



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 145

Metropolitan Youssef



# Introduction

- This Psalm is titled *A Praise of David*
- Though Psalm 17 and Psalm 86 were also called A Prayer of David, this is the only one titled *A Praise of David*
- This Psalm is attributed to David by the Hebrew and all the other translation Versions
- It is an "alphabetical" Psalm; that is, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and must contain twenty-two verses, as answering to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet
- Except the verse beginning with the letter nun, is lost out of the present Hebrew copies



# Introduction

- But a translation of it is found in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Arabic versions
- It is the last of nine acrostic, (alphabetical), Psalms, (Psalm 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145)
- Five of these alphabetical Psalms are attributed to David
- It does not appear on what particular occasion it was composed
- However, it seems to have been written by David after the Lord had granted him all his requests mentioned in the preceding Psalms, and had given him rest from all his enemies



# Introduction

- So, he turned his prayers into praises; for this Psalm is wholly praise from the beginning to the end; and so are all the five following Psalms
- They begin and end with "Alleluia": and there is not a single petition in them
- Psalm 145 is indeed a great and marvelous praise Psalm, an appropriate summary of all David had learned about God during a long lifetime of following hard after the Almighty
- It is addressed to God as the supreme King, whose kingdom is universal and eternal



# Introduction

- It celebrates His majesty, greatness, and goodness; His providential care for all His creation; His constant love towards those who love and fear Him
- This Psalm has naturally been largely used for liturgical purposes
- It is recited twice in the daily Morning Service and once in the Evening Service of the synagogue
- St. John Chrysostom speaks of the use of it in the Eucharistic service, especially verse 15



# Introduction

- St. Augustine says, “Since He is called David, who came to us of the seed of David, yet He was our King, ruling us, and bringing us into His kingdom, therefore ‘Praise to David himself’ is understood to mean, Praise to Christ Himself. Christ according to the flesh is David, because He is the Son of David: but according to His Divine Nature He is the Creator of David, and Lord of David.”



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- Praising God 145:1-7
- Declaring the Greatness of God 145:8-13
- The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16
- The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



# Praising God 145:1-7

- The two first verses contain an introduction in which David tells us what he proposes chanting of in this Psalm, and he does so by addressing God directly
- David often glorifies the Lord through His dealings with him and with the people
- But here, the Psalm begins by a glorification of the Lord, the heavenly King
- The Coptic church sing verses 1 and 2 of this Psalm on the morning following the feast of the cross (the 18th day of the Coptic month of Thoout); on account of that the cross is the throne of glory of love of our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings



# Praising God 145:1-7

- To *extol* is to praise, to lift high, to exalt
- David honored and promoted the name of God in the most personal way
- He did it with a direct address and with a personal reference
- He addresses God as *my King*, either to show that, king as he was himself, he still had God as a King, who rules all, and is ruled by none over him
- Or because he was about to praise God for the works and attributes that pertained to Him as King of mankind and of all created things



# Praising God 145:1-7

- The word *extol* in Hebrew suggests that he will kneel in homage to God as a demonstration of reverence and praise
- *I will bless*, To bless God is to praise Him with a personal affection
- Names reflect the natures and characters of the person who bore them
- St. Augustine says, “The praise of God is here begun, and this praise is carried on even to the end of the Psalm...Now then begin to praise, if you intend to praise forever. He who will not praise in this transitory ‘age,’ will be silent when ‘age upon age’ has come.”



# Praising God 145:1-7

- St. John Chrysostom says, “You have become His child and you enjoy a spiritual meal, eating the flesh and the blood which gave you rebirth; make a return, then, for such a favor, glorify its provider, and while reading the verses conform your attitude to the words. When you say, *I will extol You, my God, O King*, not only say it but give evidence of such love, He in turn would say the same of you, ‘My servant, My attendant which was said also to Moses.’”
- Some of the fathers believe that the first verse is the foundation of the whole Psalm and shows who is intended and who is its subject that is spoken of throughout, the Messiah, who is the King of the world, the King of the kings



# Praising God 145:1-7

- *Every day I will bless You*, the repetition indicates the intensity of his love to this work of praise, the firmness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of doing it
- As we receive blessings from God every day (Lamentations 3:23), it is proper that we should offer Him daily thanks
- As we are daily dependent on Him; our recognition of that dependence should be daily
- As He will always be unchangeably the same, it will be proper that He should be praised *forever and ever*
- According to St. John Chrysostom, it is shameful that nature praise God day by day and men who are more privileged do not



# Praising God 145:1-7

- He says, “How is it not absurd if even creation each day and hour offers up to its Master songs of praise? ‘the heavens declares the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.’ (Psalm 19). Both sun and moon, the diverse choir of stars, and the beautiful array of all the other things proclaim their own creator. Consequently, for the ones more privileged than all these not to do this...what pardon would such ones deserve? What defense, when despite being made for the purpose of pleasing God...on the contrary involve themselves in worldly affairs and lifeless concerns?”



# Praising God 145:1-7

- *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, David piled praise upon praise, declaring God's greatness and great worthiness to be praised*
- David felt it would be dishonorable to withhold his praise to God or to give Him half-hearted praise
- His Greatness consists in breadth, length, height, and depth, according to the Apostle, "*may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height*" (Ephesians 3:18)
- David praised God by reason of His greatness



# Praising God 145:1-7

- If we apply it to His divine essence, He is great therein in breadth, because it is immense
- In length, because it is everlasting
- In height, because it is most awe-inspiring and magnificent and exalted
- In depth, because it is incomprehensible
- God's greatness is infinite, there is no end of His greatness men who are finite cannot comprehend this greatness, *unsearchable*
- This infinite greatness of God rebukes us, that as well as His greatness has no end, so our praises should have no end



# Praising God 145:1-7

- David passes now from the essence of the great King, which is *unsearchable*, to His wonderful works, that convey some idea of His power
- David not only describes the attributes of God, but states a firm intention to proclaim them to others
- Every generation shall tell the generation that is rising up what they have seen in their days and what they have heard from their fathers; they *shall* fully and particularly *declare Your mighty acts*
- *One generation's* praise will inform the next generation of God's works



# Praising God 145:1-7

- There shall be a tradition of praise
- David looked for God's people to encourage each other in praise
- The faith of one generation plants the seeds of faith in the next generation
- *mighty acts*, His works of strength or power
- God's greatness - His infinity - is in itself a just ground of praise, for we should rejoice that there is One Infinite Eternal Being
- *His mighty acts* of nature, in creating all things out of nothing, and upholding all things by the word of His power; and His mighty acts of grace, in redeeming His people



# Praising God 145:1-7

- St. John Chrysostom comments on Your mighty acts and says, “As David normally does, he does here too: whenever he marvels at God’s greatness, His glory, he proceeds to proof it from His work.”
- *I will meditate*, Praise comes not only from emotion, but from careful thought – from careful meditation
- David meditated not only on the great things God did, but he also paid attention to God’s *glorious splendor*
- The idea is of the glory and wonder of who God actually is
- The things that inspire the psalmist to speak of God’s majesty are His *wondrous works*

# Praising God 145:1-7



- He is expressing his awe at God's *wondrous works*, which reveal many aspects of the Lord to those who approach Him in faith
- As the Psalmist says elsewhere, "*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.*" (Psalm 19:1)
- When we think of the aspects of God's *glorious splendor* – His majesty, His wisdom, His constant presence, His complete knowledge, His unlimited power, His loving and wise plan and purpose – all this should stir up praise within us
- And when we think of God's *wondrous works* – His works of creation, His works of providence, His works of salvation now and in the age to come – all this should stir up praise within us



# Praising God 145:1-7

- To give emphasis, David repeated the idea of praising God in verse 6, for who He is, *Your greatness* and for what He has done, *Your awesome acts*
- The manifestations of that power will so deeply affect the minds of people, that they will be led to speak of them
- While men speak of the awesome acts of God, the psalmist goes on to declare His great love and care, which, according to St. John Chrysostom, are proclaimed through His compassion, as well as His chastisements
- In verse 7, David and the generations will not only talk about God's characters; they will eagerly and joyously tell it to others



# Praising God 145:1-7

- Repeating the idea a third time, they remember the demonstration of God's *great goodness* in what He does, and declare that He Himself is full of *righteousness* in who He is
- Righteousness is one of the defining attributes of God's character
- The people can be certain that God will be righteous and blameless in His dealings with them—that He will judge them fairly
- Whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget, at the same time, to *sing of His righteousness*; for, as He is gracious in rewarding those that serve Him faithfully, so He is righteous in punishing those that rebel against Him



# Praising God 145:1-7

- St. Augustine says, “For if you love these (*wondrous works*) more than Him, you will not have Him. And what profit is it to you to overflow with the works, if the Worker leave you? Truly you should love them; but love Him more, and love them for His sake. For He does not hold out promises, without holding out threats also: if He held out no promises, there would be no encouragement; if He held out no threats, there would be no correction.”
- *They shall utter the memory*: The Hebrew word means they shall overflow, outpouring with the memory of His *great goodness*

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- *The Lord is gracious and full of compassion*, David echoed the self-description of God to Moses: “*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.*” (Exodus 34:6)
- *The Lord is gracious*, to those that serve Him
- He is *full of compassion* to those that need Him
- *slow to anger*, to those that have sinned against Him
- People give Him many reasons to punish them, but He often withholds His judgment to give them opportunity to repent
- *and of great mercy* to all that seek Him

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- He is not an angry God but desires the best for His people, responding in a compassionate and loving manner and often softening deserved punishment
- *The Lord is good to all*, His compassion extends to everyone
- God spreads His goodness to all humanity
- Jesus said, *“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* (Matthew 5:45)
- *His tender mercies are over all His works*, In all that He has made there is evidence that He is a kind and benevolent God
- All creation and all the wise plan of God were demonstrations of the greatness and goodness of God

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- Creation itself praises God and does so out of grateful duty
- Yet even more than the rivers and hills praising God (Psalm 98:8), God's people *Your saints* should gratefully praise and *bless the Lord*
- St. John Chrysostom says, "Let them give thanks to You...both those endowed with speech and those with no voice. Each of the voiceless creatures was also made in a such a way as to give praise through its own nature, even though they may seem voiceless to men. What these creations do through their mere existence, men do through the way of their life, as is clear from the Psalmist's addition: 'and Your saints shall bless You'"

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- *The glory* of God's *kingdom* is such that the faithful are naturally drawn to *speak* of it
- They see in that *kingdom* evidence that God is worthy of all praise
- Seeing this, it becomes to them a subject on which they talk or converse (Malachi 3:16) - a subject of interest to their hearts
- *This kingdom* does not consist of power and might, victory and oppression, as unfortunately is often the case with earthly kingdoms
- Rather, it is the place where compassion, love, goodness, grace and justice are manifested, as the Psalmist repeats several times

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- It is one of the characteristics of the *saints* or the people of God that they do talk about God and His kingdom
- The subject is to them a pleasant theme of meditation and conversation
- They have the kind of pleasure in talking about God which other people have in conversing about their daily affairs or work etc.,
- They would *speak* about His might, which is often revealed in His saving deeds
- St. Augustine says, “How powerful, how great is God! Do you ask, creation answers, and by its answer, as by the confession of the creature, you, O saint of God, bless God, and ‘talk of His power.’”

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- It is a part of the duty of *saints* (verse 10) to make known as widely as possible - if possible, to all men - the *mighty acts* and glory of God
- Primarily, for God's glory; and secondarily, to bring about their conversion to God's service
- Their objective would be that others *sons of men* would come to know about God's mighty deeds *and the glorious majesty of His kingdom*
- To bring other people to understand and to appreciate the evidences of the power of God

# Declaring the Greatness of God

## 145:8-13



- God's Kingdom or His role as Supreme Sovereign is permanent, continuing for all time to come
- His dominion abides from generation to generation
- It is different and opposite to all other kingdoms and empires, which have had or will have an end
- One reason why praise should continue forever (as in verse 2) is because God's *kingdom* will last forever
- His *dominion* is unending, lasting *throughout all generations*

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- The greatness of God is shown in His care for those who *fall*, and those *bowed down*, to uphold them and to restore them and makes it possible for them to stand again
- Fallen can have many meanings; it may mean spiritually fallen—*sinful*—in need of mercy
- God's compassion is especially evident toward those who *fall* and fail
- He does not despise or reject them; there is a sense in which He specially draws near them to hold them up
- If they allow their *fall* to rightly humble them, God will draw near and uphold them

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- The expression *raises up*, in the Hebrew, conveys the idea not only of lifting up, but enabling the person so lifted to stay and keep up
- It may be applied to people who are in any sort of distress; illness, injury, the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, financial setback, divorce, humiliation, etc.
- But is it true that God *raises up* all that fall, when we daily see many falling without being lifted?
- God is said to *raises up* all that fall, inasmuch as those who fall not when tempted

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- While those who fall and do not rise after falling, must blame themselves for it, and not God
- These words are to be taken in a spiritual sense
- God is naturally willing to raise up all
- If He sometimes brings them down, He does so either with a view to prove them and to crown them, as He does to the just, in which case it proves a raising up rather than a taking down
- Or He does so in order to punish and chastise
- Earthly kings raise up one, and depress another; supports one, and lets another fall: but the Lord upholds all His people with the right hand of His righteousness

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- St. John Chrysostom says, “He holds fast not only those standing firm but those on the point of falling lest they experience it, and raises up those lying down, and – what is truly remarkable – everyone, not just this or that person but everyone, be slaves, needy, obscure, risen from obscurity. He is the Lord of all, and does not pass by those who are down, nor despise those who are unstable.”
- The humble ones put their expectation on God, looking to Him for their needs
- They pray, *give us this day our daily bread* (Matthew 6:11), and God answers their prayer *in due season*

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- He gives it *in due season*, when it is right to give it
- Most commentators connect this with the words *every living thing* in verse 16, and see that all creation is in view
- St. Augustine says, “Yet, man often wishes to have something, and God does not give it to him right away. As a good Shepherd, He knows when it is the right time to give. So, I say, brethren, lest someone may faint, when he asks God for something good, and God does not listen to him. He should know that when God does not respond, It would be because He knows that it would bring harm to him.”

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- To express God's liberality, being the primary source of all people's blessings, David next adds, *You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing*
- Every word of the verse is expressive of abundant kindness
- It is not with a closed but an open hand that God gives to His creatures
- It is with extreme liberality; satisfy to the fullest extent of their desires
- God's care for creation extends beyond His provision for men and women

# The Kindness of God to Those in Need 145:14-16



- As Jesus would later say, God also cares for the birds and the grass of the field (Matthew 6:26-30)
- God does this with a wonderfully *open* hand and heart to His creation
- St. Augustine says, “Though sometimes You give not, yet ‘in due season’ You give: You delay, not deny, and that in due season.”
- God is the Creator of all
- Therefore, being created by Him; they live upon God
- From Him they have all the supports of their being and on Him they depend for the continuance of it

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- Throughout this Psalm David has spoken much about how we should praise God for who He is and what He has done
- Here again David gives us a reason to praise the Lord, recognizing the incomparable combination of being *righteous* and *gracious*
- He is at once perfectly just, and absolutely loving caring and compassionate, *“Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed.”* (Psalm 85:10)
- According to St. Augustine God is *righteous* when He smites and when He heals, He is righteous, and in Him there is no unrighteousness

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- God's ways in dealing and the results therefrom would always reflect His justice, fairness, or impartiality and His compassion, kindness, or love
- *The Lord is near*, No matter how high above the heavens He may be, He comes *near* at once to all that call upon Him, never refusing to hear anyone
- He does not distance Himself from those in need, but is near to them, responding compassionately to those calling upon Him in their time of need
- But David added the qualifying expression, *who call upon Him in truth* or in sincerity and with the right motive

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- *who call upon Him in truth*, because there is a false sort of worshipping, and calling upon God, which is prohibited from the benefit of this promise
- He that prays without faith does not pray *in truth*
- He that prays without hope does not pray *in truth*, because, he cannot be serious in praying to anyone by whom he does not hope to be heard
- If one really desires to enjoy the mindfulness of His presence, he must call upon Him *in truth*, i.e. sincerely, with earnest desire and strong confidence

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- In order to receive an answer to prayers, one must call upon Him; *in truth*, with an upright heart, asking those things only which are according to His will
- Sincerely desiring what one asks, trusting in Him that He will give it, and waiting upon Him in the way He has appointed for that purpose
- *He will fulfill the desire and hear the cry* of His people
- Those who *fear* or have reverent regard for God can rest assured that He will fulfill their desire, which would be in harmony with His ways

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- He would hear their cry for help and deliver them from their distress
- Then David adds, *and save them*, to give us to understand how God always hears the prayers of those that fear Him
- God frequently appears not to hear the prayers, as when he would not deliver St. Paul from *“a thorn in the flesh”* (2 Corinthians 12:7) though he had prayed three times to be delivered from it
- But He really hears the prayer which includes a desire of eternal salvation
- God always hears those that fear Him and will save them; He hears them in the time most beneficial to their salvation

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- St. John Chrysostom reflected on what St. Paul sought from God to let the angel of Satan leave him; meaning temptations and afflictions; but God did not respond to his request; He actually did what is good for St. Paul, saying to him: *“My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- When St. Paul realized he was seeking what was not to his advantage he said, *“I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* (2 Corinthians 12:10)

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- David gave a further example of God's graciousness in action preserving *all who love Him*, along with His righteousness in action, *all the wicked He will destroy*
- The punishment of God is always mentioned with His goodness in Holy Scripture, lest men should misunderstand, and think to obtain salvation though they continue in wickedness
- For though God sometimes allows the just to suffer much from sinners, still He so protects them, that such suffering cannot harm them; but truly it turns to their advantage
- God allowed the martyrs to be slain, but he *preserved* them by granting them firm faith and patience in their suffering

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- St. Augustine says, “He will save all that hope in Him, all the faithful, all that fear Him, all that call upon Him in truth: ‘and all sinners He will destroy.’ What ‘*the wicked*’ but those who persevere in sin; who dare to blame God, not themselves; who daily argue against God; who despair of pardon for their sins, and from this very despair heap up their sins.”
- David now concludes the Psalm by uniting the first and last verses, as if he said: “in consequence of all I have stated regarding the greatness of God, of His works, of the perpetuity of His kingdom, of His royal qualities that are so numerous and so perfect in Him”, *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord*

# The Love and Righteousness of the Lord 145:17-21



- And he not only means to do so himself, but he earnestly desire that *all flesh*, that every human being, everything that lives and breathes, should praise the name of the Lord forever
- He invited *all flesh to bless God's holy name Forever and ever*
- As St. Augustine commented, "Since this is so, and we have heard the blessing of the Lord, the works of the Lord, the wondrous things of the Lord, the mercies of the Lord, the severity of the Lord, His Providence over all His works, the confession of all His works; observe how He concludes in His praise, '*My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.*'"



# Discussion

- What are the differences between the words “exalt”, “praise”, and “bless”?
- How does David commit himself and others to praising God (in the first six verses)? What does he sign himself up for in these verses?
- How does God’s kingdom compare to the kingdoms of men?
- Why is church history an important part of our children’s education?



# Discussion

- In verses 8-9, David lists God's personal qualities. What are these?
- What do verses 10-12 suggest about what any person can learn just by observing Creation?
- What are some practical ways that can we bless the Lord?
- What is our responsibility toward our children in regards to praising God?



# Discussion

- In your own words, how would you describe God?
- If you believed God's timing was perfect, how would that change the way you lived?
- How do you see the mighty acts of the Lord both in Scripture and in your own life? How can you make His greatness and mighty deeds known to others?