



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 60

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# Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *To the Chief Musician. Set to "Lily of the Testimony."* *A Michtam of David. For teaching. When he fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.*
- Psalm 60 has one of the longest expressive titles given
- It indicates, as it was mentioned in previous Psalms, that it was directed toward the *Chief Musician*, whom some suppose to be the Lord God Himself, and others suppose to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph



# Introduction

- *Lily*, may refer to an instrument, a harp with six strings, or to a tune
- Other scholars believe that this Psalm is like a beautiful *Lily of testimony*, that is a beloved and joyful testimony of God's work of salvation
- This is a golden Psalm of David *Michtam*,, intended *for teaching*, to instruct his present and future generations, especially about relying upon God and nothing else during times of conflicts
- David recorded the Lord's mighty acts that they might be repeated and taught to generations to come



# Introduction

- This is the last of six *Michtam* Psalms
- According to the title the Psalm refers to the occasion in David's life and the events narrated in 2 Samuel 8,10
- It says that David *fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah*
- This would seem to be the war described in 1 Chronicles 19, where Syrian and Mesopotamian forces assisted the Ammonites against Israel which in the end became a long Israelite siege against the Ammonite capital of Rabbah
- The parallel account of this episode is in 2 Samuel 10, though the Mesopotamian forces are not mentioned there



# Introduction

- However, the title's further note about Joab killing 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt (likely the desert south of the Dead Sea) seems more closely related to events in 2 Samuel 8, concerning an earlier conflict with Syria that ended with David killing 18,000 Syrians in the Valley of Salt (2 Samuel 8:13)
- It also relates to the events in 1 Chronicles 18 when Joab's brother Abishai killing 18,000 Edomites there (1 Chronicles 18:12); *Joab was over the army* (1 Chronicles 18:15)
- Some think that there is nothing in the contents of this Psalm that bears any relation to this title



# Introduction

- The victories described in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles do not mention the kind of setbacks lamented in this psalm
- While 2 Samuel 8 describes the numerous victories of David and his armies against the surrounding nations, Psalm 60 begins by talking about how God had rejected David and the people of Israel
- Perhaps the Psalm was written at the moment when David received the news of the defeat inflicted by Edom, and Joab was sent to prevent and resist the invaders
- The Valley of Salt seems to be the border area between the nation of Edom and the nation of Israel



# Introduction

- So most likely this Psalm was written during good times and bad times
- Others consider the Psalm as descriptive of the distracted state of the land after the fatal battle of Gilboa, till David was anointed king of the whole at Hebron
- St. Augustine believes this psalm includes a prophecy concerning our Lord Jesus, he says, “as the Prophetic Spirit in the Psalms' titles is wont to depart somewhat from the expression of things done, and to say something which in history is not found, and hence rather to admonish us that titles of this kind have been written not that we may know things done, but that things future may be prefigured.”



# Introduction

- The title in the Septuagint version is, “When he burned the Syrian Mesopotamia and Hemant Zobah”
- According to a symbolic interpretation by St. Augustine, burning those provinces refer to the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in us
- He says, “That destruction indeed that David made ... our Christ, whose figure that man was bearing; He did those things, He made this destruction with His sword and with His fire: for both He brought into this world...‘I came to send fire on the earth’, (Luke 12:49), and ‘I did not come to bring peace but a sword’ (Mathew 10:34)”





# Introduction

- St. Augustine explains that God brought His mercy on us
- He destroys so that He build and edify us
- To burn our haughtiness and pride, as well as to end work of the 'old man' in us
- Destroy the old man, in order that there may be a building unto a new man, building to abide for everlasting
- He also explains that the word Edom saying, "it is interpreted earthly' That earthly one ought to be smitten. For why should one live earthly, that ought to live heavenly?"



# Introduction

- He also comments on the *twelve thousand* and says, “Twelve thousand is a perfect number, to which perfect number also the number of the twelve Apostles is ascribed; for not to no purpose is it, but because through the whole world was to be sent the Word...The four parts of the world thereof are well known to all, and often in the Scriptures they are mentioned: East, West, North, and South. To all these four parts was sent the Word, so that in the Trinity all might be called...With reason therefore twelve thousand earthly things were smitten, the whole world was smitten: for from the whole world was chosen out the Church, mortified from earthly life.”



# Introduction

## Psalm Outlines

- A Plea for Mercy from God Who Has Afflicted His People 60:1-3
- Hope in His Deliverance 60:4-5
- God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8
- Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12

# A Plea for Mercy from God Who Has Afflicted His People 60:1-3



- David and the armies of Israel fought against foreign armies and experienced some measure of defeat
- David knew that when the Lord fought for Israel, victory was assured; if there was defeat, it was likely because of God's displeasure
- Therefore, David appealed to what he believed to be the ultimate cause, not the immediate cause
- He offered a deep sincere prayer
- The sense of separation from God is worse than defeat
- This cry, *restore us again*, immediately brings hope to the matter

# A Plea for Mercy from God Who Has Afflicted His People 60:1-3



- If in some way God had caused the defeat of Israel, it did not discourage David from appealing to Him that His favor be restored
- Some applied the first two verses to the distress of the people of Israel by their neighbors in the times of the judges; to their being beaten by the Philistines, in the times of Eli and Samuel; and to the victory they obtained over them, when Saul and his sons were killed; and to the civil wars between the house of Saul and David
- However, others believe that it belongs to future times, which by the Holy Spirit David prophesied

# A Plea for Mercy from God Who Has Afflicted His People 60:1-3



- This refers to the abandonment of the Jews as a church and nation, when they had rejected the Messiah and killed Him, persecuted His apostles, and despised His Gospel
- The adversity and the failure is compared to an earthquake, which is often used as a symbol of divine judgement (Psalm 18:7,46:3,6; Isaiah 24:18)
- David felt as if the whole earth shook at the defeat of God's people
- Yet the God who could shake the earth could also *heal its breaches*

# A Plea for Mercy from God Who Has Afflicted His People 60:1-3



- The divine judgment is depicted in verse 2 as an earthquake and in verse 3 as an imagery of drunkenness which is also commonly used in the scriptures as describing divine judgment
- *“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘You shall drink of your sister’s cup, The deep and wide one; You shall be laughed to scorn And held in derision; It contains much. You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, The cup of horror and desolation, The cup of your sister Samaria. You shall drink and drain it, You shall break its shards, And tear at your own breasts; For I have spoken,’ Says the Lord GOD.”* (Ezekiel 23:32-34)

# A Plea for Mercy from God Who Has Afflicted His People 60:1-3



- Israel's defeat was hard to understand, and there were many other aspects of their situation that caused David *confusion*
- Still, there was a kind of comfort in understanding that God was the author of it all, because what God does in judgment or discipline, He can restore in love and mercy
- Referring to the church, St. Augustine comments on *You have shown Your people hard things* and says, "Wherein? In persecutions which the Church of Christ has endured, when so much blood of martyrs was spilled."
- He continues, "Of confusion" is what? Not of killing. For it was not a killing that destroys, but a medicine that burns."



# Hope in His Deliverance 60:4-5



- David felt that God had rejected Israel, yet he would not stop flying the *banner* of allegiance and trust in God
- The banner was a type of flag used during war by the army as a signaling device and an assembling point
- They were broken down, but God raised up His banner to signal to the people that there was the place to gather
- David then declares that the banner and the cause to be rallied around is truth and in the defense of justice and right
- God has raised the banner calling for his people to come back to the truth

# Hope in His Deliverance 60:4-5



- The *truth* about God – who He is and what He has done – demanded that this banner be *displayed*
- The idea is that God had committed such a standard to His people that they might go forth as soldiers in His cause
- They were enlisted in His service and were fighting His battles
- The *banner* was not to be displayed for vain parade and it was not to be waved for the mere purpose of securing victory
- But it was that a righteous cause might be defended, and that the honor of God might be promoted



# Hope in His Deliverance 60:4-5

- The Lord has raised a *banner* (Isaiah 5:26,13:2; Jeremiah 4:6) designating a place where the godly may find refuge under the protection of the Divine Warrior
- The godly, those who 'fear' (Psalm 34:7,9) Him, will find protection from the attacks of the enemy
- What was true then of the people of God, is true of the church now
- God has given to His church a banner or a standard that it may fight a war of justice, righteousness, and truth
- That *banner* ought to be employed in resisting and overcoming His enemies



# Hope in His Deliverance 60:4-5

- After recognizing the need for the people to rally under the banner of truth, David calls out to God for deliverance and salvation
- In the midst of this turmoil, David is calling out to God for divine intervention
- David needs God to act so that those whom He love may be rescued
- The prophet Davis seeks from God to hear his prayer, for salvation, not only for him, but for all those who love God
- The Right Hand of God is the Son, by His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the salvation of all mankind was fulfilled

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- Appeal is made in God's promises
- God did not simply speak, but swore by His holiness
- *in His holiness*, By His holiness, *spoken* is the same as promised or sworn, “*Once I have sworn by My holiness*” (Psalm 89:35); “*The Lord God has sworn by His holiness.*” (Amos 4:2)
- God’s *holiness* includes His whole essential nature in its moral aspect, and that nature makes it impossible for Him to break His promise (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2)
- God had promised Israel victory, and David the kingdom
- The holiness of God assured the fulfilment of His promise, so David spoke confidently

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- *I will rejoice*, But who is speaking here God or David?
- Some commentators think it is David and some that it is God
- The meaning is that God Himself would *rejoice* in His Lordship over Israel and is represented as a victorious warrior conquering the land, and dividing it out to His people
- God's response takes us back to the days of Joshua and the downfall of the land of Canaan
- God declares that He will triumph just as He did before
- As the nations battled, it was as if David understood the Lord to step forward and settle the disputes with His authority

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- The meaning might also be that God has given David His word of promise therefore David *will rejoice*
- God having *spoken in his holiness* that David shall be king, so David does not doubt that the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand: *I will divide Shechem And measure out the Valley of Succoth*
- *Shechem*, represents the territory west of the Jordan, a pleasant city in Mount Ephraim
- *the Valley of Succoth*, somewhere to the south of the Jabbok, between Peniel and the Jordan, represents the territory east of the Jordan

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- God has fulfilled His promise to grant them the promised land, the entire land of Canaan, of which the valley of Succoth represents East of Jordan, and Shechem west of it
- These two places may be named, because of their connection with the history of Jacob, who settled first at Succoth and then at Shechem, when he returned to Canaan (Genesis 33:17-18)
- God will fulfil His promise to Jacob, distributing to His people the land in which their great ancestor settled
- *God has spoken in His holiness*, May be also understood “by His Son, His Holy One, by whom He has spoken in these last times unto His people, (Hebrews 1:2) to which this Psalm has reference



# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- *Gilead*, All the land beyond Jordan, which was possessed by Reuben and Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh
- Manasseh, The other half of that tribe within Jordan
- Gilead and Manasseh, that is the land of Bashan in which half the tribe of Manasseh settled, stand for the territory east of the Jordan and the tribes settled there
- Ephraim and Judah stand for the tribes west of the Jordan
- God claims all as His own: all therefore can claim God's protection
- The repetition of *Mine* and *My* reflect that everything is His

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- Ephraim, is compared to the warrior's *helmet*
- Ephraim was the most powerful important of the tribes and held the central position in the western region, forming the main strength of the northern kingdom after the separation under Jeroboam
- *Judah is My lawgiver* (Genesis 49:10); the tribe to which God has committed the government of His people, (1 Samuel 16:1; 2 Samuel 2:4,5:1-3; Psalm 78:68)
- Judah, as the tribe to which belonged the Davidic sovereignty
- But the great Lawgiver is Christ Himself, who came of this tribe, Isaiah 33:22

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- Gilead and Manasseh on the east of Jordan, and Ephraim and Judah on the west, are applied to signify the whole dominion
- In verse 8 there is a description of the nature of the surrounding nations
- In strong contrast to the honor assigned to Ephraim and Judah is the disgrace of Moab and Edom
- Moab, notorious for its pride (Isaiah 16:6), is compared to the vessel which is brought to the victorious warrior to wash his feet when he returns from the battle
- *Edom*, an old, proud and cruel enemy of Israel

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- *Moab* and *Edom* were noted for their pride, now are given places of humble service
- The old enemy of God and His people is degraded to do lowly service: in other words, it becomes a vassal; Moab is in servitude to David and Edom is subjected under foot
- The verse signifies victory and power
- As Moab was his washpot, to wash his hands and feet, Edom was his shoe cleaner, to wipe off and remove the dirt and dust that was upon them, all which denotes great subjection

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- This was fulfilled in David, 2 Samuel 8:14; and may refer to the spread of the Gospel in the Gentile world
- *Philistia shout in triumph*, As if they had reason to rejoice and be glad, because they are subject to David, 2 Samuel 8:1
- This may very well be applied to the Gentiles, subdued by Christ, because they were delivered out of the hands of sin, Satan, and the world, through Him
- The point is that God is powerful and in control, even in the face of enemy threats

# God's Word of Triumph Over the Nations 60:6-8



- St. Augustine contemplates on *Over Edom I will cast My shoe* and says, “The Church speaks, ‘I will come through even unto Edom.’ Let tribulations rage, let the world boil with offences, even unto those very persons that lead an earthly life (for Edom is interpreted earthly), even unto those same, ‘even unto Edom, *I will cast My shoe.*’ Of what thing the shoe except of the Gospel? ‘How beautiful the feet of them that tell of peace, that tell of good things,’ and ‘the feet shod unto the preparation of the Gospel of peace.’”

# Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12



- The remembrance of God's promises has raised the psalmist out of hopelessness, and can now confidently call God to his assistance
- Edom is to be conquered, for so God has premised, but how?
- *strong city*, Probably Sela or Petra, the capital of Edom, famous for its inaccessibility (Obadiah 1:3)
- *Edom*, was a high and rocky country, walled and protected by nature and therefore not to be invaded and subdued without a Divine hand

# Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12



- It is as David is saying, “Who can lead us into the enemy’s stronghold? None but God, and God has deserted us”
- Although God had seemed to reject and forsake them, they had no other resource but Him
- The psalmist trusted that God would not forsake them altogether
- Though God has for the moment deserted them, and has not led their armies to victory, He will surely now give them help, for they trust in Him alone
- Although God may seem to forsake us, that although He may leave us for a time to discouragement and darkness, yet we have no other resource but Him



# Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12



- *O God, who cast us off,* Although God disciplines but because He loves us, *“For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you.”* (Isaiah 54:7)
- David had seen many brave men accomplish great things on the field of battle
- Yet for David and for Israel, the help of man was not enough; indeed, it was *useless*
- God’s help would lead them to victory
- They cannot find the victory in themselves, and they have no hope unless God is willing to act on their behalf

# Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12



- It is only through God and His grace, that we can, at any time, achieve or accomplish anything
- It is Him who give us strength and inspires us
- *Through God we will do valiantly*, That is, they will gain strength; and will go forth with spirit and with courage to the war
- This expresses the confident assurance that under Him they would achieve the victory
- Their fighting through God would be brave and valiant, and in it they would see God *tread down our enemies*

# Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12



- He will Himself tread or trample them down; He will enable them to do it
- The Psalm that began in defeat would end in victory
- The Psalm, though begun in hopelessness and sadness, closes, as the Psalms often do, with confident hope; with the assurance of the favor of God; and with the firm belief that the appeal sought in the Psalm would be obtained
- The history shows that the prayer was answered, and the armies of David were successful

# Renewed Trust in God Who Helps 60:9-12



- The Edom was subdued and that thus the territories of the Hebrew people had, in fact, in the time of David, the boundaries promised to Abraham
- As we face enemies today, especially those spiritual forces that seek to destroy us, let us remember, as David said in the concluding verses, that only God can help us win the battle and grant us ultimate victory



# Discussion

- How does David describe the shape of God's people as they march into war against Edom?
- Why was God displeased with the Israelites?
- To what does David compare Moab and Edom?
- Why is a banner so important in the battle?



# Discussion

- What does it mean, *God has spoken in His holiness*?
- What is our banner and where do we engage the conflict in our day?
- What do we learn about God? And what do we learn about difficulties in life?
- What does this Psalm encourage us to do by example?