

PSALMS

Chapter 95

Let Us Sing Songs of Praise

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! 3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. 5 The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. 6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, 9 when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” 11 Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

Ps 95 A call to worship the Lord, spoken by a priest or Levite to the assembled Israelites at the temple. (See introduction to Ps 93.) The psalm is composed of two parts: (1) a call to praise the Lord of all the earth (vv. 1–5); (2) a call to acknowledge by submissive attitude and obedient heart the Lord’s kingship over his people (vv. 6–11). Each part also has two subdivisions, the latter of which forms the climax. Cf. the structure of Ps 96. – Like the remaining psalms in this group, Psalm 95 sounds a joyful call to worship. However, it also tempers it with a solemn warning against throwing away the opportunity to serve God, as Israel did in the wilderness. (PBC)

In the midst of national crisis, this psalm would assure people that God is King over all, even when they suffer defeat and death (cf Ps 90). The psalm references temple practices such as procession and bowing. The text may have prepared people to hear the reading of God’s Word, such as at the Festival of Booths or Tabernacles. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–5, call to exuberant and joyful worship because God still reigns; vv 6–11, stern warning not to rebel as the Israelites did. (TLSB)

95:1–7 *Oh come.* Lat *Venite*. See canticle in *LSB*, pp 220–21. (TLSB)

95:1–2 The call to praise. (CSB)

95:1 *let us sing...make a joyful noise* – Both verbs call for loud, enthusiastic, joyful praise to be given to the Lord. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

Rock of our salvation. Rock” is a common poetic figure for God, symbolizing his unflinching strength as a fortress refuge.) (CSB)

95:3–5 Why Israel is to praise the Lord—because he is above all gods, and there is no corner of the universe that is not in his hand. The ancient pagan world had different gods for different peoples, different geographical areas, different cosmic regions (heaven, earth, netherworld) and different aspects of life (e.g., war, fertility, crafts). (CSB)

95:3 *gods*. There is only one true God. (TLSB)

95:4–5 *depths ... mountain peaks ... sea ... dry land*. All the world—the extremes and all that lies between and all that is in them. (CSB)

God’s hands are pictured as holding what He has made (v 5) and caring for His people (v 7). Along with vast expanses of the sea and dry land in v 5, these images picture all the earth as God’s possession; indeed, the whole universe is His. (TLSB)

Several examples of the Lord’s greatness are offered in terms of the areas that are under His control. Even those vast unknown and “unexplored regions” of the earth that seems to lie therefore forgotten and purposeless remain entirely within His control. Also, for that matter, everything that lies buried and hid in the mountains, of whose vast mineral wealth we are now more than ever aware – what we might call “the resources of the mountains” – these are also His. He controls the areas which the hand and power of man cannot reach. (Leupold)

95:6–11 The exhortation to submit to the Lord with obedient hearts—a bent knee is not enough. For a NT reflection on these verses in the light of the advent of Christ see Heb 3:7–4:13. (CSB)

95:6–7 The call to confess submission to the Lord by kneeling before him. (CSB)

95:6 *he made it*. Both as Creator of all things (see Ge 1) and as Israel’s Redeemer, he has “made” her what she is: the people of the Lord in the earth (see Isa 45:9–13; 51:12–16). (CSB)

95:7 *people of his pasture*. See 100:3; Jer 23:1; Eze 34:21. Since kings were commonly called the “shepherds” of their people, their realms could be referred to as their “pastures” (see Jer 25:36; 49:20; 50:45). (CSB)

As a shepherd protects and provides for his flock, a good king cares for the people of his nation. (Kings were often referred to as shepherds.) David, Israel’s great king, was a shepherd in his youth. God is the great King (v 3) who protects and provides for His people. Jesus would later say He is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11–17). Augustine: “See how elegantly he has transposed the order of the words ... that we may understand these very same to be the sheep, who are also His people” (NPNF 1 8:469). (TLSB)

hear his voice. In the liturgy of the religious festival, possibly in some such manner as Ps 50 and/or 78. (CSB)

Includes both listening to the words and obeying what is said. (TLSB)

95:8–11 Recalls Israel’s 40 years of wilderness wandering, when the people often complained and rebelled against Moses and God’s provision for them. (TLSB)

95:8 *harden your hearts*. To stubbornly rebel against what God has said. (TLSB)

Meribah ... Massah. The leader of the liturgy reminds Israel of times of her rebellion in the desert (see Ex 17:7; Nu 20:13). (CSB)

“Testing.” Cf Ex 17:7. Even after God had brought them out of Egyptian slavery, the people still questioned whether God was with them. In Heb 3:7–4:12, this stubborn refusal to take God at His

word is applied to all who hear God's Word but reject it. The "today" of v 7 is every day (Heb 3:13), and the warning is that we not become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin as the Israelites had, but listen and obey God's voice in His Word. (TLSB)

95:9 *me*. Official representatives of the Lord, when speaking for him, could shift to first person (see 50:5, 7–15). (CSB)

My work. God's rescue of Israel, which included such awesome works as the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillars of fire and cloud to lead them in safety, and food and drink for all the people (Ex 1–19). (TLSB)

had seen my work. In Egypt and at the Red Sea—and his provision of food in the desert (see Ex 16; see also Nu 14:11). (CSB)

95:10 *forty years*. The climax of Israel's rebellion came when she faithlessly refused to undertake the conquest of Canaan and considered returning to Egypt (see Nu 14:1–4). It was then that God condemned her to a 40-year stay in the desert (see Nu 14:34). (CSB)

loathed. God's reaction to rebellion is one of disgust and revulsion. (TLSB)

that generation. The (adult) Israelites who came out of Egypt and covenanted with God at Sinai (see Nu 32:13). (CSB)

They are a people ... my ways. A restatement of the Lord's word in Nu 14:11. (CSB)

95:11 *I swore*. See Nu 14:28. (CSB)

What God says, He will do. He said that the exodus generation would not enter the Promised Land, so they wandered for 40 years until a new generation had grown up. His warning still stands. (TLSB)

not enter my rest. The language of Nu 14:30 is "not one of you will enter the land," but since the promised land was also called the place where God will give his people "rest" (Jos 1:13, 15; see Ex 33:14; Dt 12:10; 25:19), the two statements are equivalent. (CSB)

For those coming out of slavery in Egypt, God's rest was the Promised Land, a place to live in peace. But Heb 3–4 expands that rest to include salvation: our eternal rest in God's presence. (TLSB)

rest. Here a fertile concept indicating Israel's possession of a place with God in the earth where she is secure from all external threats and internal calamities (see 1Ki 5:4). (CSB)

Ps 95 The opening verses have been sung in the Church for centuries as the *Venite* (Latin for "O come"). Some days we struggle to come into God's presence with such exuberance and humility. Thankfully, the psalmist directs us not to self-generated emotions, but to remember the God we worship. He is our Creator, who has formed and protected us by His strong hands. And wonderfully more—He is our Good Shepherd, who has made us the sheep of His loving hand. • Shepherd and King, lead us into Your presence with thanksgiving and joy. Amen. (TLSB)