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HALLEL PSALMS

Singing with Jesus at the Last Supper

STUDY GUIDE

Tremble At His Presence

Psalm 114

WELCOME & SHARING

Share any announcements, upcoming plans for your group, etc...

- ***The Man Who Ate New Orleans* Film Screening & Theology Lab.** Ray Cannata (pastor of Redeemer New Orleans) is coming to Cincinnati. There are 2 great opportunities to learn from him: (1) We are screening the film *The man Who Ate New Orleans* (about Ray's attempt to eat at all 700 non-chain restaurants in New Orleans) at the 20th Century Theatre on Friday, February 27th at 7pm. Tickets are \$5 (plus service fee) online at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1220237> Q&A will follow the film screening. (2) On Saturday, February 28th from 9-11am Ray will be facilitating a 2 part theology lab. Part 1 - Signs Amidst the Rubble: Church Planting in a Beautiful and Broken City. Part 2 - Gospel Neighboring. RSVP on the City.

- **Baby Bottle Campaign** New City is again supporting Life Forward Pregnancy Care of Cincinnati in its annual baby bottle fundraiser. Take an empty bottle on Sunday, fill it with coins, cash, or checks and return the bottles by Sunday, March 1st. The funds collected go toward providing free pregnancy tests and life-affirming guidance to women in need.

Opener Question: Josh shared about the how uncomfortable it can be to be living in a land that is not your own. Have you ever experienced a custom or cultural practice that surprised you, or you thought was strange? What was it?

Intro: Throughout Lent, which begins Ash Wednesday, we are reading through an studying the Hallel Psalms (Ps. 113-118). Hallel mean's "praise" (i.e. Hallelujah means "praise the Lord"). Jesus himself would have prayed and sang these songs at the Last Supper. We are learning to worship as Jesus worshipped.

STUDY/DISCUSSION

>>*Read*>> Psalm 114

1. What stands out to you from this passage on first read through? What is interesting? Encouraging? Challenging? Confusing?
2. What do you learn about God from this passage? What can you praise about his character?
3. What do we learn about ourselves (God's people) from this passage? What is this psalm asking of us?
4. What does it mean to "tremble at the presence of the Lord"? How would your relationship with God be different if this idea was more front and center in your life?
5. How does this passage point us to Jesus?
6. Optional ——> For those of you who are parents, what truth from this psalm do you most want to impart to your children?

PRAYER

Take some time and pray together: You can pray as a large group, break into smaller groups, split up into men and women, etc. A great way to pray would be to use this psalm as a jumping off point. If you share prayer requests, post them to the City so that your group can continue to be praying for each other.

Leader's Notes

This hymn of praise celebrates the special status of God's people in his plan: the Lord is the one whom all nature obeys, and even trembles before, and yet he has chosen little Israel to be his own, and he exerts his power on their behalf. The psalm mentions the exodus from Egypt, the covenant at Sinai that made Israel to be God's "dominion," the crossing of the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership, and God's provision for his people as they traveled through the wilderness. When the believing congregation sings this, they are better able to accept their current circumstances as under God's governance as well. The psalm uses exuberant personification, describing the Red Sea and Jordan River as if they fled from God, the mountains as skipping like lambs, and the earth as trembling at God's presence. The imagery conveys how powerful the Lord is: even the strongest natural forces would not dream of resisting him. However, the events of the psalm are not simply displays of raw power: God used his power for the sake of his people.

1.) Various answers. You probably don't need to linger too long here. Just get folks to toss out first impressions. For example, some people may not know what to make of the references to Israel, the Jordan river, water from the rock, etc. Some might be surprised we are asked to tremble before God.

2.) **Verses 1-2 tell us about God's grace to gather his people.** The psalmist recalls the exodus (when Israel went out from Egypt) and its consequence: Judah became God's sanctuary, and Israel became God's dominion, i.e., Israel is the holy place where God rules. Judah probably represents all Israel here, which would make sense if, as most scholars think, this psalm comes from after the Babylonian exile (when Judah was all that was left of the ancient people).

Some possible talking points:

- Psalm 107 describes the plight of the people in Egypt as: distressed, lost, shipwrecked, imprisoned, sick, desperate. *Can we see ourselves in any of those words? Do you believe God's grace can come to you when your life looks like that?*
- Deuteronomy 7:6-8 makes clear that God saves his people because of his grace and love, not because they have somehow merited his attention. *How does this affect our view of God? of ourselves?*

Verses 3-6 tell us about God's power. God split the Red sea (Ex. 14:21–22), and later the Jordan River (Josh. 3:15–17), for the sake of his people. The mountains may refer to God's arrival at Sinai (Ex. 19:18–20). The natural elements are personified, as if the sea, the river, and the mountains were all terrified of the Lord. This imagery is designed to show the absolute power that God has over his own creation.

Talking points:

- God moves heaven and earth to save and redeem his people. *What challenges in your life seem immovable to you right now? How is God calling you to trust in his power?*

Verses 7-8 tell us about how God preserves his people. Verse 7 makes two references to God's presence. Verse 8 recalls God's provision for his (stubborn) people in the wilderness (Exodus 17:6-7; Numbers 20:8-13).

Talking points:

- The psalmist waits this long to mention God. *Why do you suppose he does this? Who is the hero of this passage?*

3.) Verse 2 makes reference to becoming God's sanctuary and dominion. Israel was to be the place where God's commands and his presence dwelt. Exodus 19:6 sums this up well: "Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." 1 Peter 2:9 applies this calling to the church. Discuss what this means practically for us to be a kingdom of priests. On the one hand, when God comes to dwell in us, it certainly implies that our lives will be transformed (see C.S. Lewis quote below).¹ Our calling as priests is a calling to intercessory prayer for the people around us. *Do you take seriously your calling as a priest for your family? neighborhood? workplace? school?*

Most basically though, this psalm is calling us to praise God for the way he works in our lives, and in the church community. *How can we encourage each other to praise God?*

4.) It will be interesting to see how your group responds here. Psalm 2:11 says "*Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.*" Most people either tend toward serving God with fear and trembling, OR rejoicing in his presence. Psalm 2 says we can do both. I personally like the anecdote about Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

"Is—is [Aslan] a man?" asked Lucy.

¹ "Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building a quite different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself." (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 160)

“Aslan a man!” said Mr. Beaver sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—*the* Lion, the great Lion.”

“Ooh!” said Susan, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.”

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? *Who said anything about safe?* ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good.”

5.) Psalm 114 became part of the Passover liturgy. The Passover is an annual feast in which Jewish people remember Israel’s defining salvation event: the exodus. Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples was a Passover meal. He likely would have used this psalm as part of their worship before eating the meal.

Matthew 26:26-29 describes the Last Supper. Interestingly, Jesus deviates from the normal formula. He refers to the bread as “MY body” and the cup as “MY blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” In doing this, Jesus is saying that there is an even greater liberation that he will accomplish on the Cross, saving his people not from Pharaoh’s army but from sin and death. We continue the Lord’s Supper as a way of feasting on Christ’s grace and remembering the Cross as the definitive event in our life and story.

6.) Various answers. For my part, I am trying to help my kids with the tension between holy reverence (fear and trembling) before God, and the assurance that they can “approach the throne of grace with confidence.” If you hear of any great ideas about how to communicate this to kids, please let me know!!!!