

The Covenant Keeper

Psalm 105

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Some of you may be wondering why we sang “Joy to the World” when no one is thinking about Christmas this time of year. Actually, this song is less about Christmas then it is about the return of Jesus. This will become clearer as we consider Psalm 105.

Let me start with a question: How do we know the Bible is God’s Word?

It is full of wisdom that works... people have died rather than recanting the truths contained in it... its history has consistently been confirmed by archeologists... it is ahead of its time in scientific accuracy... it is an order of magnitude more popular than any human-authored books.

For me, it was the realization that the Bible includes prophecies that have been fulfilled with 100% accuracy. And it also reveals what will happen in the future that makes sense of the craziness we are seeing today. Only God is able to reveal the end from the beginning.

I became a follower of Christ after the Berlin Wall was torn down at the end of 1989 which marked the end of the Cold War. As someone who grew up next to an Air Force base with B-52’s flying overhead and having spent 9 years preparing for war with the Soviets as a former Army officer, the idea that the super-power stand-off of the Cold War could just suddenly end without a shot being fired was perplexing to me.

I had just read a book on Bible prophecy my father-in-law had given me that was essentially a commentary on the book of Daniel. The prophet’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream describing the Gentile nations that would rule over Israel has been fulfilled in history exactly. And it occurred to me that the Bible also explained why there could be no superpowers because all the nations of world will be under a global government when Jesus returns.

As I was pondering these things, God breathed life into my spirit and I realized that the Bible had to be right about my needing Jesus in my life as well. It was like a light going on in my head. I realized I was doomed to hell without Jesus and was so relieved that He opened my heart to Him and I committed myself to reading and studying His Word.

I share all this with you so that you might appreciate my affinity for God prophetic Word... it is what He used to open my heart to Jesus. So with that introduction, let’s take a look at our main text for this morning, Psalm 105.

This historical psalm was composed by King David; the first fifteen verses of it were used as a hymn to celebrate bringing the ark of the covenant to the tabernacle in Jerusalem as recorded in 1 Chronicles chapter 16.

Since this is a long Psalm, we are going to focus on just the first part and I’ll summarize the rest. Let’s read it together...

Oh, give thanks to the Lord!

Call upon His name;

Make known His deeds among the peoples!

² Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;

Talk of all His wondrous works!

³ Glory in His holy name;

Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord!

⁴ Seek the Lord and His strength;

Seek His face evermore!

⁵ Remember His marvelous works which He has done,

His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth,

⁶ O seed of Abraham His servant,

You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!

⁷ He is the Lord our God;

His judgments are in all the earth.

v1 – King David invites us to join him in giving thanks to the Lord, calling on His name and making known His deeds among the nations. Certainly, in David’s time, that is how people could get to better know the Creator-God, by learning about Him through His people Israel. That is what the Queen of Sheba did when she traveled to Israel to meet with Solomon.

v2 – King David invites us to join him in singing psalms to the Lord recalling His wondrous works. He reminds us that we should rejoice in His Holy name which in David’s day was Yahweh, is transliterated in English as Jehovah, and is usually translated in our Bibles as simply Lord. He is Lord because He is our Creator-God and in-control of His creation.

v3 – King David said we should rejoice in all who seek the Lord. Certainly, the holy angels do...

Luke 15:10 – *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*

What does it mean to seek the Lord?

King David elaborates in verse 4 that we should seek Him and His strength. God wants us to depend on Him and not our own resources. This is most important when it comes to our eternal salvation... even in Old Testament times it was apparent that that people could not earn salvation through their own good works. The Mosaic Law represented God’s standard and if a person was honest with themselves, they could not perfectly keep the Law. Even back then, all they could do was live by faith trusting in the grace of God for their eternal salvation.

v4 – What does it reveal about King David encouraging us to seek [the Lord’s] face evermore?

That King David believed in life after death; and that was even before Jesus came to show us His resurrected body. Also, that King David knew about the importance of a personal relationship... it is pretty personal to seek someone’s face.

v5 – Remember His marvelous works

What are the marvelous works of God you think King David wanted people to remember?

Certainly, creation but since his immediate audience were fellow Jews: their salvation in Egypt, provision in the wilderness when they left Egypt, and the blessings of the promised land. And in our day, we can add the provision God made for our sins to be forgiven in Jesus Christ along with the promise of the resurrection!

v6 – King David reminded his audience that they were God’s chosen people. God chose the Jews to be the ones He would use to reveal Himself to the world... all the writers of Scripture were Jews. And of course, Jesus Christ Himself came through the Jewish line.

In verse 7, King David reminds us that the Creator-God is the Lord of Israel and He is sovereign over all His creation, not just Israel. The Creator-God is Lord over all nations whether they recognize that or not. And mostly they have not throughout history up to and including today.

Let’s read a little more of Psalm 105...

*⁸ He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,*

*⁹ The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,*

*¹⁰ And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,*

*¹¹ Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,”*

What is a covenant?

It is a promise, in this case a promise made by God.

Where in the Bible might we find the covenant King David recalls here?

It is the Abrahamic Covenant first promised by God in Genesis 12:1-3 when Abram was still living in his father’s town near the Euphrates River:

Now the Lord had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father’s house,

To a land that I will show you.

² I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Has Abraham been a blessing to all the families of the earth?

Yes

How so?

God revealed His Word through his descendants and Jesus Christ Himself was a descendant.

God later elaborated on the land portion of the Abrahamic Covenant when He told Abram when he was in the land of Canaan:

Genesis 13:15 – *all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.*

King David reminded us in Psalm 105 that God confirmed His promise to Abraham to his son Isaac and grandson Jacob; each time revealing more details of the original covenant such as the geographical boundaries of the land God was giving them. This is why the land of Israel is called the Promised Land. It is the land God promised the descendants of Jacob, Abraham's grandson who He later named Israel.

We will not take the time to read the rest of Psalm 105 because I'd like to focus on the Abrahamic covenant but let me just summarize it:

King David recalls the history of Israel up to his time. God arranged for Israel to be protected from a great famine in Egypt where they grew in numbers and became a nation. Then when Egypt became threatened by them and treated them harshly, God raised up Moses and Aaron to perform miraculous signs and lead Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land which was occupied by Gentiles.

King David's point in recalling all this history was to show how God had been faithful to His covenant to Abraham in arranging for Israel to occupy the Promised Land.

Now, there has been some history that has happened since the time of David...

Has Israel always occupied the Promised Land?

No, God raised up the Assyrians to carry off Israel into captivity in 721 BC; then Assyria themselves were conquered by the Babylonians a few decades later. The Babylonians later carried off Judah into captivity sacking Jerusalem and destroying their temple in 587 BC. The Jews were only able to return to their land 70 years later under the Persians who had conquered Babylon. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the history of Israel's return from Babylon.

So, since Israel was denied occupying their land for a time, does that mean God wasn't faithful to His promise?

No, God elaborated on the land aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant to Moses in Deuteronomy 28

(particularly verse 37), where God put conditions on Israel for enjoying the Promised Land, that they remain faithful to Him. As we know, Israel did not remain faithful to the Lord and that is why He raised up enemies to remove them from the land.

Was Israel able to stay in the land when they returned?

Yes, for a while; they even rebuilt the temple that the Babylonians destroyed... they occupied the land long enough for the Son of God to present Himself as the Messiah to Israel. While many Jews did receive Jesus as the Messiah, the rulers of the nation did not and they crucified Him. Of course, God knew that would happen and indeed, that is why Jesus came...

Mark 10:45 – *For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Was Israel able to stay in the land after they rejected their Messiah?

For about 40 years until 70 AD when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple causing the Jews to flee the land to settle in multiple different nations.

So, is God done with Israel? Will He ever make good on His promise to Abraham?

God's promise to Abraham was an unconditional covenant. This means He will have to make good on His promise because God's very character of being faithful to His Word is at stake.

In order for God to keep His promise, Israel as a nation must at some point become faithful to God and that means they as a nation will recognize Yeshua Hamashiach, which is Hebrew for Jesus the Messiah. That is what God told us would happen when He inspired Paul with these words:

Romans 11:25-27 – *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."*

The Apostle Paul quotes Isaiah 59 in reference to the covenant God made to Jacob.

God is not done with Israel; He will use them to again be His representatives on earth. For the past almost 2,000 years, God has used the church as His representatives on earth. But the time will come when, in Paul's words, *the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*. This means that the Church Age will end when Jesus the Bridegroom returns to claim His mostly Gentile bride, the church, as He promised us...

John 14:3 – *I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Indications are that we are getting very close to the end of the Church Age. God is setting the stage to resume using Israel as His representative on earth. The Jews are returning to the land of Israel as prophesied in many places...

Isaiah 11:11-12 – *Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.*

This prophecy cannot be referring to the Jews returning from captivity in Babylon. Notice it refers to a "second" regathering (the return from Babylon was the first). Also, it states this will be a regathering "from the islands of the sea," which is a Hebrew expression for the whole world, and this is reinforced by the statement that the regathering will be "from the four corners of the earth."

The prophets also make it clear that the regathering of Israel to their land is done while they are mostly unbelievers as is the case with Israel today...

Ezekiel 36:24-27 – *For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

Notice the timing of God putting His Spirit in Israel, after they are gathered out of all countries... Then I

will sprinkle clean water on you... and put a new spirit in you.

God also promised that when Israel is re-established back in that land and given a new heart for Him that it would be permanent. Israel would never have to be evicted from the land again. Various prophets point that out...

Amos 9:15 – *I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," Says the Lord your God.*

God also promised Israel that once they are again acting as His representatives on earth, He would so bless them that they would be the preeminent nation on earth...

Isaiah 2:2-4 – *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

The time will come when Jesus the Messiah rules the nations of the earth from Jerusalem, the capital of Israel. All the nations of the earth will honor Israel by flowing to *the house of the God of Jacob* in order to learn *His ways*. It is interesting that the last part of this passage referring to beating *swords into plowshares* is inscribed in stone at the UN building in NYC.

Why do you think the UN quoted this passage from Isaiah?

The secular humanists of the UN seek to achieve their utopian vision of peace on earth through human means. If we could just all get along with one another!

Why is it that peace on earth can only happen when Jesus returns?

The Bible makes it clear that without God, the natural depravity of mankind makes the humanist vision of peace on earth impossible.

The Bible teaches that Jesus will return in two phases, first for His bride, the church where we will be resurrected and meet Him in the air... also known as the rapture. Jesus doesn't actually set foot on the earth at that time but we will accompany Him to His father's house in heaven. Then Jesus will return to earth with us (His bride) at least 7 years later to establish His kingdom on earth.

What do we call the future kingdom of Christ on earth?

The Millennial Kingdom because it will last for a thousand years per Revelation 20. The Millennial Kingdom will be the last Age of mortal humans prior to the Eternal State where there will a new heavens and earth with no more suffering or death.

The Millennial Kingdom will be an amazing time when Jesus physically rules the earth from Jerusalem. And we will be with Him fulfilling various roles in His administration. We will sing a new song in heaven:

Revelation 5:9-10 – For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.

There are many scoffers in the church today who dismiss the Millennial Kingdom as just being the spiritual kingdom of the Church Age and that Jesus ruling on the earth will only be during the Eternal State. But to believe that, they must force the clear reading of God's Word to be an allegory, meaning something other than what it says.

It is interesting to notice that there are over a hundred Old Testament prophecies of our Lord's first coming that He fulfilled literally exactly as written. So why then shouldn't we take literally the 300+ prophecies of His return?

My favorite passage of the Millennial Kingdom is in Isaiah 65. Millennial Kingdom scoffers dismiss this passage as referring to the Eternal State because it starts out saying,

Isaiah 65:17 – For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth

The new heavens and earth of the Millennial Kingdom is but a foreshadowing of the new heavens and earth of the Eternal State. The context here indicates that there will be mortal people on earth so this passage can not

be referring to the Eternal State when there will be no more procreation or death...

Isaiah 65:20 – No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

This indicates during the Millennial Kingdom, the age of accountability will be about 100 years old. In God's grace, people will be given 100 years to personally accept Jesus as their Savior. Those who fail to trust in Jesus for their salvation will die at about 100 years of age. Those who are born again during the Millennial Kingdom will never suffer physical death.

It is also interesting to note that during the Millennial Kingdom, most of the curse will be removed.

What is the curse?

That is the consequence of mankind's original sin when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3 God told Eve, "in pain you shall bring forth children" and to Adam, that his work would be made more difficult with "thorns and thistles."

But during the Millennial Kingdom, some of the curse will be removed...

Isaiah 65:22-23 – My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, Nor bring forth children for trouble

And there will be no more predators even among the animals. Carnivores will become herbivores...

Isaiah 65:25 – The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox

It always reminds me of the Millennial Kingdom when I see our cats eating grass... even they are getting ready for the curse to be removed.

So, the Millennial Kingdom is what we sing about when we sing Joy to the World...

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.*

This is what we look forward to when we anticipate the return of the Lord...

Let earth receive her King

When the nations will enjoy peace under the benevolent dictatorship of the Lord Jesus Christ when truly...

*He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove*

*The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love*

It is actually very appropriate that consider the Millennial Kingdom as the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant King David sang of in Psalm 105. Because today is the day the church celebrates Pentecost.

What happened on Pentecost?

You can read about it in Acts 2... Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit first indwelt followers of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. That why the Jewish Feast of Weeks is called Pentecost because it occurs 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits which follows the feast of Passover. Jesus fulfilled the Feast of Passover when He offered up Himself as the ultimate Passover lamb and the Feast of Firstfruits when He rose from the dead.

Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church Age also known as the Age of Grace. The Age of Grace replaced the Age of Law which began when God gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai. According to Exodus 19, that occurred during the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt. As we know the people of Israel left Egypt soon after the original Passover occurred so that would put Moses on Mount Sinai about the time of Pentecost.

Certainly, Old Testament scholars associate Pentecost with God giving Israel the Law. So that indicates a pattern here where Pentecost is the time when God begins a new age for mankind. It is likely then that some future Pentecost will mark the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Maybe that will be when the book of Revelation's 144,000 of Israel are sealed to begin serving as God's representatives on earth. I don't know, I'm only speculating.

What I do know is that the Church Age will end and that ending is the *Blessed Hope* of the church. I could go on and on about all the indications that we are in the season of the Bridegroom's return. But we are out of time for today. Suffice it to say that now is not a good time to not have Christ in your life. Those who are not born-again followers of Christ will be left behind when the Bridegroom comes for us. In God's grace those left behind will have an opportunity to become a follower of Christ. But most believers during that terrible time of transition before the Millennial Kingdom is established will have to exercise their faith by dying.

I had a pastor friend tell me he wasn't excited about the Lord returning any time soon because he wanted his kids to experience the joys of marriage and parenthood. But I am convinced that in eternity, no one will miss out on any of the good things of this life. Our experience on the future New Earth with the Lord will far exceed any joys we experience in the here and now. So, if you haven't already, don't delay inviting Jesus into your life.

If I've addressed anything this morning that you'd like to go deeper with me, let me know... I love to discuss God's prophetic Word.

Lets, pray...