



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 107

Metropolitan Youssef



Introduction

- This Psalm has no title, either in the Hebrew, or in any of the other Versions; therefore, the author is unknown
- However, it has much in common with Psalms 105 and 106, so many commentators think it has been written by David
- The three Psalms seem to be on the same subject
- While Psalm 105 celebrates God's goodness in the choosing Israel and their deliverance from Egypt
- And Psalm 106 is a confession of Israel's persistent rebellion against God's purpose
- Psalm 107 is a call to thanksgiving for its restoration



Introduction

- In these three Psalms, the author has covered the marvelous acts of the Lord towards His people; their transgressions against God; the captivities and miseries they endured in consequence; and finally, God's merciful kindness to them in their restoration from captivity, and re-establishment in their own land
- Though the literal meaning which is what happened to the children of Israel, should be preserved, yet it seems to be applicable to spirituality
- Psalm 107 is a Psalm of thanksgiving, praising God for delivering God's people from a variety of troubles



Introduction

- We can find two widely different accounts have been given of this Psalm
- One, that it describes historically the dangers and sufferings of the return from captivity, and the Divine power and guidance which brought the redeemed safely
- The other, is that it presents a general pictures of the instability of human life and the intervention of Divine Providence
- These pictures which the Psalm contains are scenes from real life, chosen to illustrate God's goodness in answering men's prayers in circumstances of trial and suffering, and to enforce the duty of thanksgiving



Introduction

- The Psalm asserts God's providence over all in whatsoever condition and circumstance; and it encourages men in their distresses to cry unto the Lord
- This Psalm was intended for liturgic use
- Psalm 107 introduces the fifth book of the Psalms, 107-151
- This fifth Book of Psalms corresponds to the book of Deuteronomy and has the same message as that book
- Deuteronomy is considered as the book of the law or the book of the Word of God



Introduction

- This fifth book, which starts with Psalm 107, presents to us the key of the fifth book of Psalms; namely, *“He sent His words and healed them”* (20)
- There is also more to the Psalm, for it also concerns Jesus
- The Psalm prophecies the coming Messiah
- All of the pictures in the Psalm point to Jesus in some way
- The Psalm presents to us a living description of the incarnate Word of God, the Forgiver of sins, who gathers His church from the ends of the earth; the divine Physician, the Healer of both the soul and the body



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Redeemed Offer Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3
- Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9
- Deliverance for the Captives 107:10-16
- Deliverance for the Sick 107:17-22
- Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32
- God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38
- God's Work in Transforming The Afflicted 107:39-42
- Conclusion: Wisdom and Understanding 107:43



The Redeemed Offer

Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3

- This is the preface of the Psalm, in which David exhorts all who have experienced the mercies of the Lord to declare His praise, and to give glory to the Lord because He is truly good and merciful, and His mercy never fails
- The Holy Spirit begins the Fifth Book of the Psalms with praise, and ends it with praise, because they who spiritually observe the Law shall, with the Angels, praise God for evermore
- *endures forever*, He is unchanging in His mercy
- It is an attribute of His very nature; He is constantly manifesting His mercy



The Redeemed Offer

Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3

- The words *give thanks* here, came to mean *Confess*
- For, according to many fathers, like St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and others, we are committed to confess to the Lord: first, for the sake of His good works with us, especially His grace working in us; by practicing goodness as a gift from Him
- And secondly, by confessing our sins to be forgiven
- The two aspects are integral; interpreted by St. Augustine as: “Confess to the Lord, for He is sweet, For His mercy endures forever”
- And says that he who does not taste the sweetness of God, would not be able to confess



The Redeemed Offer

Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3

- Father Onesimus of Jerusalem says, “There are two kinds of confession: Admitting our transgressions and giving thanks for His goodness; We are committed to present both to the Lord, for His is good, and His mercy endures forever.”
- Specifically, the psalmist invited the people of God – those *redeemed* by His enduring mercy – to declare that they *are* redeemed
- Their redemption is a proof of His goodness, and His mercy
- And while the primary reference is to the release of the children of Israel from captivity, and to their assembling to the Holy City from their various places of exile



The Redeemed Offer

Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3

- Yet a greater redemption, the overthrow of a more dreadful enemy, is spiritually foretold
- It is the redemption with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ from the dominion of Satan
- So, David invites the faithful, redeemed by the blood of God's Only Begotten Son from the bondage of a most powerful enemy, the prince of darkness, whom He afterwards collected and gathered together to be one people, one Church, one kingdom, not from Egypt or Babylon, as formerly were the Jews, but from the rising and the setting of the sun, *From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.*



The Redeemed Offer

Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3

- From the four quarters of the world, as we read in John 10:16, *“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”*
- Though all the faithful, whether Jew or gentile, are specially invited, still the invitation applies in general to all men who may have been at any time, or in any place, delivered by the Lord from any manner of trouble
- For redemption is frequently used in the Holy Scripture for any manner of delivery or salvation, without any price having been paid for it



The Redeemed Offer

Thanksgiving to God 107:1-3

- It also applies to those who may have been delivered from the *hand*—that is, from the power of any enemy
- Finally, to those who may have been delivered from any exile and brought back to their country and reunited to their people
- The whole world is included in the verse, *From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south*
- Tertullian argued that the Christian faith is the only one which can make its way and win disciples everywhere

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- 4-9 First example of God's lovingkindness to men and it refer to Israel's wilderness wanderings
- For forty years, they lived in the desert
- Some commentators restricts the historical sense of this verse to the forty years' wanderings of Israel in the desert of Sinai
- And some Fathers extend it to the sufferings of the later Jews in exile after Nebuchadnezzar's victories, and to the strives of their returning to their home journey
- But the deeper meaning tells us of those who wander in the wilderness of this world

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- According to St. Augustine those who *wandered in the wilderness* are waterless by the rivers of grace, by the rain and dew of the Holy Spirit; by the tears of repentant, who have strayed far from the Way which is Christ, and have lost the track which leads to the Heavenly Jerusalem
- According to St. Jerome, the Gentiles, as well, have lost their way in the wilderness, and found no city to dwell in
- *They found no city to dwell in;* nor even to lodge in, for miles together

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- Spiritual travelers find no settlement, rest, peace, joy, and comfort, but in Christ; nor any indeed in this world; here they *have no continuing city*, Hebrews 13:14
- *Hungry and thirsty*, Either actual hunger and thirst for not having a place for them to rest or to stop at, nor any sort of food to eat, nor springs of water to drink of
- Or spiritual hunger and thirst may be intended, as we read in Scripture, *“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the Lord.”* (Amos 8:11)

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- And like the prodigal who come to himself, and is thoroughly convinced of his state and find himself starving
- Those who *wondered* spiritually find themselves starving and no provision, they hunger after Christ, the bread of life, and thirst after His grace, the water of life the Holy Spirit
- *Their soul fainted in them*, not because God was hard but that in His love He allowed them to fail, that they might call to Him in their need, and hearing His reply, *“Eat, O friends! Drink, yes, drink deeply, O beloved ones!”* (Song of Solomon 5:1)
- So, they might learn to love their Helper

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- In the trouble of the wilderness, the redeemed *cried out to the Lord in their trouble*, and God answered *He delivered them out of their distresses*
- When all human help failed them, they appealed to God, *And He delivered them out of their distresses*
- When there was no food, God gave them manna (Exodus 16:4)
- When the water was bitter, God enabled Moses to make it sweet (Exodus 15:25)
- With that mercy, the attribute of His nature, He delivered them

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- They did nothing but cry, exactly as they had done in Egypt
- *they cried out to the LORD in their trouble*, Is repeated in this Psalm four times, verse 13, 19, and 24
- As if this were the main subject of the Psalm, that when the people of God in different circumstances, or under various forms of trouble, call upon God, He hears them and delivers them
- *in their trouble*, Spiritually speaking it concern those sinners when they realize their sin by the help of the Holy Spirit
- When they see themselves lost and on the wrong path, and find themselves starving and then pray unto the Lord

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- Then God *delivered them out of their distresses*
- No matter what the trouble is, God responds to our cries for help with His grace, even when that trouble is caused by our own foolish rebellion
- As St. Paul says, in Ephesians 2:4-5, “*God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.*”

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- God made a way for them, and that was a straight way to a city where they might permanently dwell
- God *led* His redeemed to just the right place, *to a city for a dwelling place*
- He did not merely *show* them the way, as one might point out a distant city from afar, but He *led them forth*, and was Himself the guide of their journey, as well as their Teacher
- Thus, the Lord leads awakened souls to the right way of salvation; to Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life
- And directs and enables them to believe in Him, to walk by faith, and to continue to walk in Him

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- God's way is a plain and straight way, in which they shall not stumble
- The Evangelists and Apostles tell us, in the clearest language, that there is no crooked or uneven way to heaven
- If the way is not straight, it does not lead to that *dwelling place*
- And the *dwelling place*, is either Christ, or the church
- *that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness*
- Is repeated in this Psalm four times, in verse 8 and again in verse 15, 21, and 31
- It is an earnest call on those who have experienced God's mercies to be thankful

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- God's goodness to those returning through the wilderness should give everyone reason to thank Him, *for His wonderful works to the children of men*
- We should be able to thank God for more than just His work in our personal lives, but also for what He does for others
- The wonderful things He did for the deliverance of mankind should also be properly praised and acknowledged
- The *wonders* are His Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, the work of the Holy Spirit, and all the miracles He has done Himself or by the hands of His servants

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- These ought to be the theme of thanksgiving in private and of proclamation in public, for they are not meant for a single nation, but for all *the children of men*
- God has prepared provision for their needs
- He gives them food and drink, so that their needs are met
- The Psalm spoke of those *hungry and thirsty* in the wilderness, but there is also a *longing* in the *soul* of man
- God's literal guidance and deliverance for His redeemed in the wilderness becomes a picture of how He delivers the lost, thirsty, and *hungry soul*, and fills it *with goodness*

Deliverance for Those Lost in the Wilderness 107:4-9



- As Jesus Christ has said, *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”* (Matthew 5:6)
- It seems that St. Mary, quoted verse 9 of this Psalm, *and fills the hungry soul with goodness* in her song: *He has filled the hungry with good things* (Luke 1:53)
- This is one of many scriptural quotations and allusions found in St. Mary’s song recorded in Luke 1:46-55, showing that she was a woman who knew and loved God’s word
- *the longing* of an immortal *soul*, capable of appreciating supreme happiness, can never be content with the things of this world

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- These verses 10-16 show the second affliction, physical as well as spiritual
- It is the second example of Divine goodness, in the liberation of prisoners, or captives suffering in the prison of exile in punishment for their rebellion against God
- These are afflicted differently - struck down by some grievous trouble, imprisonment, bond to sin - who suffer perhaps even more than the dissatisfied wanderers
- *and in the shadow of death*, As if they were in the state of the dead; their condition is the shadow of it and bears some resemblance to it

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- When God gathered His people (verses 2-3), they had to come to the Promised Land from every direction; so some came from prisons and chains
- David seems to refer to the captivity of the Jews, under various persecutors, in the time of the judges, or perhaps under Pharaoh; for David seems not to follow any chronological order
- And some of church fathers think that these words are in type the condition of the Gentiles before the coming of the Lord, for they *sat in darkness*, lacking the light of faith, and blinded by unbelief

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- And in using the word *sit*, the Psalmist points out that they had been for a long time in this condition
- According to St. Augustine, *iron* denotes the hardness of the sufferings, and also the difficulty of breaking the chains of old habits of unbelief and sin
- “I was bound,” remarks St. Augustine in his Confessions, “with no external iron, but by my own iron will.”
- The psalmist understood that some were imprisoned because they had *rebelled against* God
- These were justly afflicted and punished in that manner, because they disregarded God’s commandments and despised His advice

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- They resisted the commands of God and blasphemously doubted or despised the wisdom and the goodness of His purposes for them
- This should not be understood to mean that the psalmist believed *every one* of God's imprisoned people were there because *they despised the counsel of the Most High*, but at least in a general sense it was true
- The Apostle Paul later referred to himself as *the prisoner of the Lord* (Ephesians 4:1)
- These people were also prisoners of the Lord, but in a very different sense

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- Their imprisonment was difficult, with forced labor and hardship
- Their pride was brought down by captivity and chains, so as to be unable to flee from danger or evil, and that not because of any irresistible might in their enemies, but solely because of their own refusal to accept the Lord and to give heed to His warnings
- Thus, *He brought down their heart with labor*, so that even the prison was not a place of rest, but of toil, in that the captives suffered as their fathers had done in Egypt
- The bondage to Satan does not involve mere incapacity to do good, but the necessity of doing evil, and that at the cost of far more labor than God asks from His servants

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- And it is well added, *there was none to help them*,
- While we have Christ and His holy Angels to help us in all things righteous, the devil and his agents, after luring men into sin, leave all the labor of it to them, as well as the remorse and punishment to come
- Wherefore it is truly said “*The wages of sin is death.*”
- But when it is added, *there was none to help them*, that held good only so long as they continued to sit and keep silence
- The moment they knelt in prayer, a Helper came

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- In their chains and hardship, God's imprisoned people begged Him for help, and He answered
- To show the extent of their obligations to Him, David adds *He saved them out of their distresses*
- This was pure grace and mercy from God; these prisoners were under God's own discipline
- Yet when they *cried out* to Him, He mercifully answered
- The beginning of man's freedom must have its source in his own humility
- One must feel that he is a captive, that he has no strength in him, that his heart has been humbled in his labors

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- And must realize that there is not satisfaction away from God and no one is able to help him but the one heavenly Father
- They probably had neglected Him
- But now as prisoners they have time to pray, who, when they were free, could not find time
- Now they see that they have need of God's help, though in the past they thought they could do well enough without Him
- For this reason, Jesus Christ was born, and came into the world, *“To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.”* (Isaiah 42:7)

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- *“To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”* (Luke 1:79)
- *And broke their chains in pieces*, not merely loosed, but *broke*, with speedy deliverance and irresistible might
- When God will, the deliverance from the greatest difficulties that lie in the way will be nothing
- Then in verse 15, he repeats the same exhortation to *give thanks*
- Seeing the gracious power of God in action should move men to *give thanks*

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- The idea here is that the things just referred to should call forth expressions of gratitude to God
- David is exhorting those who were prisoners to confess to the Lord His goodness; acknowledge that He delivered them from such a state of darkness and death, and of captivity
- The immediate reason here given for praising the Lord is *For He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two*
- The obstacles in His way were no small ones
- No slight doors held the captives prisoned, but *gates of bronze* and *bars of iron*

Deliverance for the Captives

107:10-16



- And spiritually the Lord Jesus has broken the most powerful of spiritual bonds and made men free indeed
- *He has broken the gates of bronze, And cut the bars of iron in two,* Tells of the victory over Death and Hell done by the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, “He led Hades captive and crushed the brass doors.” (All You Heavenly Orders Hymn)
- “And brought back Adam to Paradise, with joy, gladness, and happiness; he and his sons who were in captivity to the joy once more.” (All You Heavenly Orders Hymn)

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- 17-22, A third example of Divine goodness, in the restoration of those who have been punished with sickness for their sins
- When God gathered His people (verses 2-3), they had to come to the Promised Land from every direction
- Some came from sickness and affliction, and God rescued and redeemed them – even though their trouble could be traced to their foolishness, *transgression*, and iniquity
- As when God afflicted the Israelites with a great plague, through the fiery serpents and many of the people of Israel died
- But when they cry out to God, they were delivered

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- Wicked people, considered as fools, because they are transgressors
- And the word signifies immoral persons who have no understanding of divine and spiritual things
- It is not mere weakness or ignorance, which leads to downfall
- It is the opposite of wisdom, which leads to life, *“fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* (Proverbs 1:7)
- Fool and sin are regarded as two aspects of the same moral condition in the Scriptures, and sickness is spoken of as an ordinary punishment for them (Job 33:17-22; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chronicles 21:15,26:16-19; Acts 12:23)

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- The psalmist described those who were very sick and near death
- The disease must have been very severe when they refused the food necessary to support life, so that death must have, in consequence, been actually at their doors
- Food and pleasure are no longer relevant because their affliction is a sickness to death
- By spiritual resemblance, when a sick soul has no appetite for the milk or meat of God's word, it shows that spiritual death is near
- A time of affliction is a time of trouble, and a proper season for prayer

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- *Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble:* This verse is again repeated, as before in 6, 13
- Even when God's people are in trouble because of their own wrongdoing, God answers when they cry out unto Him
- Their prayers brought them to the throne of grace, when they humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God, to seek relief
- Hezekiah in his affliction prayed to the Lord, (2 Kings 20:3), but *"Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians."* (2 Chronicles 16:12)

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- They were healed by the power of God's word, reminding us of the many times Jesus healed people simply by speaking a word
- *He sent His word and healed them*, David explains how they were *healed*, it is by the will or by the command of God alone
- David speaks figuratively when he says, *He sent His word* as if His word were a messenger or an ambassador on the occasion
- *His word* may mean a human messenger, like the "*word*" sent to Hezekiah in his sickness, (2 Kings 20:4; Isaiah 38:4)
- Or, a thought suggested to the mind either directly by God, or by an angel, like that spoken of in Job 33:23,24

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- Unless, perhaps, he refers to the mission of the Word incarnate, the actual Word of God (John 1:1)
- The Son, sent by the Father, through whom many were healed of their physical diseases, and without whom nobody could be healed of their spiritual diseases, the true physician of souls
- These sick and afflicted ones were *delivered* from *their destructions* by the powerful word of God
- God by His sole word and command, can heal and cure all manner of diseases, *And delivered them from their destructions*
- Once again in verse 21, David encourages all men to give thanks to God for His deliverance

Deliverance for the Sick

107:17-22



- Seeing the gracious power of God in restoring bodily health, which is of divine goodness; and in healing the diseases of the soul which is the forgiveness of sin, according to the multitude of His mercies, men should be moved to *give thanks*
- Those who have been sick, and who have been restored to health, should offer *the sacrifices of thanksgiving*
- They ought to praise the Lord
- The word "sacrifice" here is used in a large sense to signify worship and praise

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- 23–32, A fourth example of God’s goodness, in the deliverance of those who were caught in a storm
- David move from those that wander in the desert; from those who are in prison; from those who are sick; to those who encounter the danger of the sea, and he finds there opportunity to praise God
- Those who cross the deep know from experience many wonderful works of God
- They see manifestations of His power which are not seen on the land by many who do not know anything about it

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- For instance, the rage of the storm, the roaring of the waves, the immense extent and depth of the sea, the constant and imminent danger that surrounds them
- They see the great storms that raise *the waves of the sea* as high as *the heavens*, and plunge down again *to the depths*
- It is not surprising that the *soul* of the unfortunate traveler on the stormy sea *melts because of trouble*
- So it was with Jonah's mariners, and with the disciples in the storm
- Unlike the previous groups, no fault is attributed to this group

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- Their difficulty is not said to be the result of any sin
- What is surprising about the description is that the trouble is specifically said to be brought about by God, despite the lack of any cause for punishment
- God spoke, and the storm, in obedience to its Creator, at once arose, sprung up, and, in consequence, *the waves were lifted up*; so that they seemed almost to touch the skies; and, ultimately, to expose the lowest depths of the sea
- In fact, in the beginning of the scene it sounds as those *Who do business* are privileged to see the mighty works of God

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- The ship, with the mariners on board, seems to *stagger* and spin in the storm
- The violent motion of the ship prevents them of keeping their legs, and therefore they look like *drunken* men
- Their skill in navigation entirely fails them because they were overwhelmed by fear
- A most natural description of the state of those in danger from shipwreck
- They lose all presence of mind and, consequently, cannot act upon any; and all their wisdom in steering and righting a ship

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- Once again, the psalmist described how God's people *cry out to the Lord, and He brings them out of their distress*
- Feeling that they have lost every knowledge and skills, and their control of their ship, the sailors' souls melt with fear
- And they would have no other refuge but the Lord Himself, who alone is capable of saving them
- A storm at sea brings hundreds on their knees who never prayed before - for they feel that their only help is in God
- Prayer is good in a storm
- People may pray *staggering* and *reeling*, and pray when they are *at their wits' end*

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- God will hear them in the midst of the thunder and answer them out of the storm
- God does what only God can do – calm the stormy sea by His command
- This reminds us again of what Jesus Christ did to calm the stormy Sea of Galilee by His own word and will
- *its waves are still*, No more roaring and tossing, and the sea becomes smooth and quiet, its raging ceases: the angry sea becomes calm and peaceable

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- The mariners are glad that the waves are quiet, and they are free from danger
- So God can calm down the storm of the soul
- God grants the repentant spiritual peace
- *Then are they glad*, because the fierce waves *are still*, and so He makes them enter into *their desired haven*
- *Haven*, The destination of the sailors, where they intend to go
- What that haven is, they describe variously by the fathers
- One takes it to be the calm of prayer; another the Cross; a third the Church

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- The most frequent explanation is that it signifies calmness of soul
- Another takes it of everlasting salvation, of the Heavenly Home
- Another view is that Jesus Christ is Himself the harbor of safety for all tempest-tossed souls

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- For the fourth and final time, the psalmist encourages all men to give thanks to God for His deliverance
- This time God's people are encouraged to *exalt Him also in the assembly of the people*, praising Him among the people of God
- All men should *give thanks to the Lord for His goodness*, since they all receive favors from the Lord
- David considers it to be not enough for men who have received deliverances to thank God in their hearts, or secretly in their chambers
- But let them publicly declare His praises

Deliverance for Those in Dangerous Seas 107:23-32



- Some commentators consider *the assembly of the people* refer to the full assembly of the children of Israel, and *the elders* as the chair of the wise men, that is, the Sanhedrim, or sacred council
- The Christian explanation takes the terms as signifying the lay people and clergy
- Another interpretation is that *the assembly of the people* refers to the Gentile Church, and *the company of the elders* to the Jewish Synagogue, its elder in the knowledge of God

God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38



- At this point the tone and character of the Psalm changes, from the contrast between the sufferings of men and God's mercy in deliverance, to the praise God's providential authority over the world
- God has full control over nature and can take back His blessings
- He has absolute dominion over it
- He could effectually dry up the stream, and make it so dry that nothing would grow
- Perhaps there is a reference to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38



- According to St. Augustine the rivers refer to the rejection of the Jewish people and the end of prophecy
- The transformation can be from good to bad *a fruitful land into barrenness* if the goal is the judgment of the *wicked*
- This was the cause of the overthrow of Sodom, and of the destruction of that fine country as we read in Genesis 13:11, “*And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord.*”

God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38



- Yet this beautiful and fertile country, a paradise in itself, was dried up by brimstone and fire from heaven, and the *A fruitful land* was transformed *into barrenness*
- It was indeed *for the wickedness of those that dwell in it* that God sent upon them that terrible disaster
- Verse 35 give us the other side of the picture
- God's power to transform can also be used to transform from bad to good; *Dry land* can be turned into *watersprings*, into places of fruitfulness
- St. Augustine very properly applies this passage to the synagogue, as contrasted with the Church

God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38



- The synagogue, that once abounded in the waters of the word of God, and like a fertile soil, produced its prophets and priests, had its altars, sacrifices, miracles, and visions, now desert and barren, is turned into dry ground, with not one of those things
- While the Church of the gentiles, from having been dry and barren, is turned into pools of water, is become most fertile and has come to be the people of the Lord, the Church of the living God, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, where alone is to be found the true sacrifice, true priests, true miracles, true holiness, true wisdom, and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit

God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38



- *the hungry*, Those who were in need; those who would have perished
- Those that were *hungry* are made *to dwell* in fruitful lands; there they take root, *establish a city for a dwelling place*
- It is not necessary to refer this to any particular nation but it may be considered a general statement
- *the fields*, though favored with water-springs, will not bear *fruits* of increase, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards unless they are planted
- Man's work must be joined by God's blessing

God's Work in Transforming the Earth 107:33-38



- His blessing encourages the sower, the planter, and rewards the laborer
- As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures *increase and multiply* (Genesis 1:22)
- Spiritually it may refer to the Church, given as a home to them that hungered and thirsted after righteousness
- In a spiritual sense the *fields* are the world, and the seed which is sown is the Word of God
- Those that sow it are the ministers of the Gospel, which, by a divine blessing, brings forth fruit, in some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold

God's Work in Transforming The Afflicted 107:39-42



- The psalmist now teaches us that there is nothing on earth stable or permanent, for they who have been at one time blessed by God, and multiplied through His blessing, in a little time after because of their sins, *diminished and brought low*, to nothing
- God shows His providence, not merely in blessing, but also in chastising
- If there is prosperity, it comes from Him; if there are disciplines, they occur under His hand
- Even the very nation which has been the most highly favored may, by disobedience and sin, fall under His displeasure and suffer at His hands

God's Work in Transforming The Afflicted 107:39-42



- According to St. Augustine this refer to the Church which began to be *minished and brought low* , after it had been multiplied exceedingly from the Twelve and the Seventy into vast numbers of disciples, by internal heresies, schisms, and divisions
- In the same way that God can turn a river into a dry wilderness, He can take the *princes* of this world and bring them low, causing them *to wander in the wilderness*
- This is especially true of those rulers who subject God's people under *oppression, affliction, and sorrow*
- God treats *princes* as if they were common people

God's Work in Transforming The Afflicted 107:39-42



- He pays no regard in His providence to their class or status
- They are subjected to the same needs as others
- The sins of those *princes* brought them to condemnation by God and He deprived them of wisdom and prudence, and thus, in consequence, they made many and serious mistakes in all their affairs
- As Nebuchadnezzar, when he was driven from men, and had his dwelling with the beasts of the field
- However, at the same time, men of honor and virtue were raised up by God from poverty, and fed and nourished by Him as His own sheep

God's Work in Transforming The Afflicted 107:39-42



- In the same way that God can turn a wilderness into pools of water, He can also lift up the *poor*, setting them up *far from affliction* and making *their families like a flock*
- Hence, ultimately, divine providence caused the just to rejoice and express their joy in praising and glorifying God and the wicked to be perplexed
- God's righteous ones are happy that He knows how to bring low the proud and oppressive, and that He knows how to lift up the poor and afflicted

God's Work in Transforming The Afflicted 107:39-42



- The divine dealings shall be manifestly so just, even the wicked will not be able to find anything which will justify them in such complaints
- When the judgments of God operate this way, people notice and *all iniquity stops its mouth*
- The righteous shall find an opportunity for praise and joy; the wicked will be silenced and have nothing to say against the providence of God
- As it says in Job 5:16, “*And injustice shuts her mouth.*”

Conclusion: Wisdom and Understanding 107:43



- The psalmist invited us to look at the way God works in the world, both in responding to those who cry out to Him and in His ability to bring low and raise high
- Wisdom tells us to take notice
- He who remembers and understands all this is *wise*, though he may not have the wisdom of this world, and for this cause the Lord Himself has said, *“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”* (Matthew 11:25-26)

Conclusion: Wisdom and Understanding 107:43



- In a many ways the lovingkindness of the Lord is shown, and if we will prudently watch, we shall come to a better understanding of it
- St. Augustine says, “Not his own deserving, not his own strength, not his own power; but *‘the lovingkindness of the Lord’*.”
- The righteous will become wise by studying the acts of the Lord
- The conclusion of this Psalm transforms the hymn of thanksgiving and praise to a wisdom Psalm



Discussion

- What theme does the psalmist introduce in the first three verses?
- On what attributes of God does this Psalm focus?
- Who is the “them” in verse 8?
- What do we learn about God’s character in verse 9?
- How did the Psalmist want Israel to respond to God’s forgiveness and deliverance? (107:1-3,8-9,15-16,21-22,31-32)



Discussion

- What did God do when they rebelled? Why did He do this? Does He still discipline today?
- What are those who are delivered from the consequences of their sin encouraged to do?
- Why might God have “stirred up” the storm to begin with?
- What are the consequences of obedience and disobedience, according to verses 33-42?



Discussion

- In verse 39, why did these things happen?
- What does it mean that the wicked “*stops its mouth*” in verse 42?
- What action would a wise person take who “*understand*” these things (43)?
- What lessons can we learn from this description of Israel’s history?