight, and their roots go so deep in the ground. Likewise the believer; he does not grow quickly because he takes root and grounds himself deep below the surface, in order to rise up high and bear fruit. This will only take place through prayer, studying the word, meditation and applying what he knows to his daily life. This requires time, effort, courage, perseverance and continuity according to the commandment: "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). The believer is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper (Psalms 1:1-4; cf. Jeremiah 17:7,8).

Palm trees and cedars are perennials: The palm tree lives over a hundred years, and the cedar lives over a thousand years. But since they were planted in the court of the Temple, they received a greater blessing for being in that holy place, and better care so that they could live even longer. This is the case also with the believer who lives in the secret place of the Most High. You look for the wicked and cannot find them, but the believer enjoys the breadth and the depth of life. His memory in his lifetime and after his death is blessed (Romans 10:7).

Both palm trees and cedars are beneficial and fruitful: From the palm tree we get dates, which are rich in benefits. Likewise the believer is a good tree that bears good fruit (Matthew 7:17). The children of Israel rested in the desert in Elim, where they found twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees (Exodus 15:27). Palm tree fronds were also used in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacle (Leviticus 23:40) and were used by the people of Jerusalem to welcome Christ in his triumphant entrance to Jerusalem

- (John 12:13). Deborah the judge used to sit under a tree which was called "palm tree of Deborah" (Judges 4:5). As to cedar wood, it was used in the ritual purification (Leviticus 14:4), in building magnificent houses like the palace of King David (2 Samuel 5:11), the palace of King Solomon (1 Kings 7:2) and the temple of Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:4). Cedar wood has a fragrant smell, and the ancients used to extract from it a kind of turpentine to preserve parchments and clothes. In much the same way the believer serves as the basic element in beautifying his society and preserving it from corruption; for he is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14).
3. **God makes him bear fruit in old age:** "They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing"(verse 14). The promise is fulfilled to them: "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness" (Romans 16:31). And the prayer is answered: "Now also when I am old and grey headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come" (Psalms 71:18). And God will say, "Even to your old age, I am He, and even to grey hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isaiah 46:4). The older the believer grows, the fresher and more flourishing he becomes, because he recalls the works which he has accomplished and says with Christ, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). He also hopes that in the future he will accomplish better than all that he has done in the past. The fruit is not confined to a certain phase in one's life, because it is the result of the sap of grace that flows in the believer. It is God at work in him. As the believer grows weaker, the Lord renews his strength, "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). Let us aspire to more spiritual fruit the older we get, so that we can grow spiritually and our love for the LORD increases. Thus we become more obedient and will be like a palm tree and a cedar, as well as a green olive tree in the house of the Lord (Psalms 52:8). Let us anoint ourselves with a fresh oil, the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20,27).
 4. **God makes him testify to Himself:** "To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him"(verse 15). God grants the believer the high honour of testifying to Him, making him a preacher of His truth, to proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). The upright God gives those who believe in him uprightness and a right relationship with Himself, in order to testify to the Lord that He is the unchangeable rock of ages, who is a refuge for the sinner in whom they can hide and be protected. The Lord is faithful not to leave His righteous ones even when they leave Him; He still restores them.

A certain young man opened his heart to Christ and accepted him as his Saviour and

lived for many years loving the Lord with all his heart. The Lord honoured him so much that he became a successful businessman. Yet after his success, he was so absorbed in his business that he forgot all about God for almost forty years. And suddenly he was struck by a sickness that required him to lie down on his back for forty days. The only thing he could do was to look up! He said, "How much I thank God because He loves me and visited me after all that long time I was far away from Him. I forgot Him for forty years, but He caused me to lie down my back for forty days in order to lift up my eyes towards Him and remember my love for Him. He has honoured me through my sickness far more than He did through my success in my business."

Let us thank the Lord and rejoice in Him, and proclaim that He is upright. For this would make us fresh and flourishing in our spiritual lives.

2.3. Questions

1. Mention two things that motivate us to praise God.
2. The righteous is happy with his Lord. Mention two reasons for this happiness.

3. Psalm Ninety-Three

The Lord Shall Reign

1 The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved.

2 Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.

3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

4 The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea.

5 Your testimonies are very sure; holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.

This psalm is an introduction to six psalms (95-100) that focus on praising God the King. Each psalm of these six begins with joyful praise, shouting and singing to God and declaring that He is the King who reigns from everlasting to everlasting. Moses said in his song after crossing the Red Sea that God "shall reign forever and ever" (Exodus 15:18), and Samuel said to the Israelites, "the LORD your God was your king" (1 Samuel 12:12). When the seventh angel blows the horn, the twenty-four elders who represent both the people of the Old and New Testaments will shout, "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned" (Revelation 11:17). John, the writer of Revelation said, "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty

thunderings, saying, Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" (Revelation 19:6).

To human beings, who have but a limited vision, it seems that things have run out of the hand of the Lord King, as was the case when His people of old went astray. At that time He set King Nebuchadnezzar against them for seventy years. This set some people asking, "How can the Lord possibly allow His people to be delivered into the hand of their enemies? Has the enemy become so much stronger than God's power to protect His people?" But the truth is that God the great King allows the people whom He created to form an opposition party, if they want. Yet, He still keeps everything under control. When the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity were completed, the Lord brought His people back to their homeland. The prophet Daniel said, "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." (Daniel 9:1-3). At the appointed time, the people returned to their homeland, repenting of their idol worship, never to go back to it again. They shouted, "The LORD reigns!"

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The King of Kings (verses 1,2)
- Second: Enemies resist the King (verses 3,4)
- Third: The triumph of the King's word (verse 5)

3.1. First: The King of Kings

(verses 1,2)

1. **The Lord is King:** "The LORD reigns"(verse 1a). This is a fact that manifests itself in the works that God performs all around us, making us pray, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever"(Matthew 6:13). Some expositors claim that the psalmist's statement that "the LORD reigns" means that God created the angels, the cosmos, nature and mankind, then rested on the seventh day. After this He sat on His throne as King, subjecting all angels and nature under Him, making all mankind fulfil His will, whether willingly or not. Others have said that such a statement means that God created the world, but that "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us'" (Psalms 2:2,3). But He shall break them with a rod of iron; He shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalms 2:9). "For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). For the casual spectator, it may seem that the Lord's opponents have managed to suspend His

dominion, that the wicked have ruled over the world, and that the Lord has lost control of the cosmos. Therefore they cry out along with Isaiah, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake as in the ancient days... Are You not the One who dried up the sea? That made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over?" (Isaiah 51:9,10). In response, the Lord steadies the faith of the weak, establishes their feet, and removes the scales that cover their eyes, in order to see that He is King. They shout out loud, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7). Salvation consists in the fact that "the LORD reigns," and that now He has returned His people from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple, and offer Him their worship in it according to the law of Moses.

Going through such an experience, when the devil oppresses us, anxiety defeats us or doubts overcome us. we cry out to God and He answers our prayers, delivers us and lifts us up. We shout with the psalmist, "The LORD reigns" and say with King David, "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all" (1 Chronicles 29:10-12). How beautiful was King Jehosaphat's prayer: "O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?" (2 Chronicles 20:6). Knowing this and believing it we rejoice with the Arab poet who said:

I have been worried and sad.
I have been worried and sad.
I was chagrined and lost in darkness.
But God illuminated me and dawned upon me.
So, I knelt to pray.
My soul found rest at the gates of God.

- The King's majesty:** "He is clothed with majesty"(verse 1b). Majesty is glory, greatness and high status. God put on majesty as a garment to fight the enemies of His people. "For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head"(Isaiah 59:17). He did not put on an appearance of majesty, but majesty itself as a unique and peculiar garment! The leader of singers calls us to sing: "Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations

under our feet" (Psalms 47:1-3). When we see the children of the Kingdom suffering from persecution, we must pluck up courage because the Lord has put on majesty. Christ came to us in absolute humility and was born in a manger, but He put on majesty. Angels sang His praises at the time of His birth. Wise Men from far lands came to bow down before Him after seeing His star in the east. Simeon the elder carried Him in his arms with joy, saying, "For my eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:30). He is God's salvation, even when He put on a poor appearance "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9). He was lifted up on the cross to die, and ascended to heaven, from which He will come back to the earth as Judge of the living and the dead.

3. **The King's power:** "He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved"(verse 1c,d). Once again the psalmist compares God's power with a unique and peculiar garment. He is the One "Who established the mountains by His strength, being clothed with power"(Psalms 65:6). How great is the One who girded Himself with power for the love of His people. Love is power in the greatness of its service, whereas oppression is power in the impotence of its tyranny. On the eve of the Last Supper, Christ took the towel with which He was girded, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel (John 13:5). He established their hearts in love, humility and service. He girdled Himself with justice, which is permanent power, as opposed to injustice, which is only a temporary power. "For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity" (Psalms 98:9). The Lord put on power as a garment, and the earth was established according to the laws which He had set up "O LORD God of hosts... the heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and all its fullness, You have founded them" (Psalms 89:8-12). The Lord put on power to establish the moral laws. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way" (Psalms 37:23), for the rule of "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"(Galatians 6:7) has no exceptions. Everyone who defies the divine laws hurts himself. The Lord said to Saul of Tarsus, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9:5). Goads are the sharp points of the plough. When an ox does not like pulling the plough anymore, it kicks against the goads, hurting only itself. But the goads remain intact to continue tilling the soil.
4. **The King's everlasting existence:** "Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting"(verse 2). With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8). It is He who said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'"(Revelation 1:8). Since time immemorial He has taken care of His people and saved them, and numbered even the very hairs of their heads (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7). "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"

(Deuteronomy 33:27). The Israelites will never forget the event of the exodus. The Jewish year begins with the Passover, when they got their freedom from Pharaoh. In the same way our new life in the faith begins with our second birth when Jesus Christ enters our hearts to change us and deliver us from the wages of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23), and from the oppression of sin, because whoever commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34). God provided for our redemption even before He established the world, and Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself on our behalf (Hebrews 9:14). And when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, the Virgin Mary (Galatians 4:4). Truly "known to God from eternity are all His works" (Acts 15:18). So, let us rejoice and be glad because we are the children of the King who has reigned since time immemorial. He is "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Timothy 1:17).

3.2. Second: Enemies Resist the King

(verses 3,4)

1. **Enemies resist:** "The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves"(verse 3). The Land of Israel lay between three countries that formed two major powers, Babylon and Assyria in the North, and Egypt in the South. If the people of the North fought those in the South, or if the people of the South fought those of the North, always the Israelite would be crushed on both sides! Here the psalmist lifts up the matter of his enemies to the Lord, as Hezekiah did when he spread out the letter from his enemy (Isaiah 37:14). The psalmist describes the enemies as floods beating against the banks, without ever hurting them. He says to the Lord, "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them" (Psalms 89:9), and the prophet says, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). The Scriptures compare the two major powers to rushing rivers wanting to overwhelm the land, but to no avail. The Bible says that Assyria is like the Euphrates (Isaiah 8:7,8), and Egypt like the Nile (Jeremiah 46:7,8). But this resistance is futile because the Lord defends His people, just as Christ commanded the winds to calm down and the waves to subside (Matthew 8:26).
2. **Resistance is crushed:** "The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the sea."(verse 4). Resistance makes a very loud noise, but the Lord on high is mighty, and His word is final. The prophet Isaiah describes the mighty king of Assyria in the North as being the servant and messenger of the Lord who fulfils His purposes. He says, "Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty; the king of Assyria and all his glory; He will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks. He will pass through Judah, He will overflow and pass over, He will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel."(Isaiah 8:7,8). The prophet Jeremiah describes

the pride of the king of Egypt by saying, "Who is this coming up like a flood, whose waters move like the rivers? Egypt rises up like a flood, and its waters move like the rivers; and he says, 'I will go up and cover the earth, I will destroy the city and its inhabitants'" (Jeremiah 46:7,8). And from the terror of the enemy's danger the prophet shouts, "Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas, and to the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters; but God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Then behold, at eventide, trouble! And before the morning, he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, and the lot of those who rob us" (Isaiah 17:12-14). Then shouts the prophet again with the psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High" (Psalms 46:1-4). Yes, they roar and are troubled, but the victory is the Lord's, who granted victory to Moses and His people over Pharaoh, for which Moses raised his voice to sing this song of triumph: "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces" (Exodus 15:2-6).

3.3. Third: The Triumph of the King's Word

(verse 5)

1. **God's word is sure:** "Your testimonies are very sure"(verse 5a). The testimonies of the Lord are His steadfast and faithful promises; they are sure because they're the manifestations of the Lord, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning (James 1:17). Where the word of the Lord is, there is the authority of the Lord. When Christ called out, "Lazarus, come forth," the dead man rose (John 11:43,44). If He just said, "Come forth" without specifying the name of the dead person, all those buried in the tombs would have risen! As Christ commanded the paralytic "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house," he immediately rose, took up the bed and went out in the presence of them all (Mark 2:11,12).

A Roman Emperor who persecuted the church asked a carpenter right before he was martyred, "What does the Carpenter of Nazareth do today?" The carpenter answered, "He is preparing a casket for the Roman Empire." Then came the first Christian Emperor,

Constantine, who was the first Christian Emperor to stop the persecution of the church, and convened the Nicene Council in defence of the Christian faith which was attended by 318 bishops. The Emperor kissed one of the bishops on his missing eye, which was lost because of persecution. He ordered the copying of 50 Bibles at the expense of the state, thus was the casket prepared for the enemies of the Nazarene Carpenter. Moses told the truth as he said to the Israelites, "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:7,8).

"Your testimonies are very sure,"testifying to the believers that the Lord is faithful, giving His people a good land. "The eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12). He says to His people, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). His testimonies are also very sure about His enemies, who are "like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish"(Psalms 1:4-6).

- 2. The place for revealing His word:** "Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever"(verse 5b). The house of the Lord is the temple, or the holy land of which God said, "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again" (Joel 3:17). Also the prophet Isaiah said of it, "Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths'" (Isaiah 2:3). When King Solomon completed the building of the temple, the priests sang, "For His mercy endures forever," the house of the LORD was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God (2 Chronicles 5:13,14). And as Solomon prayed at the inauguration of the temple, the glory of the LORD filled the Lord's house (2 Chronicles 7:2). God consecrates His house and His land by being in its midst. The house of the Lord is the place for revealing His word, where people worship Him, and where Christ is present according to His promise: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The bodies of the believers are also the house of Lord, because they are the temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them, according to the statement of the apostle: "For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" (2 Corinthians 6:16,17). In much of the same way the houses of the believers are the house of the Lord, because the believer says, "But as for me and my house, we will serve (worship) the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). Christ said to Zacchaeus after the latter's repentance, "Zacchaeus,

make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5). So do not be yoked with unbelievers; neither should a believing woman marry anyone else but a believing man, nor should a believing man marry anyone else but a believing woman, so that their house would be a house for the Lord. At the beginning of the church there were no buildings for the church. Believers used to gather in their own houses, which made each house a spiritual, as well as an actual, church (Philemon 2). May the Lord make our houses churches that testify to His grace, so that holiness may adorn the place where He reigns forevermore, as we gratefully say, "The LORD reigns" over all the earth. Every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and fulfil His will, whether willingly or not.

3.4. Questions

1. How do you see the sovereignty of God when you meet difficulties?
2. Explain verse 3 of this psalm.

4. Psalm Ninety-Four

A Call for Justice

- 1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs -- O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!
- 2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud.
- 3 LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?
- 4 They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.
- 5 They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage.
- 6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.
- 7 Yet they say, "The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand."
- 8 Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise?
- 9 He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see?
- 10 He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge?
- 11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile.
- 12 Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law,
- 13 That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked.
- 14 For the LORD will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance.
- 15 But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

17 Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence.

18 If I say, "My foot slips," Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up.

19 In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

20 Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You?

21 They gather together against the life of the righteous, and condemn innocent blood.

22 But the LORD has been my defence, and my God the rock of my refuge.

23 He has brought on them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; the LORD our God shall cut them off.

In this psalm the psalmist complains to God of the prosperity of the wicked and their persecution of the believers. Their actions seem to indicate their question: If the Lord is King, why then do the wicked persecute the believers and hurt them? The psalmist's problem was his own family and the people who belong to the God of Jacob (verse 7) who devise evil by law (verse 20). They do know the divine law, but they twist its meaning to get out of it meanings and statutes that contradict what the Lord intended for it. The psalmist was disturbed by the persecution he received at the hand of his neighbours. If such persecution came from an enemy, he would not have thought it strange. But since it came from a neighbour, he cried out questioning and wondering.

This psalm expresses the cry of the persecuted at all times: How can God be a sovereign King over all creation and at the same time allow the wicked to persecute the righteous? But the believer draws comfort from the fact that he is able to lift up his heart to the Lord King, to find Him a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1), and hears Him say, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

The psalm contains the following:

- First: A petition for justice (verses 1,2)
- Second: Three questions raised and answered (verses 3-23)

4.1. First: A Petition for Justice

(verses 1,2)

1. **Running to the God of justice:** "O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth! Rise up, O Judge of the earth; render punishment to the proud"(verses 1,2). The psalmist cried out requesting vengeance on his enemies,

because God is mighty and uplifted, the Judge of the earth, the only One who has the right to take vengeance. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19, quoted from Deuteronomy 32:35). He is "the God of recompense. He will surely repay" (Jeremiah 51:56). He establishes the balances of justice and gives everyone what is due him, because "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). To Him we say, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face" (Psalms 89:14).

2. Requesting the God of justice:

1. **Shine forth:** because God is the true light that disperses all darkness when He shines on His people who suffer from the sinners, those who twist His truth. Then He will say to His people, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, and not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16).
2. **Rise up:** the Lord is exalted and His name is holy in whom the poor finds shelter and under whose wings the oppressed find protection as He goes to sit on the judgment seat to judge the oppressor. He will render justice to those who cry out, "Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me" (Psalms 35:24).
3. **Render punishment:** No one else can render such punishment but the Lord, the righteous Judge who "executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed" (Psalms 103:6), and say, "Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked" (Psalms 91:8).

4.2. Second: Three Questions Raised and Answered

(verses 3-23)

In the psalmist's confusion from his many persecutors, he found himself asking three questions as if saying, "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O LORD my God" (Psalms 13:2,3).

1. The first question (verses 3-15):

1. **The question:** "LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?" (verse 3). The repetition reflects the cry of a helpless man who has suffered long, a man who urges the Lord to rush to his aid, believing that the answer is coming. In this way the souls of those killed for the sake of the word of God cried out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of

their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed"(Revelation 6:10,11).

2. The motives for the question (verses 4-7):

1. **The enemies spoke insolent things:** "They utter speech, and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves"(verse 4). They run off with their mouths, uttering a flood of insolent words full of impertinence, arrogance, offences and lying, unashamed and unafraid of the Lord. "Pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth" (Psalms 73:6,9).
2. **They broke God's people in pieces:** "They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless"(verses 5,6). They break in pieces the people whom the Lord chose for Himself; they afflict them in the dust, so that it seems that the Lord's covenant with His people has been annulled. They are like Saul of Tarsus when he was carried away by the ignorance of his bigotry: "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord... so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven" (Acts 9:1-3). The enemies, in carrying out their evil works, broke the Lord's commandment: "You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry"(Exodus 22:21). No wonder He would hear, since He is "God in His holy habitation, a father of the fatherless, a defender of widows. He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land" (Psalms 68:5,6).
3. **They blasphemed:** "Yet they say, 'The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand'"(verse 7). The wicked have wronged the righteous, and found for themselves justifications from the law. They even blasphemed God by claiming that He does not see nor understand! How then can they say that the Lord is the Master of creation, the God of Jacob who is faithful to His covenants, and at the same time contradict themselves, saying that He does not punish or reward? He said to Jacob as he fled from his brother, "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac... I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you"(Genesis 28:13,15). How then can they say that He does not see? They are like those who said, "The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil"(Zephaniah 1:12).

3. An advice to the wicked (verses 8-11):

When the psalmist recalled the wicked among his people who offended God and His holy saints, he was awed and gave them advice so that they might repent. "Wisdom calls aloud outside. She raises her voice in the open squares, 'Turn at my rebuke. Surely I will pour out my spirit on you. I will make my words known to you'" (Proverbs 1:20,23).

1. **A warning of foolishness:** "Understand, you senseless among the people; and you fools, when will you be wise?"(verse 8). Their offence against the believers and their Lord indicates their dangerous spiritual foolishness and ignorance, enough to justify describing them as senseless and foolish. "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns; broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).

2. **The enlightenment of truth (verses 9-11):**

The psalmist presented three facts to the fools:

1. **God created you:** "He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? He who formed the eye, shall He not see?"(verse 9). The Creator of the ear must hear. The Creator of the eye must see the wicked ones who claim that He neither sees nor understands! How can the Initiator of thought be thoughtless? And how can a Master Craftsman not know the secrets of his workmanship? "For You formed my inward parts. You covered me in my mother's womb... Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed, and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Psalms 139:13,15,16).
2. **God corrects you:** "He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct, He who teaches man knowledge?"(verse 10). God destroyed the nations who sinned by the flood, taught Pharaoh by disciplining him, and He must correct and convict the sinners so that they might repent from their sins. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Also the word of God convicts, "You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives'" (Hebrews 12:5,6). His discipline is always for the good, to instruct each man in the divine wisdom, as He instructed Paul who was a blasphemer and a persecutor of the church, doing what he did in ignorance and unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). Having learned his lesson, Paul said, "I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain

Christ"(Philippians 3:8). And God still calls out, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments" (2 Kings 17:13).

3. **God knows you:** "The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile"(verse 11). The psalmist warns the wicked that God knows their thoughts, and that all their conspiracies against His people are futile. God not only knows the outward acts, but the thoughts, plans and intentions, "For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous" (Psalms 37:17).

4. **The answer to the first question (verse 12-15):**

In answer to the question "How long will the wicked triumph?" the psalmist presents four ideas:

1. **The Lord instructs the believer in order to teach him:** "Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, and teach out of Your law"(verse 12). Eliphaz the Temanite said to Job, "Happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17), and the philosophical Solomon said, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:11,12). God said to David about his seed, "I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him" (2 Samuel 7:14,15). The believer should consider the words of the wicked, their violent treatment of him, and their blasphemy against God as trials for him, through which the Lord disciplines him, teaches him and chastens him, so that he might say, "The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death" (Psalms 118:18). Pain must accompany chastening, for "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). The godly will notice that God's word and rod of chastisement go hand in hand. He instructs us in His word, and chastises us if we go astray. Chastisement without the word of God is like a furnace that melts metal, but God's word together with the furnace melts the metal and purifies it. God brings us into the smelting pot of pain to form our lives to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29). "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12).
2. **God punishes the wicked:** "That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked"(verse 13). The godly one learns that God must give him rest from the days of adversity, when the pit is dug for the wicked. The disciples cried out to Christ in the boat when it was about to sink, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Yet they ought to know that a

boat used by Christ cannot sink. After calming the raging sea, He said to them, "How is it that you have no faith?" The wickedness of the wicked must come to an end, just as Christ commanded the sea, " 'Peace, be still!' and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:38-40). "When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation" (Proverbs 10:25).

3. **The Lord judges on behalf of the believer:** "For the LORD will not cast off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance"(verse 14). Because the enemy crushes the believer it seemed to the eye that the Lord had cast off His people. But how can He possibly cast off His people and inheritance, as precious inheritance is to a man, not just because of its material value, but because of its emotional significance? God says to His people, "For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you" (Isaiah 54:7,8).
 4. **The believer's tribulation must come to an end:** "But judgment will return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it"(verse 15). The tribulation of the believer at the hand of the wicked who oppress him must come to an end, because the great Judge will come to start a reign of justice. Affairs will be managed with uprightness, the godly will rejoice, and the procession of justice will move on triumphantly, followed by the upright in heart. All will know that justice has returned triumphant, and the believer will walk in righteousness without hindrance or obstacle. Justice might take time to come, but the great Judge must come. "Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice"(Isaiah 32:1).
2. **The second question (verses 16-19):**
1. **The question:** "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?"(verse 16). The psalmist asks himself: Who is the saviour who can help and protect me against the evil ones who work iniquity and commit evil against me continually?
 2. **Two motives for asking (verses 17,18):**
 1. **The danger of death:** "Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence"(verse 17). The psalmist saw himself in danger of death and burial in the silence of the grave, had it not been for God's help. "The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged" (Psalms 37:32,33).
 2. **The danger of doubt:** "If I say, 'My foot slips,' Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up"(verse 18). When the wicked surrounded the psalmist, he lost his strength and thought that his Lord forgot him; his feet almost slipped into the world of

doubts and into the abyss of forsaking the faith. He joined Asaph in saying, "But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled. My steps had nearly slipped" (Psalm 73:2). But the mercy of God helped him and he did not fall down, so he said to the Lord, "For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling" (Psalms 116:8).

3. **The answer to the second question:** "In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul." (verse 19). When the wicked mocked the psalmist, ridiculed him and crushed his people, his anxieties and fears increased, and his mind was confused like a sailor assailed by storms, whose ship began to fill with water. But the comforts of God were the object of his meditation and delight, and his ship did not sink. "This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalms 34:6). He found a living treasure and supply in the comforts of God's good promises, so he felt safe and secure. He could only shout, "How precious is Your loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures" (Psalms 36:7,8).

3. **The third question (verses 20-23):**

1. **The question:** "Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You?" (verse 20). This is a rhetorical question: Can the throne of iniquity join with the heavenly seat? Could there be any covenant or pact between light and darkness, between uprightness and iniquity? Will the corrupt throne ally itself with God, who is seated upon the holy throne? The psalmist's thoughts were disturbed and he got confused seeing the injustice and the prosperity of the wicked, although they devise evil by law. They issue sinful laws that wrong people, use the Mosaic Law to crush the poor, and twist legal statutes in such a way that makes the wrong seem right. How can such people join a covenant with God? Christ said to the likes of those, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).
2. **The motive for the question:** "They gather together against the life of the righteous, and condemn innocent blood" (verse 21). The psalmist complains of the seriousness of his position, because those wicked men who twist the upright law are gathering against the righteous and issuing unjust judgments against him, which could lead to his execution, despite his innocence. This is exactly what happened in Christ's mock trial. Pilate said to the Jews, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all answered, "Let Him be crucified!" He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children"

(Matthew 27:22-25).

3. **The answer to the third question (verses 22,23):**

The Lord Himself gives two answers to the psalmist's third question:

1. **The Lord is his line of defence:** "But the LORD has been my defence, and my God the rock of my refuge"(verse 22). The Hebrew word for "defence" can mean a high castle or an impregnable fortress. For the wronged godly man the Lord was a high castle, reassuring and giving shelter. Therefore the godly man says, "He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps"(Psalms 40:2). "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalms 27:1). "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Psalms 18:2).
2. **The Lord will judge the wicked:** "He has brought on them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness"(verse 23). The Lord reassures the believer that the wicked will be punished: "For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth" (Psalms 37:9). "The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalms 34:18).

4.3. Questions

1. What are the three questions the psalmist raised in Psalm 94?
2. What are the two answers to the third question?

5. Psalm Ninety-Five

A Call to Worship

- 1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
- 3 For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods.
- 4 In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also.
- 5 The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.
- 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
- 7 For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice:

8 "Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness,

9 When your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work.

10 For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.'

11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' "

We saw in Psalm 93 that the LORD reigns, and that He is clothed with majesty, so we soared with Him in the skies of love and power. But Psalm 94 brought us back to earth, to the bitter reality of pain, as though the psalmist were wondering along with Gideon, "If the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles...?" (Judges 6:13). Now in this psalm the psalmist returns to his optimism, and draws attention to God's greatness, which calls for worshipping Him through praise and singing. It is said that Psalm 95 was written for the occasion of the inauguration of the temple shortly after returning from the exile in 516 BC. The tabernacle of meeting, which Moses set up, was the first place of worship for the Israelites after their exodus from Egypt. But as the people settled down, David wanted to build a house for the Lord. But the Lord told him that he had shed too much blood, and that his son Solomon would be the one to build such a house. King David, however, did not want to be left out of the high honour of participating in the building of the temple of the Lord, so he prepared a great deal of building material so that his son could use it in construction. Later Solomon erected the great temple, and the Lord came down in it with His glory (2 Chronicles 5:13,14; 7:2). But as the people fell away from the worship of Yahweh, He handed them over into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who took them captive and tore down their temple. The people remained in captivity for seventy years, as the Lord had foretold (Jeremiah 25:12-14). Afterwards, the Lord stirred the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to allow them to return to their homeland and build the temple. Their return began under Ezra the scribe, and they started to build the temple, but soon stopped. The Lord sent them the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage them to continue building. Haggai said to them: You have returned from captivity to your own land. You built your own houses, but left the house of the Lord in ruins. It is not good what you do (Haggai 1:3,4). They, therefore, continued building and inaugurated the temple. And this psalm, it is said, was written on the occasion of rebuilding the temple after the captivity.

The psalmist says in this psalm that the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, and were brought out by the Lord through a miracle. Afterwards, they were allowed to build a great temple to Him. He was gracious to their fathers, but their fathers were not gracious to Him. And now there is a new temple, so let them beware of repeating the mistake of their fathers. He calls out to them, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.. Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (when the people rebelled against the Lord for the lack of water; Numbers 20:13), and as in

the day of trial in the wilderness (when the Israelites wondered if the LORD was among them or not; Exodus 17:7) "when your fathers tested Me... I was grieved with that generation."

The psalm contains the following:

- First: A call to worship furnished with reasons (verses 1-7a)
- Second: A warning of declining the call to worship (verses 7b-11)

5.1. First: A Call to Worship Furnished with a Reason (verses 1-7a)

The psalmist presents five reasons for worshipping the Lord:

1. **Because He is the rock of our salvation:** "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms"(verses 1,2). The psalmist shouts joyfully to the Lord, offering Him worship and adoration, because He is the rock of salvation on whom we can build our spiritual house, knowing that it would stand, in spite of howling winds and heavy rains. Our spiritual house can only be built upon Christ, the Rock of Ages, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). He is the rock of our salvation, who satisfies our lives. When the Israelites thirsted in the wilderness, the Lord commanded Moses to beat the rock with his staff, whereupon water gushed forth and all the people drank to satisfaction (Exodus 17:1-7). The rock is a symbol of Christ, the Rock of Ages, who was beaten on our behalf on the cross, to give us the water of life, of which He said to the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give Me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10). He is the rock, in Whom we take shelter, as David said to Him, "I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies" (Psalm 18:1-3).

Our meditation on "the Rock of our salvation" makes us approach Him with thanksgiving and shout out loud with songs, because "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised"(Psalms 48:1). We give Him thanks for His bountiful love with which He loved us. All those who come to the Lord rejoice in Him. "But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice exceedingly" (Psalms 68:3). It is written, "Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" after His resurrection from the dead (John 20:20). The two disciples of Emmaus were walking, overcome by gloom, but their gloomy frame of mind ended as He broke the bread, when at once they recognized

that Christ was alive. They were immediately filled with great joy and went back to Jerusalem to tell the rest of the disciples (Luke 24:13-35). As we partake of the body and blood of the Lord, we rejoice in our Saviour, as we rejoice every time we recall how we became His own through our spiritual rebirth by the Holy Spirit, when we committed our lives to Him. So, let us sing and shout joyfully, for worship is not an obligatory duty we have to perform, but a privilege and a real joy to us. As we appear in the presence of the Lord, we meet Him personally, and thank Him and sing to Him out of gratitude for His favour.

2. **Because He is the only God:** "For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods"(verse 3). Moses said to the people, "The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome" (Deuteronomy 10:17). By "gods" the psalmist may have meant "idols". In our world there are many man-made gods; such as idols, which heathens worship, money, which materialists adore and sex which the licentious bow down to. As the Philistines brought the ark of the Lord's covenant into the house of their god Dagon, they found Dagon fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD next morning. "So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD again, with its head and both the palms of its hands broken off on the threshold" (1 Samuel 5:3,4). All those who worship Mammon realize that its purchasing power waning, not to mention the things it cannot buy, such as health and love. "One's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). Whoever trusts his health, finds it failing with the advance of years, and whoever counts on friends may be deserted by them in time of need. The Lord, however, is the great God and the great King above all gods. They do not satisfy, help or last, for satisfaction and help are found only in the Lord.

God's greatness over all gods was evident when Elijah challenged the heathen priests of Baal to offer a sacrifice to it, while he would offer one to the Lord. The God who would send fire down on the sacrifice would be the true God. Elijah gave them the first chance to offer their sacrifices. And despite all their calls and howls to attract their idol's attention, no fire came down on their sacrifice. Then Elijah called the Lord, who sent fire down from heaven that devoured Elijah's sacrifice. At this the people shouted, "The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:21-39).

Perhaps by "gods" the psalmist meant judges and rulers, according to the statement: "God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods." The Lord said to the Israelites, "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High'" (Psalms 82:1,6). This may be due to the fact that a judge pronounces the litigants either as innocent or guilty, through the commissioning of God and according to His law. The Lord is the great God, and the great King above all judges, because a high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them (Ecclesiastes 5:8). Rulers

come and go, and others replace them, but as to the Lord, He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). His kingdom neither changes nor ends.

3. **Because He is a rich God:** "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also. The sea is His, for He made it; and His hands formed the dry land"(verses 4,5). The deep places of the earth could be the mines and the oil wells; they are places rich in God's wealth. The treasures of the high hills are also His, with all the forests and pastures that cover them. The sea is also His, which is a symbol of instability and unrest, as well as the dry land, which is a symbol of stability. The Lord commanded Moses to divide the Red Sea with his staff; it was split apart and dry land showed in the midst of it, on which the people of God could cross. Later, the water returned to its natural state, causing all Pharaoh's hordes to be drowned (Exodus 14:21,22). The same thing was repeated with the water of the Jordan River during the time of Joshua (Joshua 3:13). And Christ Himself walked on the sea as though He were walking on dry land, and even gave His disciple Peter the same privilege (Matthew 14:29). As Lord of nature, Christ told Peter to catch a fish with a hook to find a piece of money in it, which he could pay as tax for the Lord and himself (Matthew 17:24-27). So, let us sing to the Lord, because He is rich and almighty.
4. **Because He is our Maker:** "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker"(verse 6). The psalmist offers praise to God by worshipping, bowing down and kneeling before Him, because He is the Creator who made him and us. It is not central here to assume a specific posture in prayer, but simply being reverent and respectful, for "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalms 51:17). David sat to pray, and the Lord accepted his prayer (1 Chronicles 17:16). Believers may also stand lifting up their hands toward heaven (Psalms 141:2). King Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall to pray, and God accepted his prayer (Isaiah 38:2). When sin corrupted the first creation, God created man afresh as follows: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"(2 Corinthians 5:17). God revealed this to his prophet Jeremiah as he went to a potter's shop to see how he made a clay pot. He saw the potter holding a clump of clay to make a vessel out of it, but the clay would not respond to the work of the potter's hands and it all but crumbled. He put it together again and started to work it afresh, turning it into a vessel such as a craftsman would like to make. Thereupon the Lord God said to Jeremiah, "'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. 'Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!'" (Jeremiah 18:6). How wonderful was the first cre-ation that sin damaged, and how magnificent is the second creation that is justified by the blood of Christ! Let us pray: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23,24). "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my

heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalms 19:14).

- 5. Because He is our Shepherd:** "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand"(verse 7a). The Lord is our God because He created us, guides us, watches over us and provides for all our physical, spiritual, and mental needs. He chose us to be His own people, and planned to bring us into a new covenant with Himself, of which He said, "'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you'"(Matthew 26:26,27). Thus we became His own people, and the sheep of His pasture. He is the Good Shepherd who said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He is the One who gave us the privilege to say, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters" (Psalms 23:1,2). "So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever; we will show forth Your praise to all generations" (Psalms 79:13). "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!"(Psalms 80:1).

5.2. Second: A Warning against Declining the Call to Worship

(verses 7b-11)

The psalmist presents three warnings against rejecting of the call for worship:

- 1. For fear of a hard heart:** "Today, if you will hear His voice: do not harden your hearts"(verses 7b,8a). Life is short and tomorrow does not belong to us, because God holds the future in His hands. Therefore we must hear His voice "today" and obey it, because postponing repentance hardens the heart of him who presumes to be the holder of his own destiny, who relies on his health or wealth, and supposes to repent "on the morrow." But "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Today is a day of repentance and salvation. God not only invites us to accept them, but orders us to embrace them "today"! This is a clear invitation to us all to make an immediate and conclusive decision to live with the Lord. Christ said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). Do not leave Christ standing at the door of your heart knocking any longer than you already have. If you do not take a step of repentance toward Him today, you may never take it at all. The Spirit of God shall not strive with any straying man forever (Genesis 6:3). Enough of long-held carelessness, because every day that passes you without the personal knowledge of Christ is a true loss to you. You will never find life meaningful unless you live with God, enjoying intimacy with Him.

" Today, if you will hear His voice:Do not harden your hearts."The word "heart" in the

Bible may have several meanings:

- **Will:** "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land"(Deuteronomy 11:13,14). Make your will submitted to the Lord's will.
 - **Conscience:** "After that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe"(1 Samuel 24:5). Be sensitive to the Lord's voice. And if He calls you, say, "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:9).
 - **Memory:** "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!"(Psalm 119:11). Do not forget the word of Lord.
 - **Mind:** "And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly"(Ecclesiastes 1:17). Make your mind open to the word of the Lord.
 - **Emotions:** "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart"(Matthew 22:37). Make your emotions and feelings directed to the Lord. Do not harden your will, conscience, memory, mind or emotions, but rather submit them all to God.
2. **To keep away from the mistakes of the past:** "As in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work"(verses 8b,9). The psalmist asks the people not to harden their hearts, admonishing them by the example of their own fathers' hardened hearts, so that they may not sin as they did. We are used to speaking of our fathers with pride and affection, glossing over their errors out of love and respect for them, but the Lord describes things as they really are. He mentions what happened in Meribah (rebellion and strife), and what transpired in Massah (trial or temptation). Those were times when the Israelites murmured against God, Moses and Aaron for the lack of water. Their first rebellion was at Rephidim, at the beginning of the years of wondering in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-7). They also murmured in Qadesh in the fortieth year of their wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 20:1-3). The Israelites murmured often against the Lord, so that He said about them, "These men... have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice" (Numbers 14:22). The place is called both Meribah and Massah; it is a spring that gushed out from a rock in Horeb when Moses struck the rock with his staff, as the Lord commanded him to do. Truly, how wretched is implacable man! Moses called the name of the place Massah and Meribah "because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7) The painful thing is that the fathers murmured despite the fact that they experienced God's goodness, faithfulness and power, as well as witnessing His mighty deeds. The people did not murmur owing to blindness or ignorance, rather because of their stout hearts and unbelief, and in spite of seeing God's love, care and protection.
3. **To avoid the punishments of the past:** "For forty years I was grieved with that

generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest"(verses 10,11). God was grieved by the going astray of man, because He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live (Ezekiel 33:11). The expression "grieved with" may also mean "to love less." The Lord lessened His care of them, and removed his protection and provision from them. It was said that whoever wants to follow Christ must hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters (Luke 14:26). This means that his love for the Lord must come before his love for his family. His love for God must be stronger than his love for his own family, in such a way that his love for his family would be like unto a light of a candle in front of the light of the sun. And as God's love reigns over his heart and feelings, he exclaims, "For the love of Christ compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

The people went astray from the Lord, departed from His straight paths, because they were unbelieving and iniquitous. They went astray in their hearts, so their feet missed His ways. The psalmist said about them, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies"(Psalms 58:3). Also Isaiah said about them, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). This generation is "a people who go astray in their hearts." Their going astray issues from within, from their own souls, by their own wills, emotions and minds. Because of this going astray the Lord was grieved with them and denied them entrance to the Promised Land, and their corpses fell like dung over the face of the desert.

Again because of this straying and persistence in going wrong, God swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest. God said to Moses and Aaron, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. Say to them, ' "As I live," says the LORD, "just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun" "' (Numbers 14:26-30).

The psalm ends abruptly with these words. There is a piece of advice in it, which must always remain in front of our eyes: God's special favour to us must remind us of our spiritual responsibility, and that the grace that God grants us does not at all mean that we can live as we like, but as our Saviour and Shepherd would have us to. Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker, for we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.

5.3. Questions

1. The psalmist presented five reasons for worshipping the Lord. Write down three of them.

2. The psalmist presented three warnings against the rejection of the call for worship. Write them down.

6. Psalm Ninety-Six

A Call to Glorify God

- 1 Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- 2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
- 3 Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.
- 4 For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
- 6 Honour and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.
- 7 Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength.
- 8 Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts.
- 9 Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth.
- 10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously."
- 11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
- 12 Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD.
- 13 For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.

This psalm is one of the psalms of praising God the King (95-100). It was sung as a reply to the call at the introduction of the previous psalm: "Oh come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation." The Septuagint says at the introduction of the psalm that it was written by David. Most likely it was composed by David for the occasion of removing the Ark to the Tabernacle which he had built for it in Jerusalem (the same psalm occurs in 1 Chronicles 16:8-33). It was sung by Asaph and his brothers, then later some modifications were introduced to it to suit every public worship, as it now appears in its present form. Some expositors concluded that these modifications were made for the occasion of inaugurating the temple after the return from the Babylonian exile in 516 BC, because the Septuagint says at the introduction of Psalm 95 (the first among the psalms of praising God the King): "When the House was built after the captivity."

Since God is King, His kingdom must extend over all the inhabited world, and all nations

must submit to His dominion, bringing an offering, in the beauty of holiness. All peoples must praise Him, and the heavens will rejoice, as do the earth, the sea, the field and the trees, because "The LORD reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously."

The psalm contains the following:

- First: Glorifying God in all the earth (verses 1-3)
- Second: Glorifying the awesome God (verses 4-6)
- Third: Glorifying God in His courts (verses 7-9)
- Fourth: Glorifying God the King (verses 10-12)

6.1. First: Glorifying God in all the Earth

(verses 1-3)

1. **Glorifying God with a new song:** "Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth"(verse 1). The Lord's new mercies call us to praise with a new song. It is a holy call for all the inhabitants of the earth to reflect on the divine blessings continually, as the Lord commanded: "Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you coastlands and you inhabitants of them! Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare His praise in the coastlands" (Isaiah 42:10-12). He calls Kedar, the second son of Ishmael, and Sela, the most impregnable fortification of Edom, the descendant of Esau, as well as the inhabitants of the far-flung coastlands to sing, shout joyfully, and proclaim the glory of the Lord: "Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it" (Isaiah 42:5). He is the Provider for their physical and spiritual life, because He is the Life-giver and Renewer of health. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. He gives bread to those that hunger, and prosperity in life comes only through Him, because by the skilfulness of His hands He guides and directs. To Him we shout along with Moses, "I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" (Exodus 15:1), and with Deborah and Barak, "Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I, even I, will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel" (Judges 5:3). He granted us the grace of free salvation, and delivered us from the bondage of sin. He has set us free. He is worthy to be praised every new day, because His mercies are new every morning. As we sing, the clouds lift off and we rise above the pitfalls in our path, and the thorns no longer make our feet bleed, for our eyes are fixed

upon the Lord of Providence. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"(Hebrews 4:16).

2. **Glorifying Him by proclaiming His salvation:** "Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day"(verse 2). Salvation in its larger sense means salvation from sickness, hunger, the woes of war and from sin, by virtue of the redemption of Christ, which the angel proclaimed, saying, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord"(Luke 2:10,11). Let us, therefore, sing to Him, bless His name and speak of His perfect salvation, exclaiming, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), and "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"(1 Peter 1:3,4). Let all join in praising: "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:1,2). Let us proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvellous light, making us sons and heirs of His kingdom, to spread the joyful blessings of the Gospel. "For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed"(Romans 1:16,17). It is the glad tidings, revealed by the Lord who "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"(1 Timothy 2:4-6). May our motto be: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Finally, let us obey the commandment of Christ to "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you"(Mark 5:19).
3. **Glorifying Him by speaking of His miracles:** "Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples"(verse 3). No doubt the psalmist recalled the miracle of the Exodus, and that of returning from the Babylonian captivity, which they called "the second Exodus." Miracles and wonders accompanied both events. We today thank God for a spiritual exodus; that is, our deliverance from the humiliation of our sins by forgiveness and sanctification, as well as from the cares of our material life. All of them are miracles and wonders. Now we are surrounded by the Lord's daily miracles, which are so amazing that we cannot enjoy them in silence, but are compelled to proclaim them among the nations and to all peoples, and shout, "O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep... Marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well... I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvellous works" (Psalms 92:5; 139:14; 9:1).

6.2. Second: Glorifying the Awesome God

(verses 4-6)

1. **Glorifying God because He is an awesome Creator:** "For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens"(verses 4,5). "The LORD your God, the great and awesome God, is among you. The LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome" (Deuteronomy 7:21; 10:17). He is the Lord, who is so great in His might, and much to be praised for His love. He is great and greatly to be praised for His forgiveness, salvation, healing, works, wisdom, goodness and generosity. "There is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might)... For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You. But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King"(Jeremiah 10:6,7,10). All His works are good and His loving kindness is bountiful; His mercies are wonderful and worthy of our thanksgiving "We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near" (Psalms 75:1). He is almighty, active and to be feared. He commands and it is done. His tender mercies for those who fear Him are bountiful and His love is so vast, as vast as His fathomless knowledge. "With God is awesome majesty. As for the Almighty, we cannot find Him; He is excellent in power, in judgment and abundant justice... Therefore men fear Him"(Job 37:22-24).

It is sad that some nations worshiped useless idols of wood, rock, gold and silver. And even today, some people have forgotten the Lord, and worshipped Mammon, power or their lusts. "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we live for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live" (1 Corinthians 8:5,6).

2. **Glorifying Him because He is the majestic Creator:** "Honour and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary"(verse 6). In the wilderness of Sinai glory and majesty preceded the people of the Lord, in a pillar of cloud by day to protect them from the scorching sun, and a pillar of fire by night to light the way before them and frighten off the beasts of the wild. "And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. And he said, 'Please, show me Your glory.' Then He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion'" (Exodus 33:9,18,19). And in His sanctuary, there is all strength "Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage"(Psalms 84:5). In His sanctuary also there is perfect beauty that changes and

transforms every one who enjoys it into a glorious image, as it was with Moses when he spent in His holy presence forty days and forty nights. As he descended the mount the skin of his face shone, but he did not know it (Exodus 34:28,29). In the Lord's sanctuary man is sanctified, and obtains salvation. "For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation" (Psalms 149:4). Therefore the believers intone with David: "One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalms 27:4).

6.3. Third: Glorifying God in His Courts

(verses 7-9)

These three verses contain three commands: The first of which is repeated three times: "Give...Give...Give...Bring...Worship."

1. **Glorifying Him by giving glory to Him:** "Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples, give to the LORD glory and strength. Give to the LORD the glory due His name"(verses 7,8a). "Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psalms 29:1,2). Let all the nations of the earth, and all people of influence and wealth shout that the Lord has all glory and strength. We are indebted to acknowledge this fact before all the world, and also put this acknowledgment to practice by submitting to Him and becoming holy instruments in His hands, ever ready to accomplish His purposes.
2. **Glorifying Him by bringing offerings to Him:** "Bring an offering, and come into His courts"(verse 8b). The Scriptures advise us: "They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you" (Deuteronomy 16:16,17). The offering that we bring into to the Lord's courts are our worship, tithes and praise. It is He who said, "For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the nations" (Malachi 1:11). All that we have is a gift from Him, and He gives to all liberally and without reproach, so of His own we have given Him (1 Chronicles 29:14). Christ advised us, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). Although Scriptures say, "You shall not tempt the LORD your God"(Deuteronomy 6:16), yet they still tell us to " 'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'" (Malachi 3:10).

- 3. Glorifying Him by worshipping Him:** "Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth"(verse 9). The Lord commanded Moses to make holy garments for Aaron, for glory and for beauty, which he would wear as he ministered to the Lord (Exodus 28:2). Likewise the people of the Lord ought to appear in His presence in garments of godliness and holiness, showing an attitude of reverence and worship. "For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve'" (Luke 4:8). Let our adornment not be merely outward, with fine apparel and costly perfumes, "rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:4). Without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14), who directs the most modern beauty salon, in which He beautifies our lips with words of edification, our eyes by looking at Him and our hands by serving others. Let us come to Him in humility so He may beautify us with justice and sanctify us with righteousness. "Since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him... Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on...humility, meekness..." (Colossians 3:9,10,12). In the presence of the great Lord, all the earth trembles for fear and worship, because "The LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Habakkuk 2:20).

6.4. Fourth: Glorifying God the King

(verses 10-12)

- 1. A King who reassures:** "Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously'"(verse 10). The Lord is not a King over one nation, but the great King over all His creation. And since He is King, He enforces justice, thus stability is achieved, and the world is firmly established, so that it shall not be moved. Injustice turns things upside down, and makes both oppressor and oppressed unstable in their thoughts and deeds. Often the oppressed are driven to utter despair, and start to practice injustice themselves. But the Lord gives stability and continuity of justice because He is a God of justice. He teaches us: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). "For when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness [or justice]" (Isaiah 26:9). So, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; then the work of the devil will grow weak, for he would like to sift the earth and shake its stability by injustice, greed and the terror of wars.
- 2. A King who gives joy:** "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness; for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth"(verse 11-13). This prophecy has been partially fulfilled in Christ's birth of the Virgin Mary, as Isaiah had

prophesied, "There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots... with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist"(Isaiah 11:1-5). And it will fully come true at the declaration of His happy kingdom, when He comes back to judge the earth righteously and reward every one according to their work, and "according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). But right now we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs because of sin and its consequences, for it was subjected to futility when it was cursed and brought forth thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18). The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws (Isaiah 24:5). But it hopes for the declaration of God's truth and the coming of Christ for judgment to set it free from the bondage of corruption. Even those who received Christ as Saviour groan at present within their souls waiting for the fruit of God's adoption of them, which includes the completion of the redemption of their bodies when He will transform their lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body (Philippians 3:21). Likewise the Spirit also helps in the weaknesses of the believers and teaches them how to pray even as they groan in such a way which cannot be otherwise expressed (Romans 8:21-26). When Christ returns, all creation will be able to obey the command: "Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel" (Isaiah 44:23).

"Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth."

6.5. Questions

1. Give three ways you can glorify the Lord in His sanctuary.
2. According to verses 10-13 the Lord King does two things to His people. What are these two things?

7. Psalm Ninety-Seven

Light is Sown for the Righteous

1 The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad!

2 Clouds and darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.

3 A fire goes before Him, and burns up His ene-mies round about.

4 His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles.

5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole

earth.

6 The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory.

7 Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods.

8 Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice because of Your judgments, O LORD.

9 For You, LORD, are most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.

10 You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.

11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

This psalm is one of the psalms of praising God the King (95-100). "The LORD reigns" and has declared that He sits upon the throne of judgment to scatter all evil with His eyes (Proverbs 20:8). Let the earth rejoice because its Master and Redeemer will establish His truth and justice in all the earth. How lovely for the godly to look up and see His light and radiance shine upon their faces. Their souls would fill with joy and their tongues would sing praises to the good, great and loving Lord of creation. He is worthy to be worshipped with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to follow Him in trust, obedience and hope. For when He reigns over the believer's life, He blesses his family, prospers his work and keeps him from evil, that it may not cause him pain. "The LORD reigns" over our world, to grant justice to the oppressed and punish the oppressor-- to uphold truth. And because He is King, every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:25).

"The LORD reigns" always, and He has saved His people and brought them out of Egypt. He gave Moses His law on Mount Sinai. And later in time came Christ who gave His law in the Sermon on the Mount, opening it by the beatitudes to throw open before us the gates of happiness and salvation: "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). And when the Pentecost was fully come, it brought along the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Ephesians 1:17). There He revealed His love to mankind, saving in one day three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). In between Christ's humble first coming and His glorious second coming, He comes to the believer thousands of times: In times of sickness to heal him, in times of trouble to deliver him, and in times of need to meet it according to His riches in glory. "The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting" (Psalms 93:1,2).

"The LORD reigns" and He will come with power and great glory and send His angels with a

great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:30,31). So let us be ready to meet Him in order to enjoy it.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The manifestations of the coming of the King (verses 1-3)
- Second: The effect of the coming of the King (verses 4-9)
- Third: The blessings of the coming of the King (verses 10-12)

7.1. First: The Manifestations of the Coming of the King

(verses 1-3)

1. **He comes with joy:** "The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad!"(verse 1). God has established the earth with truth, goodness and beauty; He created it pure and ready for man to dwell in it. But man profaned God's earth with his sin, for which he received the condemning pronouncement: "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you" (Genesis 3:17,18). Because God is a King of love He did not leave man in his error, but visited him with the law through Moses, yet "All turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one" (Romans 3:12). The law exposed man's inability to obey God, but did not help him live the life of obedience. In the fullness of time, God sent His own Son as Redeemer, Saviour and Intercessor, to preach the good news of the kingdom, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel"(Mark 1:15). He redeemed those who were under the law, to grant them the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4,5), and snatched away from the snare of the devil those who came to their senses, having been taken captive by the devil to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26). In the cross and the resurrection the King declared His victory, and granted this same victory to all those who followed Him. He gave them justice and peace, and truth towered high. The promise was fulfilled to them: "Instead of your shame you shall have double honour, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. For I, the LORD, love justice" (Isaiah 61:7,8).
2. **He comes with majesty:** "Clouds and darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne"(verse 2). He is light, whom no man can see and live (1 Timothy 6:16). Yet we can see His goodness in His works, as we can see the perfection of His glory in Christ, the Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory (John 1:14). It was said of Him, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him"(John 1:18). The psalmist pictures Him as surrounded by clouds and a dark fog, invisible to human eyes,

although His righteousness and justice are visible in His works and judgments. At the time of the exodus from Egypt it happened that "the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way"(Exodus 13:21). But as Pharaoh pursued the people "the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night" (Exodus 14:19,20). Similarly, on the occasion of the transfiguration, Christ took Peter, James and John up a high mountain by themselves "and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:1-5). In His second coming, He will come with all His majesty with clouds, and every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7).

On the foundation of righteousness and justice the Lord established His throne in heaven, and made the earth His footstool. "Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:16-18).

3. **He comes with victory:** "A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about"(verse 3). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 10:31; 12:29). Also His word is like a fire that goes before Him (Jeremiah 23:29), terrifying those who reject it, and gladdening those who receive it. Thus the word of the Lord to Saul of Tarsus was a great light like lightning that struck him down to the ground (Acts 22:6,7). It burned off his enmity and doubts, changed his life, and made him an apostle who preached Christ, who will spend and be spent for His names sake (2 Corinthians 12:15). The Lord said of him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My names sake" (Acts 9:15,16). It is at once the fire of love and judgment. It is the light of mercy for whoever accepts justice, and the fire of justice for whoever rejects mercy.

7.2. Second: The Effect of the Coming of the King

(verses 4-9)

1. **His effect on the earth:** "His lightnings light the world; the earth sees and trembles"(verse 4). Power accompanies the coming of the great King, and signs of divine majesty surround it. His luminous lightning declares the coming of light to a dark world.

The earth sees and trembles out of fear and veneration before the awesome God of creation. Lightning also accompanied handing over the law to Moses, for the Bible says, "Then it came to pass on the third day...that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled...Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly" (Exodus 19:16-18).

2. **His effect on the mountains:** "The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth"(verse 5). Mountains boast of their height, and God even chose one as a place for His temple (Psalms 68:16). Man looks at the towering snow-capped mountains with awe as they challenge him to scale them to reach their peaks. But those majestic mountains lose their power when hit by earthquakes or volcanoes, and melt at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth like wax does at the presence of fire. "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiners fire and like launderers soap" (Malachi 3:2). His effect will be apparent at the second coming of Christ: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:9,10).
3. **His effect on the heavens:** "The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory"(verse 6). The Lord has His throne in heaven, and round about His angels do His pleasure and perform His just commands, and at His feet lie all the stars. Also "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalms 34:7). The stars do His bidding, for when Christ was born a star announced the place of His birth, and led the Wise Men to travel all the way to Bethlehem to worship Him, thus all the representatives of the people saw His glory (Matthew 2:1,2,7). And when He was crucified for our sins, there was darkness over all the land (Matthew 27:45). All nations saw in the crucifixion the meeting together of Gods justice and mercy. The heavens declare Gods justice in lightning and thunder, as all nations saw His glory in the flood on the day He said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth... And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die" (Genesis 6:13,17). Truly, "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun" (Psalms 19:1).

4. **His effect on the pagans:** "Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods"(verse 7). All who serve idols will be put to shame on the day they discover they have been worshipping the work of their own hands. Will a craftsman worship his own workmanship? They will also be put to shame the day they discover that they neither see, hear, speak nor help. Likewise were the magicians of Pharaoh put to shame as they told him about the plague of the gnats, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). All the heathen gods worship God, for all the stone, metals and animals which the idolaters worship are none but Gods creation. Similarly, what modern man worships today, such as money, fame, health and family, are nothing but God's own gift. The worshippers of all such things will be put to shame as they hear Christ say to the Samaritan woman: "You worship what you do not know... But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:22-24).
5. **His effect on the believers:** "Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice because of Your judgments, O LORD. For You, LORD, are most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods"(verses 8,9). While idolaters are put to shame because their idols are futile, and when they discover that God is high above earth and heaven, the believers will rejoice because the time of the nations to know the true God has come. God has indeed revealed the truth to them, and because "there is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might), who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due. For among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You" (Jeremiah 10:6,7). And "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' Your watchmen shall lift up their voices, with their voices they shall sing together" (Isaiah 52:7,8). Christ did bring glad tidings about the covenant of grace for all mankind, and He says to those who receive His salvation and redemption, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28), and that "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"(Romans 8:1).

7.3. Third: The Blessings of the Coming of the King

(verses 10-12)

1. **The holiness of His followers:** "You who love the LORD, hate evil"(verse 10a). When the King declares His kingdom, those who love and follow Him, those who keep His commandments, will surround Him. They will even love Him more, because they will be closer to Him, and will hate evil in all its forms, banishing it far away from their hearts,

thoughts and homes. They will act on the commandment of the Apostle: "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22). And because they love the holy Lord, they will become as holy as He who called them, in all their conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15,16). Just as the Israelites used to search their houses thoroughly with a lamp on the feast of Passover to find any leaven and remove it from their houses, so do the believers, saying together with the psalmist, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalms 66:18). Because they love the Lord, they do not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoice in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6).

2. **The safety of His followers:** "He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked"(verse 10b). When those who love the Lord hate evil, they no longer fear the wicked, because the Lord preserves their souls, for He is the Keeper who neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psalms 121:4). He shall cover them with His feathers, and under His wings they shall take refuge (Psalms 91:4). The brothers sold Joseph, their own brother, into slavery, and he was thrown into prison unjustly, but the Lord was preparing him to be the Prime Minister of the greatest kingdom in his time. Finally he said to his brothers, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). Paul stood up in Neros courtroom, having been left by all believers, and said, "At my first defence no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them... But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me... And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:16-18). Christ, the Good Shepherd, watches over His flock and keeps them, so that a thief should not steal them by night nor a wolf devour them by day. He says to them what He said to Peter, "Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:31,32). Peter passed the sifting of Satan peacefully, and although he denied Christ three times, Christ preserved his faith, so that he acknowledged his love for Him three times (John 21:15-17). And Christ still affirms us that "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).
3. **The enlightenment of His followers:** "Light is sown for the righteous"(verse 11a). The righteous is the person who has a right standing with God. He is not righteous within himself, but because Christ made him righteous, justified him after he had prayed, " 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ...he went down to his house justified" (Luke 18:13,14). His face shone from Gods pleasure with him "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, and in His light we see light (Psalms 36:9), so that the eyes of our understanding are enlightened (Ephesians 1:18). The light of the righteous has been sown, just as dawn comes before the breaking of daylight, which shows so clearly that none can hide it. "Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness" (Psalms 112:4).

7.4. Questions

1. The King manifests His coming in three ways. Mention them.
2. According to verses 8,9 the coming of the King influences believers. How?

8. Psalm Ninety-Eight

My Soul Magnifies the Lord

1 A Psalm. Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvellous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.

2 The LORD has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.

3 He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

4 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.

5 Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm,

6 With trumpets and the sound of a horn; shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.

7 Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it;

8 Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,

9 For He is coming to judge the earth. With right-ousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.

This is the only psalm in the entire psalter that has the word "Psalm" in its title without any addition to it. It is one of the seven psalms that call us to praise God the King (i.e. 93,95-100), because He brought salvation to His people, called them with a high calling, and brought them out of the wicked world to follow Him. The psalm calls upon nature with its rivers, seas, mountains and inhabitants to praise the Lord. Most likely the psalmist sang the words of this psalm for the occasion of the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity, and the redeemed church ought to sing it today, as it meditates upon the authority of the Lord King on earth, who works miracles and saves His people. Let us sing the words of this psalm even when encompassed by problems and troubles, and even if it seems to us that that the kingdom of God is defeated and that the kingdom of the devil is victorious. A Christian leader told about a miracle the Lord performed as a result of the prayer of the church, then added, "Sometimes we give the devil more that he deserves. We think too highly of him, saying that he caused trouble, disruption and harassment, where in fact the Lord is the triumphant King who holds everything under control and moves the earth and its inhabitants with one word from His mouth. No matter how strong the devil may be, he is

merely a worker forced to serve the purposes the kingdom of God." This wise leader could not have said a truer word!

The God King deserves that the believers surrender themselves to Him of their own free will, serve Him with all their hearts, and offer themselves up to Him with their full desire (Romans 12:1). He is their King who holds the rudder of this world's ship, steering it in the favourable direction of those who belong to Him. Let us, therefore, renew our covenants with Him so that he may reveal to us the power of His love and care that captivates the minds.

Adam Clark said, "This psalm is an evident prophecy of Christ's coming to save the world; and what is here foretold by David is, in the Blessed Virgin's song, chanted forth as being accomplished. David is the Voice, and Mary is the Echo."

1. **David:** "O sing to the Lord a new song."(The Voice)

Mary: "My soul glorifies the Lord."(The Echo)

2. **David:** "He has done marvellous things."(The Voice)

Mary: "The Mighty One has done great things."(The Echo)

3. **David:** "His own right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory."(The Voice)

Mary: "He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts."(The Echo)

4. **David:** "The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed,"etc. (The Voice)

Mary: "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation."(The Echo)

5. **David:** "He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel."(The Voice)

Mary: "He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful."(The Echo)

The words of our psalm must have been vivid in the mind of the Virgin as she sang her song of praise of the coming of the Saviour who works out a salvation for His people much greater than both that of the exodus from Egypt and the return from the Babylonian captivity. It is greater because Christ's salvation is a comprehensive, universal, eternal salvation from sin, its power and wages.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: Why do we praise the Lord? (verses 1-3)
- Second: How do we praise the Lord? (verses 4-6)

- Third: Who praises the Lord? (verses 7-9)

8.1. First: Why Do We Praise the Lord?

(verses 1-3)

1. **We praise Him because His works are marvellous:** "Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvellous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory"(verse 1). God's wonders are obvious in the life of the every believer, and they are the cause of praise. God has changed the sinner's stony heart, and given him a heart of flesh through the spiritual second birth, according to God's holy promise: "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19,20). The believer's mouth was, therefore, filled with a new song of praise to God. God's greatest miracle with the Israelites was the Exodus, which ended their bondage to Pharaoh, after the destroying angel put to death all the firstborn of Egypt, without touching the firstborn of the Israelites who obeyed the command of the Lord and sprinkled blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts (Exodus 12:23). As a result, Pharaoh had to order them out of Egypt. Shortly after, however, he regretted letting them go, so he followed them with his army to bring them back into slavery, but God divided the Red Sea for them to cross, while their enemy was drowned in it (Exodus 14:29,30). As they reached the border of the Promised Land, God divided for them the Jordan River so that they could cross in safety (Joshua 3:17). God performed yet another miracle with the Israelites, which they called "the second exodus," i.e., their return once again to their country from the Babylonian captivity which lasted for seventy years. God commissioned Cyrus, king of Persia, to facilitate for them the matter of returning to their country and rebuilding the temple at the end of the seventy years. God worked all these wonders, saving His people from all their troubles without needing any human agency. "The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isaiah 52:10). "Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him" (Isaiah 59:16). Between the two exoduses God's love for His people still worked miracles.

Today, we see much more than what the Israelites saw, because Christ is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:21-23). Scriptures revealed to us that "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh"(1 Timothy 3:16). When those around us ask, "How can God be incarnated?" we answer, "Is He not the Almighty? Does He not have all power and authority to reveal Himself to mankind in any way He likes? How then can He not be incarnated?" He is love, so behold the love of Him Who deigned to come down to save us. He is the heavenly Father from Whom every earthly father and mother learn how to love their children both instinctively and voluntarily. Notice their sacrifices for

their children, especially during their initial years of growth or when they are sick. So does it seem strange that God came down to us to take care of us and save us? Christ's cross has revealed the most marvellous wonder of God's; i.e. His deliverance of us by redemption. Christ could come down from the cross, if He wanted to, but the greatest miracle was to stay on the cross to save our souls by His holy arm, defeating Satan and destroying him who had the power of death, through His own vicarious death (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14). Not only that, but He also rose from the dead on the third day. Peter told the Jewish elders about Christ, "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2:23,24).

As we meditate on Christ's life on earth, we see His marvellous salvation and the acts of His mercy. Once He stopped suddenly as He was walking with the multitude because a woman that had an issue of blood touched the hem of His garment to get healed, and she was healed on the spot. The Mosaic Law had stated that such a woman was ritually unclean, and would defile whoever she touched. Christ, however, not only allowed her to touch Him and be healed of her physical sickness by the power that issued from His body, but also gave her a new spiritual life when He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction" (Mark 5:34). He dressed her wounds, healed her broken soul and gave her His great salvation (Mark 5:25-34). We still see today the miracles of His love evident amongst us, for He healed the sick when He was on earth, and now that He has been raised to life by God, He still works the same miracles. So, let us sing to the Lord a new song, because He worked and still works miracles.

- 2. We praise Him because His works are revealed:** "The LORD has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations"(verse 2). The Lord said, "My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed"(Isaiah 56:1). God's salvation and righteousness (which is His justice) go hand in hand. God's justice is also His faithfulness to His promises, and His working on fulfilling these promises. God has revealed His salvation through the coming of Christ to earth and completing our redemption, then through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon those who believed in Him, which endowed them with power to bear witness to Him. Thus He fulfilled His promises, which He had spoken through His holy prophets. God revealed His righteousness and mercy through the cross, on which He bore the burden of our iniquity, and by which He fully paid the price for our sins. In the cross "Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10). The Lord has made His salvation and revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations who had no revealed book, whose religious insight was darkened and spiritual eyes blinded, because the devil, the god of this world, blinded their minds so that they could

not follow the truth. God made known His salvation and revealed His righteousness to those blind folk, to open up their insight and lead them into the paths of righteousness. It was His plan to make known, even to the hardest of men, that He is the God of love, just as He did to Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church He opened His insight and removed the scales that covered it, and said about him, "For he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"(Acts 9:15,16). The man of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle, who said, "Nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Christ opened the eyes of a man born blind, as well as the eyes of those who have been blinded by sickness. One day some friends led their blind friend to Jesus and asked Him to open His eyes. Laying His hands on the man's eyes, Jesus asked him whether he saw anything. The man answered that he saw people walking like trees, but he was not enthusiastic to receive a bigger blessing. In spite of this, Christ laid His hands on his eyes another time, and restored his sight completely. This healing revealed God's righteousness and love, as well as His power for this man and us (Mark 8:22-26). In this miracle, as well as in others, we see the God of salvation who does not just give half a blessing, but a full one. God has made known His salvation and revealed His righteousness, and there is none that can hinder His work or stop the efficacy of His holy arm!

- 3. We praise Him because His works are according to His covenant:** "He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel"(verse 3a). God cannot forget the covenant in which He entered with His people, for He said, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David" (Psalms 89:3). It was also said of Him, "You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old" (Micah 7:20). Yet, the people of God may say in their despair, "The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me" (Isaiah 49:14), but He will answer them, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me" (Isaiah 49:15,16).

This faithful and righteous God, who entered a covenant with His people in the past, entered in a new covenant with all those who received Christ as their personal Saviour. He said of this new covenant, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you" (Matthew 26:26,27). He calls us to be faithful to this covenant with Him, as He is always to His covenant with us, remembering His mercy and His faithfulness.

- 4. We praise Him because His works are visible:** "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God"(verse 3b). God's salvation is great and uplifted; both those far and

near can see it, because He reveals it in the sight of the nations (verse 2). "The humble shall see this and be glad; and you who seek God, your hearts shall live" (Psalm 69:32). The chronicler of the Holy Scriptures says, "So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan... that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer" (Joshua 5:1). God's acts of salvation are obvious to the believers who experience them, as well as to those around them. When Isaac planted his land he reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous. The Lord has made room for him, and he became fruitful in the land. Then the king of land and the commander of his army came to him and said, "We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you'" (Genesis 26:12-33). Meeting the sinful Samaritan woman, Christ saved her soul from her sins, and she returned to witness to her fellow villagers about this Saviour. They came to Him, heard Him and received His salvation. Then they said to her, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42).

8.2. Second: How Do We Praise the Lord?

(verses 4-6)

- 1. We praise Him with joy:** "Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice and sing praises"(verse 4). The psalmist tells all created things to shout joyfully to their Creator "Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob" (Isaiah 44:23). When a king would first sit on His throne, the people would celebrate Him by shouting to him (1 Samuel 10:24), and singing with the accompaniment of music, as the people did when they celebrated Solomon (1 Kings 1:39). They would also clap their hands, as they did with Joash (2 Kings 11:12). Shouting comes from a joyful man; singing involves words that are set to music and intoned either by an individual or a group, because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long, and in Your righteousness they are exalted" (Psalm 89:15,16). When the Lord returned the captivity of His people, the prophet exhorted them, "Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem" (Isaiah 52:9).
- 2. We praise Him with the accompaniment of music:** "Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn"(verses

5,6a). The psalmist asks that singing to the Lord should be accompanied by a harp, which is a stringed instrument that may have up to ten strings. He asks the people to release their joyful throats in singing to the Lord King, who reassures us, saying, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). To this we answer, "I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved" (Psalm 16:8).

The horn is a trumpet made of the horn of a ram or an ox. It had such a high sound that everyone could hear. It was used to call the people to worship in the house of the Lord, as Moses commanded, "Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting" (Numbers 10:2,3). Trumpets were used to call the people to rally in defence of their country in time of war and to rejoice in time of triumph. "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies"(Numbers 10:9). The sound of the trumpet called the people to celebrate the feast. The Lord said, "Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets" (Numbers 10:10). Also the sound of trumpet declared the Year of Jubilee. The Lord said, "And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land" (Leviticus 25:8,9). The Year of the Jubilee was the year for freeing the slaves and returning the lands given in pledge to their owners. Let us celebrate, therefore, and call one another to enjoy the freedom that Christ gives us: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"(John 8:36).

- 3. We praise Him with respect:** "Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King"(verse 6b). The believers know the great honour awarded to them in having the Lord as their King, in being citizens in the kingdom of His love and having the right to appear in His presence. The Lord is the King who must reign over our lives; He is the God Who bought us from every tribe, nation, people and tongue to be His own. Shouting joyfully before the King is a declaration of love and obedience to God and submission to His authority. It was in that attitude that the multitudes received Christ on His triumphant entry into Jerusalem "Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!'"(Matthew 21:9).

8.3. Third: Who Praises the Lord?

(verses 7-9)

1. **The seas and the rivers:** "Let the sea roar, and all its fullness...Let the rivers clap their hands"(verses 7a,8a). The seas and the rivers are God's creation; the psalmist calls upon them to clap their hands, as though the sound of their waters beating against the shores were a sort of clapping to the One who made them and set a boundary that they may not pass over (Psalm 104:9). Both seas and rivers represent the enemy, or the force that opposes the Lord, even it be His own creation. But the created thing must eventually fulfil the will of the Creator, whether willingly or not. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You" (Psalm 76:10). Thereupon, no matter how much the sea roars, in the end it will obey God, its Creator. The Red Sea roared, and the people of old crossed it; the Jordan clapped the hands as it parted for the believers to cross! The prophet said, "But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour'" (Isaiah 43:1-3). Also the psalmist says, "The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves" (Psalm 93:3), but "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).
2. **The earth and mankind:** "The world and those who dwell in it"(verse 7b). The world and those who dwell in it are invited to praise the Lord who created them and who still watches over them. The inhabitants of the world are divided into two groups: children of the Lord and beggars from the Lord. Both receive from Him who opens His hand and fills them with good things (Psalm 104:28). Yet, what a world of difference there is between those who receive from the Lord and are filled because He has given them the unmerited grace of adoption according the Scriptures: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12), and the beggars who are fed with the crumbs which fall from the table of the children (Luke 16:21). Have you been adopted by God? Or are you just a beggar begging Him for bread?
3. **The hills:** "Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity"(verses 8b,9). The psalmist calls the hills, the highest formations on the face of the earth, to praise the Lord, because He is righteous (just) and powerful, without weakness or frailty. Everyone who is being wronged will rejoice because the Lord judges mankind, giving each one his due right. "For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands... and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 55:12,13). When we will hear the voice

of Christ, who will judge the world, say, "Surely I am coming quickly," we will shout joyfully, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

8.4.

As we meditate on this psalm let us answer three questions:

1. **Question 1:**The psalmist said, "The Lord has made known His salvation. His righteousness He has openly shown in the sight of the nations" (verse 2). Have you experienced His great salvation prepared for you on the cross? Are your sins forgiven because of His redemptive work for you?
2. **Question 2:**The psalmist said, "Break forth in song. Rejoice and sing praises"(verse 5b). Are you rejoicing in the Lord? Some people experienced the salvation of the Lord, but they look sad. Show the joy of your salvation with a bright smile and singing a hymn.
3. **Question 3:**The psalmist said, "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (verse 3b). Have you witnessed to His salvation? Many believers are satisfied with the cosy fellowship with their brothers in Christ, and do not pay attention to the crying perishing world. Always proclaim Gods salvation.

8.5. Questions

1. Explain this statement: "We praise Him because His works are marvellous and visible."
2. How can the world know Gods great salvation?

9. Psalm Ninety-Nine

He is Holy

1 The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved!

2 The LORD is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples.

3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name -- He is holy.

4 The King's strength also loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool -- He is holy.

6 Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel was among those who called upon His name; they called upon the LORD, and He answered them.

7 He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar; they kept His testimonies and the ordinance He gave them.

8 You answered them, O LORD our God; You were to them God-Who-Forgives, though You took vengeance on their deeds.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

This is the third, and the last, psalm that opens with "The LORD reigns" (which are Psalms 93,97 and 99). It opens with praise to God, the holy King. The theme of God's holiness repeats itself in it three times. In verse 3 and 5 it says, "He is holy" and in verse 9, "our God is holy." The psalmist calls all peoples to join the people of God in declaring God's perfect holiness, and shout with the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3). A sinner cannot stand in the presence of the holy God unless he receives from Him the garment of salvation, the robe of righteousness and the clothing of piety. Christ told a parable about the wedding of the king's son (Matthew 22:1-14) in which He told of a certain king who invited his subjects to His son's wedding banquet. He prepared for the guests all they could imagine; he even distributed royal clothing to them. Later, he walked among the guests to welcome them, but finding a man without the royal clothing, who presumed that his own clothes were adequate for attending the royal banquet, He had him thrown out of the palace. The moral of this parable is that we cannot appear in God's presence without taking refuge under the cover of His precious atonement to be accepted. Our first ancestors attempted to cover themselves with leaves, but to no avail. Only the Lord could cover them with redemption and with tunics of skin. It is fearful for a sinner to stand in the presence of the Lord. A man has no protection but that of Christ's propitiation, for He said of Himself, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost...The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Luke 19:10; Matthew 20:28).

This psalm focuses on holiness. It makes mention of three characters: Moses the law-giver, Aaron the priest and Samuel the prophet and judge. It says that they called upon the Lord, and that He answered them. He answered by virtue of their perfection, but because He granted them forgiveness and deliverance through the Passover lamb that protected the firstborn of the Israelites from death, and through the vicarious sacrifices that the Lord required of Moses, which typified Christ's atonement on the cross. Every one of those three led the believers in the way of the Lord, prayed for them and led a holy life themselves, because they were accepted by God through the righteousness that comes by faith.

In this psalm the psalmist says that the Lord established the foundations of His dominion over the whole earth, and in His holy temple, and now judges with righteousness, truth and uprightness, therefore all must praise Him.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The Lord reigns over the world (verses 1-3)
- Second: The Lord reigns with righteousness (verses 4,5)
- Third: Manifestations of the Lord's reign (verses 6-9)

9.1. First: The Lord Reigns over the World

(verses 1-3)

In these three verses the psalmist says that as the Lord reigns, the earth and those that dwell upon it tremble, and the believers praise His fearsome name.

1. **The earth and those who dwell upon it tremble:** "The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved!"(verse 1). As the Lord reigns, the peoples tremble and the earth moves in reverence, respect and veneration for the Creator who created them. The psalmist said to the Lord, "The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook" (Psalms 77:18). Also the prophet Isaiah said to the Lord, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence; as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil; to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!" (Isaiah 64:1,2). When the Lord was revealed in His greatness to the prophet Isaiah, the temple was filled with smoke, and foundations of its doorposts were shaken, he cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). The earth and those who dwell upon it tremble, because they feel unworthy to appear in the presence of the Lord, and realize that they will perish because of the sins and that there is no way out for them except through the divine mercies.

The psalmist says that the Lord "dwells between the cherubim." In Hebrew *cherubimis* a plural word of the singular *cherub*. They are a chosen group of angels nearest to God, who are also called the angels of the Presence. Jewish scholars also called them "the angels of might". God appointed them as guards to the gates of the garden of Eden when He cast Adam and Eve out of it (Genesis 3:24). God told Moses to make two cherubim of gold, spreading their wings over the ark of the Lord's covenant in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 25:18,19). The expression "the One who dwells between the cherubim" is a figurative one, indicating rest after finishing His work. It also refers to the fact that the angels, as great and mighty as they are, serve and worship God, accomplishing all that He bids them. Hezekiah prayed, "O LORD God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth"(2 Kings 19:15). The psalmist said, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel...You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!" (Psalms 80:1). In another poetic figure of speech David says that He rode upon a cherub, and flew (Psalms 18:10). The prophet Ezekiel saw the cherubim under God's throne (Ezekiel 11:22). Because of the abundance of God's power, who is served by the cherubim, immovable things shake, just as the place where the disciples assembled and prayed was shaken (Acts 4:31).

Similarly, the prison gates at Philippi were opened by the power of Paul and Silas' prayer and singing (Acts 16:26), and the hard hearts trembled at the greatness of God's work (Acts 16:29). Truly "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth"(Isaiah 40:4).

- 2. The believers offer praise:** "The LORD is great in Zion, and He is high above all the peoples. Let them praise Your great and awesome name; He is holy"(verses 2,3). In Zion King Solomon built the great temple, and the psalmist says about this, "The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Psalms 87:2). "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain" (Psalms 48:1). The reason for this praise was that God's great grace appeared in the temple, where the confessing sinner was forgiven as he offered up his sacrifice to obtain mercy, as the Mosaic Law required. Likewise, the perfection of God's law and teaching is evident in the temple, which prompts the believers to praise His great and awesome name, for He is holy. The statement is then fulfilled: "The LORD your God, the great and awesome God, is among you" (Deuteronomy 7:21). "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths...' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-3).

After Christ came to earth, the offering of the Mosaic sacrifices stopped and the temple at Jerusalem was torn down, because the atonement of Christ was the type that they stood for. When the true Sacrifice came, the types ceased, just as the flower falls off the tree as soon as the fruit appears. The church today is God's dwelling place, and He has shown it His power, wisdom righteousness and redemption, therefore it must obey Him and praise Him for the salvation and redemption, as well as for His care, provision and response to prayer. He says to the people of the church, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"(1 John 4:4). "Christ in you, the hope of glory"(Colossians 1:27). The church today is the spiritual Zion, and Christ dwells in its midst as He promised: "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"(Matthew 18:20). So, let us ask the Lord, who is in our midst, to show us His majesty so that we can worship Him and rejoice in Him, as the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord (John 20:20). Let us lift up the Lord in our midst, that His holy name may be exalted in our actions and lives, "For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth" (Psalms 47:2). The psalmist concludes this part of the psalm with a shout: "He is holy!"

9.2. Second: The Lord Reigns with Righteousness

(verses 4,5)

In these two verses the psalmist says that the Lord loves justice, has established equity, and executed justice and righteousness; He requires His people to worship at His footstool.

1. **The Lord King loves justice:** "The King's strength also loves justice"(verse 4a). The Lord is strong because He is the only true God, who has no flaw, lie or deceit. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all"(1 John 1:5). Christ said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life... And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free... Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 14:6; 8:32; 8:36). Christ said in His intercessory prayer, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). He is the true God, as compared with the false gods worshipped by the heathen, and the mystical gods of the Greek pagans. "Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding. He does not preserve the life of the wicked, but gives justice to the oppressed. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they are on the throne with kings, for He has seated them forever, and they are exalted" (Job 36:5-7).
2. **The Lord King establishes equity:** "You have established equity"(verse 4b). The Lord said, "For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant... All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed"(Isaiah 61:8,9). Because He loves justice, He removes crookedness from the souls of those who love Him, who follow Him with all their hearts; but He punishes every unrepentant sinner.
3. **The Lord King executes justice:** "You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob"(verse 4c). Jacob is the father of the tribes, and his name, by extension, covers all the Israelites. The meaning could be that God executed justice in Jacob's life, as well as in what He did to him. He saved Jacob from his sins, and delivered him from his enemies. At the onset of his life, Jacob double-crossed people; deceiving his own father, brother and uncle. But God changed his life and his name from Jacob the deceiver to Israel the diligent. Through such a change He executed justice in Jacob's life. He also executed justice with him when He delivered him from his enemies and made His promises good to him. The meaning could also be that God executed justice in the lives of Jacob's descendants and dealt justly with them. He punished them by the Babylonian captivity when they fell away from worshipping Him and offered sacrifices to idols. But as they finally got rid of idolatry, God brought them back to their country by a direct decree from Cyrus. God, likewise, executed justice with the Israelites when He rescued them from their enemies. The Lord is willing to execute this same justice in our lives. He can radically change our lives, so that the biblical statement is fulfilled in us: "Therefore, if

anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). He also acts justly with us and stands by us, so that we can say, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

- 4. The Lord King is worthy to be King:** "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool; He is holy"(verse 5). How do we exalt the LORD our God? Does He need exaltation, being the Most High Himself? The intention is that the Lord should reign over our lives completely, so that we can call Him, "the God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23). Also that we should exalt His word by obeying it, so that He would have the final word in our lives. Christ taught us to pray: "Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9,10). It is meant that we should venerate His name in worship, and that His kingdom should come into our lives by our submission to it, so that what Saint Augustine said may be fulfilled to us: "When you do the will of God as though it were your own, God will do your will as though it were His own."

The psalmist requires that we should worship at His footstool. The Israelites understood the Lord's footstool to be the Ark of the Covenant inside the Holy of Holies. David said to the leaders of his people, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God"(1 Chronicles 28:2). This means that the psalmist requires us to worship in God's holy house. Yet God's footstool can also be the whole earth, as the Lord said, "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool" (Isaiah 66:1). It seems that the psalmist would like us to consider the whole earth as a place of worship and adoration, that we may not settle for thanking and praising God only in a certain place designated for worship, but wherever we may be.

The Lord reigns with righteousness because "He is holy." When you call on Him, as the tax collector did, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" you will go down to your home justified (Luke 18:13). If we confess our sins to Him, we receive the grace of forgiveness, and He also blesses us and makes us a blessing. Let us worship at His footstool as sinners in need of mercy, and as poor in spirit devoid of any goodness. And as we submit to Him, confessing our unworthiness, He will bestow upon us His heavenly gifts.

9.3. Third: Manifestations of the Lord's Reign (verses 6-9)

In these four verses the psalmist mentions that God's dominion appeared in the past in the lives of the believers, who prayed to God and obeyed Him. He appeared in His dealings with those believers; He answered them, forgave them their sins, and, in love, punished them for their transgressions to bring them back to Himself. What son is this whose father does not chasten him (Hebrews 12:7)? Finally, the psalmist requires us today to exalt the Lord's name

and worship Him.

1. His dominion appears in what the believers of old had done (verses 6,7):

- 1. The believers of old prayed to Him:** "Moses and Aaron were among His priests, and Samuel was among those who called upon His name; they called upon the LORD, and He answered them"(verse 6). The psalmist mentions three great characters: Moses, Aaron and Samuel. Moses abandoned Egypt's greatness and preferred to be humiliated with the people of God, whom God made a priest and used as a bridge for people to cross over to Him. Also, through his preaching he told people about God, and through his prayer he told God about the people. Had Moses remained a prince in Egypt, he would have become king. He would have ended up in the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square in Cairo, a mere mummy covered in a shroud. But he preferred to obey God and lead His people out of Egypt; he lifted up prayers on their behalf, and as a result, God granted them victory and forgave them. Moses prayed on behalf of his people during their war with Amalek, "And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exodus 17:11-13). God forgave His people for the sake of Moses' prayers when they sinned by worshipping the calf (Exodus 32:30-32; Deuteronomy 9:18-21). Later, God forgave them another time when they did not believe God's promises, but credited the reports of the ten spies who purported that they could not possess the land (Numbers 14:13-15).

The second person mentioned by the psalmist was Aaron, Moses' brother, whom God chose together with his descendants to be priests for His people. God responded to Aaron's prayer when the people rose up against Moses and himself, headed by Korah, and the Lord sent a plague to destroy the people. Aaron made haste, took an incense pot, put fire and incense in it from the altar of the Lord, and ran in the midst of the people to make atonement for them. He stood up between the living and the dead, so that the plague ceased (Numbers 16:41-50).

Now, the third person mentioned by the psalmist was Samuel, the son of prayer, whom God gave to his barren mother as she prayed in the temple to God to give her children. When God answered her, she said, "For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him" (1 Samuel 1:27). It is Samuel who was called by the Lord in the temple when he was still a child, who responded, "Speak, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10). It was also Samuel who said to his people, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way"(1 Samuel

- 12:23). Being in mortal distress because of their enemies, the people asked Samuel not to cease praying for them. "And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him" (1 Samuel 7:9).
2. **The believers of old obeyed:** "He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar; they kept His testimonies and the ordinance He gave them"(verse 7). God spoke to His people in a pillar of cloud, in order to emphasize to them in a clear, visual, unforgettable way that He was in their midst, to protect and watch over them. As a result, they paid attention to the divine love, responded to it and kept His testimonies which testified against them. The Lord recorded them on the two stone tablets, and they were kept in the Ark of the Covenant because they were a covenant between the Lord Himself and His people, as a testimony to them, to their works and their faith. "Blessed are those who keep His testimonies"(Psalms 119:2). They also kept the ordinance He gave them. An ordinance or a statute is a command backed up by an authority. The son says to his father, "Teach me Your statutes!" (Psalms 119:12) because the father lays down rules and ordinances for his house for the safety of its members, the good of his children and the advancement of the whole family.
2. **His dominion appears in what He has done (verse 8):**
 1. **He answered them:** "You answered them, O LORD our God"(verse 8a). True, the Lord is the One who hears prayer; to Him all flesh will come (Psalms 65:2), but His people receive a special attention from Him. Did He not say, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them" (Exodus 3:7,8)? He said to King Hezekiah, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years" (Isaiah 38:5).
 2. **He forgave them:** "You were to them God-Who-Forgives"(verse 8b). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"(1 John 1:9). Someone may say, "I have no hope in being accepted by God because sins are so many." But such a person should think of the crucified thief who blasphemed Christ, but the Lord still opened his eyes to see that the One crucified in the middle was a King over a kingdom who could welcome into it whoever He willed. The man could not but say, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And he was immediately answered, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise"(Luke 23:42,43). The sinner's transgression is great, but the Lord's pardon is even greater. Let us not put off repentance. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).
 3. **He punished them:** "Though You took vengeance on their deeds"(verse 8c). Mercy is shown to whoever accepts mercy, and punishment to whoever rejects it. The one who receives salvation enjoys all its benefits, but the one who rejects it endangers

himself greatly. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Let us enter the ark of deliverance, as Noah did. This our ark of deliverance is Christ, who planned for our redemption and atonement through His loving cross. Not entering the ark of deliverance means our perdition, even if we think that we are the tallest people in terms of spiritual stature, and our spiritual houses are the highest ever. The fact is "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

3. His dominion appears in what the believers must do today (verse 9):

1. **They must exalt Him:** "Exalt the LORD our God"(verse 9a). The psalmist repeats here what he had required in verse 5, what the believers must always do.
2. **They must worship Him:** "And worship at His holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy"(verse 9b). To worship is to submit your will to the Lord, and kneel down before Him in love. Everyone who kneels down before Him experiences the beauty of living with Him. "A broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalms 51:17). When worship takes place on the Lord's holy hill, the life of the worshipper becomes holy and his conduct becomes pure. Before entering the Holy Place, the priests had to pass by a large bowl to wash themselves (Exodus 40:30-32). This ritual purification symbolized the necessity of the purity of heart, as David asked the Lord, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalms 51:10). And "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). When we ascend to the Lord's holy hill and worship Him, our faces will shine for joy, as Moses' face did because he was in God's presence (Exodus 34:29). Christ said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you... No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you"(John 15:3,15).

"The LORD reigns... Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool... For the LORD our God is holy."

9.4. Questions

1. Verses 4,5 of this psalm say that God, our King, does four things. What are they?
2. According to verse 8 of this psalm God's dominion appears in three matters. Write them down.

10. Psalm One Hundred

A Repeated Call for Praise

1 A Psalm of Thanksgiving. Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!

2 Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

This psalm serves as the conclusion, as well as the climax, of the group of psalms that praise the Lord King. In this psalm the psalmist twice repeats the call to all peoples to join the children of Israel in praising the Lord, who is the only true God, who brought back His people from their captivity in Babylon. The prophecy must be fulfilled: "Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him... Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:6,7).

This psalm was usually sung on the occasion of presenting the thanksgiving offering, of which the book of Leviticus says, "This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which he shall offer to the LORD:... for a thanksgiving... But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow or a voluntary offering..." (Leviticus 7:11-21). When the Lord honours the believer and gives him a bigger blessing than what he expects, he expresses his thanksgiving by presenting a peace offering, out of gratefulness and praise to the Lord, and sings the words of this psalm while presenting his offering. For the Lord "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever" (Ephesians 3:20,21). When a believer made a vow, and the Lord granted him his request, he would present to the Lord whatever he had vowed, and sing the words of this psalm while doing so. Also when a believer wanted to present a voluntary offering out of love for the Lord, he would present this sacrifice and sing the words of this psalm while doing so.

So let us join the psalmist in singing to the Lord King, because we want to thank Him, saying, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalms 103:1,2). He has touched our lives a thousand tender touches. Even at the times when He chastens us we thank Him, saying, "The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death" (Psalms 118:18). In chastening us He wants to keep us alive and restore to us the life of intimacy with Himself. He uses difficult circumstances to spiritually bless us, our families and church. His blessing comes to us sometimes in a joyful white envelope, but at times it

comes to us in a black one. Do not stop at the outward wrapping; open the message and read it gratefully, and you will find it emphasizing once again that God is love, and that His love is true and wonderful because it wells up from the spring that never goes dry. God "did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). Let us offer to Him "the sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15), and, in spiritual maturity, let us say to Him, "For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favour You will surround him as with a shield"(Psalms 5:12). We do not go through life alone; we live with Christ under those circumstances, having in Him full protection. Let us join the offerer of the peace sacrifice in offering a sacrifice of voluntary thanksgiving, singing this psalm and confessing God's favour and goodness to us.

The psalm contains the following:

- First: The first call furnished with a reason (verses 1-3)
- Second: The second call furnished with a reason (verses 4,5)

10.1. First: The First Call Furnished with a Reason

(verses 1-3)

1. The first call to praise (verses 1,2):

1. **It is a universal call:** "Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!"(verse 1). This is a universal call to mankind in general, and to those who love God in particular, to shout joyfully to the Lord King, to express their praise and thanksgiving. Some of us undergo hard circumstances or failure, while others go through happy circumstances and success. But neither success nor failure is there to stay; we live in an ever-changing world. It is our relation to the Lord that must be there to stay; it must continue and grow deep, because it does not depend on our circumstances, but rather on our relationship with Him and our love for Him. As deep and continuing our relationship with Him so is our joyful shouting and thanksgiving to His majesty. Let us love the Lord with all our hearts, to receive the title of the tribe of Benjamin: "The beloved of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 33:12), and the title of "Jedidiah" (2 Samuel 12:25; meaning "the beloved of the Lord"), which was the title the prophet Nathan gave King Solomon, by direct command of the Lord, and the title given to John "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). Let our motto be "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Let us shout joyfully to the Lord, and call the whole earth to join us in this joyful shout.
2. **It is a call for joy:** "Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing"(verse 2). Joyful hymns, songs and praise characterize our worship. Music accompanies it, because the Bible commands us: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and

spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). Our God is a God of joy, so much so that Christ compared the Kingdom of God to a wedding banquet (Matthew 22:1-14), and performed His first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). In the parable of the prodigal son, who came to himself and returned to his father, Christ depicted heaven's joy at the repentance of a single sinner. The prodigal son was not certain of his father's acceptance of him, but how happy the father was at the return of his son. His happiness set an example for all the servants who prepared the banquet, the friends who were invited to it, for the smile knew its way to the father's sad face once more (Luke 15). Everyone who recalls that he is Christ's, sings, "O happy day, O happy day, when Jesus took my sins away!" Some of us may be able to remember a specific day when we repented and received from Jesus the new life, but others may not be able to recall such a specific date or occasion. What each and every one of us must be sure of is that Christ entered his hearts and took control of his life. With this assurance we can praise God, the God of forgiveness, who fills our lives with joy, so that we can say, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

2. The cause of the first call for praise (verse 3):

- 1. We praise Him because He is God:** "Know that the LORD, He is God"(verse 3a). The psalmist calls all people of the earth to know who is the Lord, the Creator, and the Master, in order to obey and love Him. And as they come to know Him really well, they start to sing to Him because He is worthy to receive "glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11). But man often misses the way to the knowledge of God! Yet, in His love, God brings the lost back to the paths of righteousness for His name's sake (Psalms 23:3). The children of Israel went astray when Moses was on the mountain and worshipped the golden calf, but the Lord brought them back to their senses (Exodus 32). During the time of Elijah the people worshipped Baal, the god of the surrounding nations, but Elijah defied their idol and God showed His power by bringing down fire upon Elijah's sacrifice. The people cried out in unison, "The LORD, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:21-39). We must rest assured that the Lord is the God who holds everything under control. When Pilate said to Christ, "Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?" Christ answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:10,11). Recently made governor, Pilate thought he had the final authority, but it was Christ who held that kind of authority, who now accepted standing before Pilate as a starting point toward the suffering of the cross to complete His wonderful redemption. Has He not said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

2. **We praise Him because He is the Creator:** "He who has made us"(verse 3b). "The LORD has made all for Himself" (Proverbs 16:4). He created everything out of nothing, without the assistance of anyone, and He holds His creation together by the word of His command. He made us when He formed Adam, our first father, of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living being (Genesis 2:7). Then He created Eve, a helpmate, of one of his ribs. But sin entered the world and corrupted the innocence of the first creation. It stripped our first fathers naked and shamed them, but God covered the naked man and re-formed His creation, making it a new creation. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared be-forehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10), because "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is what Christ called "to be born again and to be born of the Spirit" (John 3:3,5). Therefore every believer prays and says, "I thank you, Lord, because You created me twice; physically and spiritually, because "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"" (John 3:6). This great Creator says to every believer, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1). Our hearts will be full of joy and praise to the Lord, because we were redeemed in such a marvellous manner through the precious blood of Jesus.
3. **We praise Him because He is the Shepherd:** "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture"(verse 3c). We are not our own because He is our Creator, and we will not be anyone else's: "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7). We are also His by virtue of His redemption of us, "You are not your own. For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). Again we are His because He is our owner who gave us His law to live according to it. We are His because He is our Judge before whom we must stand to give an account of what we have done. He is our great Shepherd who searched for us when we strayed until He found us and brought us back to Himself. Therefore the believer says, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalms 23:1), for Christ says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The Apostle Peter says, "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25). Christ, then, is the Shepherd and Overseer who watches over His flock; if one strays, hungers, or falls sick He sees him and rushes to his aid.

10.2. Second: The Second Call Furnished with a Reason

(verses 4,5)

1. **The second call for praise:** "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts

with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name"(verse 4). The psalmist calls everybody to enter the house of God which He never shuts in the face of anyone. They may enter the gates with their hearts full of praise and thanksgiving; they may praise Him and bless His name, joyfully shouting, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD'" (Psalms 122:1).

2. The cause of the second call for praise (verse 5):

1. **We praise Him because He is good:** "For the LORD is good"(verse 5a). God is love. He is generous, gracious and magnanimous. He never makes a mistake in anything He does or allows to happen; all His works for those who love Him are good. I was acquainted with a Canadian lady of Greek origin who married an Egyptian man who had immigrated to Canada. They both travelled to Saudi Arabia for work. There, they met an Egyptian young man who led them to the Lord and they got to know Him in an intimate way. They committed their lives to Him and were saved. As their contract came to an end, they decided to stop over in Cairo and in Athens, to tell their families about salvation through the redemption of Christ. They wanted all of their relatives to have the joy of having a living relationship with Christ. The Lord blessed their ministry in both Cairo and Athens. They returned to Canada rejoicing. Suddenly the husband fell ill and died, leaving behind his three young children in the care of his wife-turned-widow, who found solace in the fact that her husband departed to be with the Lord. "For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23). When I wrote her to give her my condolences, she answered that the Lord is good and never makes mistakes. She said that, in His wisdom, the Lord took her husband to be with Him in glory. This is a real experience of the work of the grace of God, which supports the believer under the hardest circumstances. The words of the gospel are not hollow promises, nor a drug or an opiate for the nations. They are rather living truths that make public to us the goodness of God. " 'Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for His mercy endures forever'... who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD" (Jeremiah 33:11).

2. **We praise Him because He is merciful:** "His mercy is everlasting"(verse 5b). The sons always experience His mercy as the fathers have experienced it. Had His mercy been for only a time, we would have perished and died because of our many sins. But the magnificence of the divine mercy is that it wells up from a heart filled with mercy, and this heart only performs acts of unending mercy. We can trust in God's mercies, for they are everlasting.

How great the divine mercy is when compared with the mercy people show to one another. As an example, on Paul's first missionary journey he was accompanied by Barnabas and Mark. Half way on the journey Mark departed from them and returned to his home in Jerusalem, where it must have been comfortable and safe. When Paul

decided to go on his second missionary journey, he refused to take Mark along on the grounds that "they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work." He was right in refusing him. But Barnabas, Mark's uncle, was merciful with his nephew and decided to take him along on a second missionary journey. Barnabas showed mercy on Mark, and was an example in encouraging the weak. He was, therefore, called "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 12:25; 13:5,13; 15:36-41). Paul was right once again when he judged Mark a few years later, as he saw Mark's seriousness in the ministry. He requested him to come to minister with him, for he was useful to him in the ministry of the Lord (2 Timothy 4:11). We are so grateful to God for His mercy and love, because He forgives us and gives us a second chance. He forgets our failures and says, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

3. **We praise Him because He is faithful:** "And His truth (faithfulness) endures to all generations"(verse 5c). The Lord is from eternity to eternity; with no beginning or end. His faithfulness is inherent to His character. "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

The Lord's faithfulness with us appears in the forgiveness of our sins, for "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). His faithfulness appears as well in the times of temptations, for "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). He showed Himself faithful as he established our faith: "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one"(2 Thessalonians 3:3). The Lord will remain faithful to His people, even if they themselves prove faithless (2 Timothy 2:13). Let us persevere being faithful, and remain so, so that we may hear His voice calling: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:23).

10.3. Questions

1. "Serve the LORD with gladness"(verse 2). Write your comment on this verse.
2. "The LORD is good"(verse 5). Tell us an experience you passed through that proves the authenticity of this verse.

11. Quiz

There are two questions at the end of each chapter. If you answer 15 of these questions correctly you may join our Bible school by correspondence and work toward a certificate.

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