



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 117

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Introduction

- This Psalm has no title
- It is the shortest Psalm but is one of the greatest in its expression of praise
- The occasion of the Psalm may have been the restoration of Israel from exile, or some occasion that reflects God's goodness towards His people
- It celebrates the redemption from captivity, the grand type of the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ
- It is a Messianic Psalm



Introduction

- It is quoted by St. Paul in the New Testament in connection with the work of Christ
- It certainly refers to Gospel times, and to the conversion of the Gentiles for the apostle Paul has quoted it in Romans 15:9, to prove the Gentiles should glorify God for His mercy
- And also prophecies of the calling of the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel, as St. Paul applies it, Romans 15:11
- This very short Psalm, as well as the very long one 119, called the great Psalm, both came to confirm the fact that the value of worship is not measured by time and the length of prayers, but by their depth and spiritual warmth



Introduction

- The church prays it at the beginning of the sunset Vespers (the 11th hour), as a reference to establishing the church at the fullness of time and opening up of the gate of faith before the Gentiles, being those of the eleventh hour
- The Psalm simply urges us to praise God because God has abundantly blessed us



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- Gentiles are Called to Praise the Lord 117:1
- Praising God for His Mercy and Truth 117:2

Gentiles are Called to Praise the Lord 117:1



- The psalmist addresses the whole Church, and exhorts her to praise God
- Previous Psalms called on Israel to give *praise* to God, but here *all* the *Gentiles* are called to praise Him
- This showed that God intended Israel to have from the beginning, pointing to the truth that in Abraham all the peoples of the world were to be blessed (Genesis 12:3)
- He is not the God of the Israel only, but of all people and His praise should be celebrated not merely by one nation, but by all

Gentiles are Called to Praise the Lord 117:1



- The time would come when the barrier between Jews and Gentiles would be broken down, and when all the nations of the earth would unite in the worship of the same God
- Some suggest that *all you peoples* refers to the Jewish people, but St. Paul's quotation of Psalm 117:1 in Romans 15:11 leads us to believe that this is a call to the nations
- *Laud Him*, It means to *sing aloud*
- It conveys the idea that God should be praised with a voice loud enough for everyone to hear
- It may also mean to say praiseworthy things about a person

Gentiles are Called to Praise the Lord 117:1



- The psalmist called upon *all peoples* to praise God intelligently, and he provided reasons why He is worthy of worship
- Since this is one of the six Egyptian Hallel Psalms (113-118), sung as part of the Passover service, Jesus would have sung Psalm 117 with His disciples (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26)
- Therefore, on the eve of His crucifixion, we know that Jesus had all the peoples, all the Gentiles in mind
- Through His work on the cross and victory over death at the empty tomb, God would call a people to Himself from every tribe and tongue

Gentiles are Called to Praise the Lord 117:1



- The Christian explanation of the Psalm is Apostolic, for St. Paul cites this verse when arguing for the union of Jews and Gentiles in one Church
- Some old commentators believe the first part of this prophecy began to be fulfilled when the Wise Men came with their gifts to Bethlehem
- The Rabbinical interpretation of the Psalm is completely in accord with the Christian view, inasmuch as it is taken to be a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles in the days of Messiah

Gentiles are Called to Praise the Lord 117:1



- As a famous Rabbi comments, “This Psalm consists of but two verses, and belongs to the days of Messiah. And by making it consist of only two verses, the Psalmist implies that all nations shall be put into two classes: Israel ... and the Gentiles... both together shall worship the Lord.”
- St. John Chrysostom says, “This Psalm calls on not only one or two or three nations, but all land and sea. That is what actually happened when the coming of Christ shone forth. Then he mentions also the cause of their saving, that it was not by their own good deeds that they were saved, nor from their life and confidence, but from His lovingkindness alone.”

Praising God for His Mercy and Truth 117:2



- The reason the psalmist gives for praising God is, *For His merciful kindness is great toward us*
- By the coming of the Messiah to Jews and gentiles
- Without God's mercy there would be no salvation for us
- Salvation rests on truth, the truth that God cannot deny His own character
- It is not truth at the expense of mercy
- If that were so, there could be no hope; it would mean that God would have to deny His own holy character

Praising God for His Mercy and Truth 117:2



- *kindness is great*, it is not only *great* in bulk or number, but it is powerful
- By *toward us* the psalmist has in mind Israel and the *all peoples* as mentioned in the previous verse
- God is to be praised not only for *His merciful kindness* , but also for His *truth*
- His ever-enduring truth means that He will not change in His love and goodness to us
- That Truth is the Eternal WORD, Who in His incarnate form said, *“I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.”*(John 14:6)

Praising God for His Mercy and Truth 117:2



- That truth, too, which came by Jesus Christ, that Gospel which is the substance of the shadowy Law, *endures forever*, for He has said, *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”* (Matthew 24:35)
- *And the truth of the Lord endures forever*, for the Church was established, *“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18)
- And His kingdom was established, of which there will be no end, *“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”* (Daniel 7:14)

Praising God for His Mercy and Truth 117:2



- *the truth*, All that God has said: His declarations; His promises; His assurances of mercy
- The faithfulness of God to His promises, not only made to the Jewish fathers concerning the Messiah, and redemption by Him; but to the Gentiles
- *Praise the Lord*: Once again, all peoples are called to say, *Alleluia!*
- In God's worship it is not always necessary to be long; few words sometimes say what is sufficient, as this short Psalm gives us to understand



Discussion

- To whom is the psalmist is speaking?
- What is the message of this Psalm?
- What motivated the psalmist to praise the Lord?
- What reason did the psalmist give to encourage God's people to praise Him?



Discussion

- How did the Psalmist describe God's faithfulness?
- What does this Psalm teach us about God's care for us?
- How should we respond to God's love and faithfulness?