

# PSALMS

## Chapter 105

*Tell of All His Wondrous Works*

**Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! 2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! 3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! 4 Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually! 5 Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered, 6 O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones! 7 He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. 8 He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, 9 the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, 10 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, 11 saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance." 12 When they were few in number, of little account, and sojourners in it, 13 wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, 14 he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, 15 saying, "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!" 16 When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, 17 he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. 18 His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; 19 until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. 20 The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; 21 he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, 22 to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom. 23 Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. 24 And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes. 25 He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants. 26 He sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen. 27 They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made the land dark; they did not rebel against his words. 29 He turned their waters into blood and caused their fish to die. 30 Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the chambers of their kings. 31 He spoke, and there came swarms of flies, and gnats throughout their country. 32 He gave them hail for rain, and fiery lightning bolts through their land. 33 He struck down their vines and fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country. 34 He spoke, and the locusts came, young locusts without number, 35 which devoured all the vegetation in their land and ate up the fruit of their ground. 36 He struck down all the firstborn in their land, the firstfruits of all their strength. 37 Then he brought out Israel with silver and gold, and there was none among his tribes who stumbled. 38 Egypt was glad when they departed, for dread of them had fallen upon it. 39 He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to give light by night. 40 They asked, and he brought quail, and gave them bread from heaven in abundance. 41 He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. 42 For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. 43 So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. 44 And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, 45 that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!**

**Ps 105** An exhortation to Israel to worship and trust in the Lord because of all his saving acts in fulfillment of his covenant with Abraham to give his descendants the land of Canaan. It was composed to be addressed to Israel by a Levite (see 1Ch 16:7 and compare vv. 1–15 with 1Ch

16:8–22) on one of her annual religious festivals (see chart on “OT Feasts and Other Sacred Days”), possibly the Feast of Tabernacles (see Lev 23:34) but more likely the Feast of Weeks (see Ex 23:16; Lev 23:15–21; Nu 28:26; Dt 16:9–12; see also Dt 26:1–11). For other recitals of the same history (but for different purposes) see Ps 78; 106; Jos 24:2–13; Ne 9:7–25. (CSB)

The introduction is composed of seven verses in two parts: (1) an exhortation (with ten imperatives) to worship the Lord (vv. 1–4); (2) a call to remember what the Lord has done (vv. 5–7). The main body that follows is framed by two four-verse stanzas (vv. 8–11, 42–45) that summarize—as introduction and conclusion—its main theme: The Lord has remembered his covenant with Abraham. The editors of the Psalter have added an outer frame of “Hallelujahs” (see introduction to Ps 104; see also note on 104:35). (CSB)

Ps 105 and 106 stand together as they recall God’s promise to Abraham to bring Israel into the Promised Land and the mighty ways He kept that promise. Ps 105 focuses on God’s grace, while Ps 106 describes the people’s rebellion and their continued need for mercy. Ps 105:1–15 appears in 1Ch 16:8–22 at the joyous occasion of David’s bringing the ark to Jerusalem, indicating it was used in worship on festival occasions celebrating the covenant God made with His people. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–6, call to praise; vv 7–11, God’s promise of a land; vv 12–15, the Lord’s care for the patriarchs; vv 16–25, Joseph; vv 26–36, Moses and the plagues; vv 37–42, the exodus; vv 43–45, conquest of Canaan. (TLSB)

**105:1–4** The exhortation to worship and trust. (CSB)

**105:1-6** *call ... make known ... Sing ... Glory ... seek His presence.* “That is the true honor of His name, to look to it and call upon it for all consolation” (LC I 70). (TLSB)

The piling up of these directives would have been very effective in calling the attention of the worshipers to the necessity of praise. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**105:1** *Give thanks.* Through praise. (CSB)

*call upon.* In prayer (see v. 4). The first two imperatives highlight the two themes of the ten imperatives of the exhortation: praise and prayer as expressions of devotion to the Lord (celebration of his past saving acts; trust in him for future deliverance and blessing). (CSB)

*make known... among the peoples.* As an integral part of praise. (CSB)

Augustine: “This confession is to be understood as praise, ... whence the Lord’s Prayer itself has at the commencement a very brief praise, in these words, ‘Our Father which art in Heaven.’ The things prayed for, then follow” (NPNF 1 8:520). (TLSB)

**105:2** *wondrous works.* Augustine: “Praise Him both by word and deed; for we sing with the voice, while we play with an instrument, that is, with our hands” (NPNF 1 8:520). (TLSB)

**105:3** The verb “to seek” gives the sense of seeking help or guidance from the Lord in prayer and worship, or in making inquiry through priests or prophets. So describing the faithful as those who seek the Lord and his strength, to seek his face always. By doing so they will receive his favor, their faith will be strengthened and they will have more occasions to praise the Lord. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**105:5–7** Exhortation to remember God’s saving acts. (CSB)

Most of the rest of the psalm is a review of the Lord’s past faithfulness to the covenant, arranged in historical order. (PBC)

**105:5** *Remember*. As a motivation for and focus of worship and the basis for trust—remember how the Lord has remembered (see vv. 8–11). (CSB)

Basis for this joyful worship, particularly God’s rescuing His people from slavery and giving them the Promised Land. (TLSB)

*judgments*. Righteous decisions God rendered for the benefit of His people and against those who had oppressed Israel (cf 48:11). (TLSB)

*uttered*. As Lord, he commands and it is done. (CSB)

**105:7-11** *covenant ... word ... promise ... statute*. Words built on one another to stress that God will remember His pledge to His people. The covenant is entirely God’s initiative. God chooses Israel as His people, delivers them, and reveals to them how they are to respond both in faith to Him and in trusting obedience to His Law. (TLSB)

*forever ... thousand generations ... everlasting*. Emphasizes that God will never forget the promises He made to Abraham (Gn 17:8), Isaac (Gn 26:3–4), and Jacob (Gn 28:13–14). (TLSB)

**105:8–11** The Lord remembers his covenant with Abraham (see vv. 42–45). (CSB)

**105:8** *remembers* – To remember something means to act on it, to be loyal to it – here to be faithful to his covenant promises. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

*covenant*. The promissory covenant of Ge 15:9–21. This verse and v. 9 may be echoed in Lk 1:72–73. (CSB)

The covenant is unlimited – its promises are for a thousand generations. They are valid forever because their fulfillment depends on the Lord and his plan for the ages. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

*thousand generations*. See Ex 20:6; Dt 7:9; 1Ch 16:15. (CSB)

The covenant was initiated with the patriarchs by God’s grace – he chose them and gave his promises to them; but those promises were not fulfilled in the time of the patriarchs. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**105:10** *as an everlasting covenant*. As a fixed policy governing his future actions. (CSB)

**105:12–41** A recital of God’s saving acts in Israel’s behalf from the granting of the covenant (see v. 11; Ge 15:9–20) to its fulfillment (see v. 44; Jos 21:43). Cf. the recital prescribed by Moses in conjunction with the offering of firstfruits (Dt 26:1–11). (CSB)

**105:12-15** *they*. Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Although the promise had been given, the land was not yet theirs. Israel's humble beginnings are as semi-nomads, wandering from place to place, chosen (Dt 7:7) and protected (Gn 20:2-7) by God's grace. (TLSB)

**105:14-15** When Abraham and Isaac got into trouble by their own lies and deception (Gen 12,20,26), God protected them from the kings of Egypt and Philistia. He protected Jacob from Laban and from Esau (Gen 28-32). He protected Israel when Jacob's sons stirred up the hostility of the land by their slaughter of the Shechemites (Gen 34). Finally he saved them from the famine and from being absorbed by the Canaanites by sending Joseph to Egypt to prepare a place for them (Gen 37). (PBC)

**105:15** *My anointed ... My prophets*. The patriarchs spoke for God to His people. (TLSB)

The point of the section is that God protected his people because he chose them and made a covenant with them so that they would be his representatives in the earth. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**105:16-22** Summary of Gn 37-50. (TLSB)

**105:16** *summoned a famine*. Joseph's rise to greatness is not attributed to his own efforts but to God's direction. The Lord uses disasters and what was intended for evil (Gn 50:20) to save His people. (TLSB)

**105:18** *fetters ... irons* That is, shackles of iron. The poet takes the freedom to use a later conventional description of prisoners (see Job 13:27; 33:11). (Shackles are not spoken of in Ge 39:20-23, and iron came into common use for them at a later time—earlier shackles were made of bronze; see Jdg 16:21.) (CSB)

Augustine: "That Joseph was put in irons, we do not indeed read; but we ought no ways to doubt that it was so. For some things might be passed over in that history, which nevertheless would not escape the Holy Spirit, who speaks in these Psalms" (*NPNF* 1 8:523). (TLSB)

**105:19** *he*. Joseph, interpreter of Pharaoh's dreams. (TLSB)

**105:22** *to bind*. Dramatic reversal. The one once bound (Gn 39:20) now binds or rules those who had imprisoned him. (TLSB)

*bind*. He whose "neck" (v. 18; Hebrew *nephesh*) had been shackled was given authority to "bind" Pharaoh's princes "as he pleased" (Hebrew "with his *nephesh*"—here meaning his will). (CSB)

*elders*. Pharaoh's counselors, conventionally older men of wide experience and learning. (CSB)

Old age and wisdom are strongly associated in Scripture. (TLSB)

**105:23, 27** *land of Ham*. Ham was associated with Egypt. (CSB)

**105:23-25** *Ham*. Egypt. Israel comes to Egypt during the famine (Gn 46), rapidly increases in numbers (Ex 1:7), and a new pharaoh enslaves them (Ex 1:8-16). (TLSB)

**105:25** *turned*. In OT perspective God’s sovereign control over Israel’s destiny is so complete that it governs—mysteriously—even the evil that men commit against her; hence the bold language used here (see Ex 4:21; 7:3; Jos 11:20; 2Sa 24:1; Isa 10:5–7; 37:26–27; Jer 34:22). (CSB)

Augustine: “It was not then by making their hearts evil, but by doing good to His people, that He turned [the Egyptians’] hearts, that were evil of their own accord, to hatred” (*NPNF* 1 8:524). (TLSB)

**105:23-25** Poetic summary of Ex 1–12. The order of plagues is treated with some liberty as the ninth plague, darkness, is mentioned first (emphasizes the thought of Ex 11:3). The plagues of flies and gnats are reversed. Two plagues, cattle sickness and boils, are omitted. Augustine: “Praisegiving is free from the law which binds one who is relating or composing a history” (*NPNF* 1 8:524). (TLSB)

**105:28–36** Recital of the plagues against Egypt. In this poetic recollection seven plagues (symbolizing completeness) represent the ten plagues of Ex 7–11. Apart from omissions (the plagues of livestock disease and boils) the poet follows the order of Exodus except that he combines the third and fourth plagues (gnats and flies)—in reverse order—to stay within the number seven. He also places the ninth plague (darkness) first in order to frame his recital with mention of the two plagues that climaxed the series. (CSB)

**105:37–42** God richly keeps His promise by leading His people out of Egypt (Ex 12:33–36) and giving His divine protection (Dt 8:4). He guides and provides for His people as they travel through the wilderness (Ex 13:21–22; 16:13–15; 17:1–7). (TLSB)

**105:39** for *a covering*. Elsewhere it is said that the cloud (symbolic of God’s presence) served (1) as a guide for Israel in her desert journeys (see 78:14; Ex 13:21; Nu 9:17; Ne 9:12, 19), (2) as a shield of darkness to protect Israel from the pursuing Egyptians (see Ex 14:19–20) and (3) as a covering for the fiery manifestations of God’s glorious presence (see Ex 16:10; 24:16; 34:5; 40:34–35, 38; Nu 11:25; 12:5; 16:42; Dt 31:15; 1Ki 8:11). The psalmist appears to highlight yet another function: God’s protective cover over his people in the desert, perhaps as his shading. (CSB)

**105:40** *bread from heaven*. So called because it came down from heaven. (CSB)

**105:41** *like a river*. Poetically heightened imagery to evoke due wonder for the event. This miracle of the desert wanderings concludes the recital and has been placed in climactic position as one of the most striking manifestations of God’s redeeming power and benevolence (see 114:8; Isa 43:19–20; cf. Isa 50:2). (CSB)

**105:42–45** Concluding summary (balancing the introduction to the recital: vv. 8–11). (CSB)

**105:43-45** Echo of the great songs of thanksgiving when God led Israel to the victories that would give them the Promised Land (Jsh 11:23). (TLSB)

**105:42** *he remembered his holy promise* – This verse is the key to the psalm. God’s remembrance of his covenant is more than a calling to mind. It is taking decisive action for the benefit of his people. God’s faithfulness was not due to Israel’s worthiness, but to his own faithfulness to the promise he had made to the patriarchs. (PBC)

**105:45 statutes.** God has kept his “decree” (v. 10) so that Israel might keep his “precepts”—the Hebrew word is the same. God’s redemptive working in fulfillment of his covenant promise has as its goal the creating of a people in the earth who conform their lives to his holy will. Thus the list of appropriate responses begun in v. 1—praise and prayer (trust)—is completed by the third: obedience (see Ge 18:19). (CSB)

The focus has been almost exclusively on what God has done for His people. Now, the people respond with obedience. Keeping God’s laws flows from faith, out of the relationship God gave to these people when He chose them as His own. (TLSB)

**Ps 105** God frees His people from slavery. Christ has rescued us from sin and its eternal punishment. All God’s promises find their fulfillment in Jesus, who hung on the cross and then ushered in a new era by rising from the grave. Abraham’s true descendants are those whose faith in Christ is counted to them as righteousness (Gal 3:6–9). Gathered together by Jesus, we now belong to the Church, which knows no geographical boundaries. • Praise the Lord, for in Christ we received the blessings promised to Abraham. Amen. (TLSB)