

Jesus in the Psalms

The Song of the Great Commission

Psalm 96

January 19th, 2025

I. Introduction

Through this octet of psalms, we went from David's crown laying in the dust and his throne cast down (Psa. 89) to now calling in all the nations and all the earth to worship the Son of David (Psa. 96). We went from the valley of exile to the height of Mount Zion where all the nations flood in to worship Jesus. This is a bold song. Little Israel, a mere captive tribe of Babylon, would have had this song in their psalter. They would have sung it, calling out to the nations to bow before their God, while being mere slaves to the emperor. Similarly, Jesus, the despised carpenter from Nazareth, and His small company of men would have sung this song, while being nothing before the Jewish leaders, let alone the Roman authorities. But this is what our God delights to do. He delights to make extravagant promises in the bleakest of circumstances, and then confound the world by bringing His sworn Word to pass. Why? Because He alone is God, and there is no other.

II. The Text: Psalm 96

*1 Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
3 Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples. . . .*

III. Summary of the Text

This psalm can be broken up into three sections, each of which contains a call to whole world, to all the families of the peoples.

- 1. Call to the whole world to worship the _____ (vv. 1-6)
- 2. Call to the whole world to come to _____ (vv. 7-9)
- 3. Call to the whole world to look forward to the _____ (vv. 10-13)

IV. The Mystery Revealed

It was always God's plan to have the nations praise Him. From the very beginning, when Abram was called to leave his country, and go out to a land that the Lord would show him, the Lord promised to make of him a great nation; the Lord promised to bless him and make his name great. And He promised that in Abram all the families of the earth would be _____ (Gen. 12). Later in Abram's life the Lord would change his name. No longer would be known as *Abram*, which means exalted father, but *Abraham*, the father of many _____. All the nations would be blessed by coming into his tent and into the blessings of the covenant that the Lord promised to Him. How would the Lord do this? Through the promised offspring, the true Isaac, Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of this as "the _____ hidden for ages," and this mystery gradually unfolded through biblical history culminating in the revelation of God's decree in Christ.

V. People of the Great Commission

Boldness & Confidence. This means that we have every reason for boldness and confidence in the work of our God. Envision our Lord Jesus with His twelve disciples singing this song. They are a small company. Israel is a captive nation to the Roman Empire. Jesus is about to be betrayed and carried off to be crucified. And yet they sing boldly, calling all the earth to come in and worship the Lord God; they sing, calling all the families of the earth to bring tribute to the reigning King, proclaiming that the Lord will judge the nations. That is bold. And how much more reason do we have to expect still more, we who stand two thousand years into the triumphant work of the Gospel?

Racial Peacemakers. This reality excludes any and all _____ hatred, division, strife, and so on. If we are to sing this song with upright hearts—with hearts that actually mean it—what room is there for racial animosity? If we are to call all the earth to sing to the Lord, to bless His name, to proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day, then what room is there for enmity and strife and hatred? Jesus became “our _____, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity . . . so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace” (Eph. 2:14). In Christ, the nations are called to stream into the house of God, and we get to do the work of proclaiming that good news and _____ them—welcoming them in, even as we were welcomed (Rom. 15:7).

A Holy People. If we are calling the families of the peoples into the courts of the Lord to worship the Lord “in the beauty of holiness and tremble before him” (v. 9), then this means that we must be _____. We must tremble before the Lord. We must bring to Him a holy offering. We cannot call out to the nations and expect them to do what we ourselves refuse or neglect to do.

In particular, it is absolutely essential that we, the Church of God, worship Him in the beauty of holiness. The stench of hypocrisy, of proclaiming one thing while living another, is abhorrent. Throughout the New Testament, the Church is described as something attractive. The people of God are not simply _____ sinners. We are dead men _____. We are saints. In Christ, we are made into light.

Jesus speaks of the Church as being the light of the world and a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14); so Jesus said to His disciples: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). If we are not different than the world, then we should not expect to draw others into the brightness of our Lord’s shining. We must be clothed in the beauty of holiness. Which means we are to be clothed in Christian _____ (Col. 3:12-14).

Rejoice in Hope. This song directs us to say among the nations, “The Lord reigns; the world is established; it shall never be moved; and He, the LORD, shall judge the peoples righteously” (v. 10). We are to proclaim and herald this Gospel to the nations—and we are to call all of creation to rejoice in it. If we are calling out to the nations, to rejoice in this hope, surely this means that we first and foremost must rejoice in this hope ourselves (Col. 3:1-4).

VI. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ