



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 92

Metropolitan Youssef



# Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day*
- This title gives no information concerning the time, occasion, or author's name
- It is the only Psalm with this title
- This Psalm which had its special position in the ministry of the Sabbath day in the temple, reveals the true meaning of the Sabbath for the Jews
- It shows that the Sabbath was a day not only for rest but for the community of believers to worship, according to Leviticus 23:3 it is "a holy convocation" and intended to be a delight rather than a burden



# Introduction

- Some think it was written by Moses, but there is no evidence
- Others say by David because of the mention of the musical instruments, the number of enemies, and the mention of the house and courts of the Lord
- They believe that the mention of the Sabbath refers to the time of rest which David had from his enemies
- Many of the Jewish writers think that this Psalm was written by the first man Adam
- But if it was, then it should have been placed at the head of this collection of Psalms, and before that of Moses, Psalm 90





# Introduction

- Besides there were no musical instruments then for this Psalm to be sung on, as in Psalm 92:3
- They say it was made by him quickly after his creation, and his ejection from paradise; but according to Genesis 4:21, Jubal “*was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.*”
- And there were no any number of enemies and wicked men to rise up against him, according to verse 7 of this Psalm
- This Psalm is not merely an expression of individual gratitude for personal mercies; it speaks on behalf of the community of Israel; it is a Psalm of worship



# Introduction

- It teach us how the believer should react, live, and feel like as servants of God
- It is *A Song for the Sabbath day*, therefore, it teaches us how we ought to approach the gathered public worship
- The major theme in the Psalm is that the people of God should be a people of praise
- There are those who do not see God for who He is (the wicked) and their end is destruction, but the people of God (the righteous) will be blessed both now and forever
- This “Sabbath Psalm” is a good reminder of who God is, who we are and how worthy He is of our praise – on the Lord’s Day and everyday



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3
- The Greatness of God's Works 92:4-6
- The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11
- Blessings for the Righteous 92:12-15



# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- This Sabbath Psalm begins with a simple yet profound statement
- It is a *good* thing *to give thanks to the Lord*, the covenant God of Israel and the Creator of heaven and earth
- *It is good* because it is just, and due from us to God our King
- It is delightful, for it is pleasant for one that loves, to praise the object of his affection
- Vulgate Latin version put the term *confess* instead of *give thanks*
- St. Jerome says, “When we (confess) to the Lord, we trust in His mercy; And when we sing praises, we consummate the good work.”

# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- The Coptic church begins every service with the prayer of thanksgiving even at funerals
- It is greatly important to start our prayers with praises and thanksgiving because it pleases our God and invites Him to come among us and accept the aroma of our prayer
- It gives us the chance to remember all the great and wonderful things that God has done and does for us all day and each moment
- It is exalting, giving man a share in the office of the heavenly spirits



# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- Giving thanks to God has no specific occasions but it must be always and under all circumstances
- St. Augustine says, “Let him always be grateful, never ungrateful: let him be grateful to his Father, who soothes and caresses him: and grateful to his Father when He chastens him with the scourge, and teaches him: for He ever loves, whether He caress or threaten: and let him say what you have heard in the Psalm: *‘It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High.’*”
- The effect of praising God is good and it is a desirable state of mind

# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- An unthankful mind is an unhappy mind; a murmuring, complaining, dissatisfied mind makes the person pitiful, and all around him miserable
- *O Most High* - God is exalted over all
- The fact that He is exalted over all is an appropriate thought when we come before Him to praise Him
- Morning and evening are natural times for prayer (Psalm 5:3,63:6,55:17)
- *Lovingkindness and faithfulness* are the attributes which move God to make and keep His covenant with His people (Psalm 89:1)

# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- There is no better preparation for a day than a thankful, cheerful mind in the morning
- The suitableness of worship every morning and evening has been almost universally considered
- The Mosaic Law provided for it by the establishment of the morning and evening sacrifice (Exodus 29:38-39), with the accompanying ritual
- The Coptic Church established the Agpeya (the Book of Prayers, seven hours of prayers) book which is still *in the morning... every night*
- Proclaiming God's *lovingkindness* and *faithfulness* is another way to give thanks to the Lord



# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- This declaration is not only to be made on the good days or nights, but *every night*
- St. Augustine observes on this passage, “the father loves his children no less when he threatens than when he caresses them; nor should we be less grateful to God when He chastises us in the time of trouble, than when he heaps favors on us in our prosperity.”
- Worship and honor to God may be expressed *On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute*
- But it is to be sang *With harmonious sound*

# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- The first three verses of this Psalm show that worshipping and honoring God have many different aspects and expressions
- We should worship God in an honoring way
- The church fathers focused more on the spiritual meaning of this verse
- St Clement of Alexandria tells us that *an instrument of ten strings* means the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, seemingly because the initial letter of that holy Name stands for the number *ten* both in Hebrew and Greek
- As if the hands *instrument of ten strings* and the tongue *the harp* work together in the delightful work of praise

# The Duty and Advantage of Praising God 92:1-3



- St. Jerome says, “We pray to the Lord on an instrument of ten strings;... our body, soul, and spirit; will all play together in harmony, to produce a nice tune.”
- St. Augustine says, “You have not heard of the psaltery of ten strings for the first time: it signifies the ten commandments of the Law. But we must sing upon that psaltery, and not carry it only. For even the Jews have the Law: but they carry it: they sing not....’And upon the harp’ This means, in word and deed; ‘with a song,’ in word; ‘upon the harp,’ in work.”
- All these instruments of music were typical of the spiritual joy the believers have in their hearts when they praise the Lord





# The Greatness of God's Works

## 92:4-6

- Contemplation of the divine work of God caused the psalmist to be *glad*
- It was natural for him to sing because he was *glad*
- Those who have themselves experienced the pleasantness of the duty of praising God can best recommend it to others
- *Your work* It may be the work of creation, the finishing of which the Sabbath was designed particularly to commemorate
- The focus is entirely on God, and not on self
- The *triumph* is found not in what we do for God, but on what God has done with His own *hands*



# The Greatness of God's Works

## 92:4-6

- The psalmist had been studying the beauty of God's works; of the heavens, the earth, and all the creation and he had been delighted with them
- But it was not God's works that delighted him, but it was in God Himself he delighted; for His works led him to reflect on His own infinite beauty
- The psalmist was pleased, overjoyed; and will, therefore, daily exult and praise Him *in the works of Your hands*
- *Your thoughts are very deep*, The plans or the purposes of God, as evinced in the works of creation and providence, are too profound for man to understand them



# The Greatness of God's Works

## 92:4-6

- Who but God Himself can comprehend them?
- Having said that he was delighted so much with the works of God, for fear he should be supposed to have comprehended them thoroughly, or to have a knowledge of the excellence of all God's works, he now adds, that the works of the Lord are too great, and His wisdom in producing them too profound for any one in this life to comprehend
- He cannot comprehend the magnitude of them, for truly did Sirach say, *"Who has numbered the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of the world? Who has measured the height of heaven, and the breadth of the earth, and the depth of the abyss?"* (Sirach 1:2)





# The Greatness of God's Works

## 92:4-6

- Yet however great they may be, greater beyond comparison is the wisdom that created them
- Of which the same inspired writer immediately adds, “Who has examined the wisdom of God, which precedes all things” (Sirach 1:3)
- He concludes this part of the Psalm, that delights on creation, by asserting, that it is only the wise, and not the senseless or the fool, that can know how great and mysterious are the works of the Lord
- For fools never look for anything in things created but the pleasure or the advantage they derive from them



# The Greatness of God's Works

## 92:4-6

- But the wise, though they do not comprehend the greatness of God's works, still, they feel they are unable to comprehending them, and are sensible of their ignorance therein; and the more they are sensible of it, the more they admire God's works, and come near true wisdom
- Commentators give several explanations of the distinction between the two classes of persons here named
- Some say that the first denotes unbelievers, who know nothing of the wisdom of God, and the second evil Christians, who, knowing the external facts of His truth, are unable to comprehend them because of their unwillingness



# The Greatness of God's Works

## 92:4-6

- Others see the man who is unconcerned of heavenly things and him who is eager about earthly matters
- Or, the Jew who rejects, and the Gentile who has never learnt the Gospel
- It is explained to denote the man gifted with worldly wisdom, but who is poor of spiritual knowledge and the man who has neither wisdom of this world nor of the next
- If our joy is in the things of this world and do not find our joy in God, then we are senseless enemies of God who do not understand





# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- Verse 7 introduces the statement of the truth the *senseless man* does not understand which is the prosperity of the wicked is only momentary and they will be *destroyed forever*
- The psalmist saw many times when *the wicked* seemed to prosper
- They grew quickly *like grass* and seemed to *flourish*
- Yet he also knew that their prosperity was only to lead up to their destruction, *it is that they may be destroyed forever*
- The meaning here is, not that the purpose of their being thus made to flourish is that they should be destroyed, but that such will be the result



# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- They will not be happy in another world by their prosperous and prospered wickedness here
- There is no Sabbath rest of mind or of future happiness awaiting the wicked
- In contrast to the wicked who have only temporary prosperity, God is set *on high forevermore*
- God's position is quite different from that of the wicked, for their elevation is only temporary, but He is *Most High* forever
- He is untouched by any change, is not as the *grass* of the field, lying low, but *Most Highest*
- He is not one that can perish but is *for evermore*



# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- And thus, though His enemies counted Him a mere man, who could be slain, and His memory blotted out, yet His very death itself was the overthrow of both His spiritual and human enemies
- The word *behold*, implies the suddenness of the change, as if he said, *They that so thrived and flourished will perish all at once*
- How fearful it is to become an enemy to God and a friend to the world?
- For thus writes St. James, *“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”* (James 4:4)





# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- *For behold, Your enemies, O Lord, for behold, Your enemies*, the repetition is for emphasis
- It also adds the greatest force to the passage and bring to the reader attention and make them observe the result of being an enemy of God
- *All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered*, This is but a repetition and explanation of the first part of the verse
- Those he called *enemies*, he calls *workers of iniquity* here; and those he said *shall perish*, he says here *shall be scattered*



# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- The psalmist now contrasts the fate of the just with that of the wicked, and shows that they will one day be exalted by the divine providence and justice
- The *horn* was a symbol of strength and might
- The wicked are destroyed, but the righteous have their strength *exalted*
- This may be applied to Christ, the horn of salvation raised up in the house of David, Psalm 132:17
- And so may refer to exaltation at the right hand of God, and the strength and glory of His kingdom



# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- *oil* often signifies the Spirit of God, His gifts and graces
- *fresh oil* may intend new supplies of His grace which is in Christ
- Some say that it refer to the direct anointing of the Holy Spirit and the renewed joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit
- The psalmist had the additional blessing of *seeing* his triumph over his enemies
- Victory is assured for the people of God (Romans 8:37), but sometimes it is only understood by faith and not seen with the natural eye
- *my desire* Does not arise from a revengeful spirit, but from a regard to the glory of God, and the honor of His name





# The Fall of the Wicked 92:7-11

- He would see that which would be for God's glory, and that which would be absolutely right and just
- This perhaps has reference to Christ, to His victory
- Those that rise up against Christ will fall before Him and be made His footstool
- Some fathers say that it may point to the victory of the Church, by no physical act of her own, over the Jews and the Pagans who oppressed her in the earliest days of Christianity
- Or to the inner eye of the soul beholding the victory of faith over temptation
- And it may point to the final overthrow of sinners in the Judgment

# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The wicked have their season of flourishing, verse 7, but the righteous *shall flourish* like the ever-green *palm tree*
- The psalmist is now comparing the righteous to the palm and cedar trees, in contrast to the wicked he had compared to grass
- This image and the comparison of a righteous man to a flourishing, majestic, green, and beautiful tree is not uncommon in the Scriptures, Psalm 1:3; Jeremiah 17:8
- Grass springs up in the morning, withers during the day, or is cut down, is a temporary thing of no longevity
- Whereas the palm tree lives a long time, and gives forth its fruit and its leaves for a long time

# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The palm grows to a great height, and perfectly straight, symbolizing desire to heavenly things and uprightness of life
- It grows as long as it lives, is an evergreen, and always fruitful, symbolizing spiritual improvement and continuous life of holiness
- Its leaves spread out above as high as possible from the ground, and its fruit is amongst those leaves, symbolizing greatness of intention and action
- Every part of it is good for some purpose, showing that in a holy life no ability, talent, or opportunity will go to waste



# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The palm tree never bends before the storm, it is the symbol of victory
- Thus, the wicked thrive and prosper for a while, and are then thrown into the fire; but *the righteous*, like the palm tree, *shall flourish* and hold leafy green, and bear the sweetest fruits forever
- The *cedar*, in its vast spreading immensity and majesty, in its deep roots, its sweet aroma, its incorruptible wood, and its great longevity, serves as a type of other attributes of the righteous
- *He shall grow*, to an enormous height, sending out its branches of good works and roots of perseverance, which will enable them to resist any storm, however great, of temptation

# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The psalmist gives a reason for having compared the *righteous* to *the palm* and *the cedar*, because they will not be planted in the woods or the wild mountains, but will be planted in God's own house
- God's house, the place of His presence, is the place where believers are both *planted* and where they continually live and *flourish*
- *The righteous*, likened to these trees, can flourish only when planted within His Church, not merely inside its visible limits, but rooted in its doctrine

# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- They will be planted in His Church by true faith, watered by His sacraments and His word, rooted in charity
- They will not fail to give out in abundance the flowers of virtue and the fruit of good works
- For, outside the Church, and without the foundation of faith, every plantation will be rooted up, as we read in Matthew 15:13, *“Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.”*
- *They shall still bear fruit in old age*, As 2 Corinthians 4:16 indicates, it is possible to be outwardly wasting away, yet inwardly renewed day by day



# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The body will get weaker as the person get older, however, the soul is renewed, *“Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”* (Psalm 103:5)
- Here reference is made to that distinguishing attribute of the palm-tree that it never ceases to bear fruit, however old it may be
- Its produce is more abundant in its latter years; while the cedar, though not a fruit-bearing tree, continues to spread in size and greenery to an old age
- Thus, signifying the constant vitality and fruitfulness of the Church and of the holy soul to the end of their earthly time

# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The psalmist uses a lot of imagery to convey the point that God will give strength, stability and longevity to those who are His
- The Psalm ends just as it began: with praise of God
- This is why the people of God live in a blessed way that gives honor and attention to God by *bear fruit*
- It isn't to draw attention to themselves as wonderful people, but to make known and declare *that the Lord is upright*
- This mercy to the aged righteous proves the faithfulness of their God, and leads them to show that the Lord is upright, by their testimony to His continuous goodness

# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- The happy and flourishing old age of the righteous is a strong indication of God's faithfulness and truth, showing that He keeps His promises, and never forsakes those that put their trust in Him
- *the Lord is upright*, Well, how does the fruit-bearing of an aged Christian show that? Why it shows that God has kept His promise?
- He has promised that He will never leave them nor forsake them
- He has promised that when they are weak they shall be strong
- He has promised that if they seek Him they shall not lack any good thing



# Blessings for the Righteous

## 92:12-15



- For, though He allows the wicked to prosper for a while, He will, in His own time, exercise the judgments of His justice, by rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked
- *He is my rock*, The psalmist have found Him a *rock*, strong and steadfast, and His word as firm as a rock
- He is right and good and strong
- *there is no unrighteousness in Him*, This is said in the most absolute form - implying the most entire confidence
- God is altogether to be trusted
- He is the *rock* who keeps us and loves us throughout all of life's changes

# Discussion



- How does the psalmist emphasize the value of giving thanks to God in verses 2-3?
- What type of great works do you think the psalmist had in mind in verses 4-5?
- What words does the psalmist use to describe those who do not understand God's works in verses 6-9? How does the psalmist contrast these people with the righteous in verses 12-14?



# Discussion

- For what purpose does the psalmist say the righteous flourish in verse 15. Compare to Matthew 5:3-12.
- What does it mean to truly flourish in life? How is this different from a worldly understanding of flourishing?
- How are the attributes of God described in verse 15 encourage thanksgiving?