

Psalms 116-120 – Chapter Study

Psalm 116

There's no marker for when this psalm was written.

While many of the psalms hint at an event that allows us to glean when it was composed, several contain no such hints.

In several of those psalms, the intent seems to be prophetic.

Such is the case with 116; it looks like a celebration of the Resurrection.

1 I love the Lord, because He has heard My voice *and* my supplications.

2 Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as I live.

As the next vs make clear – the psalmist had cried out to God for help.

God heard & answered, so he praises & thanks Him.

3 The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.

4 Then I called upon the name of the Lord: “O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!”

Jesus did indeed taste death.

He didn't just pass-out on the cross; He died.

He was laid in the tomb and as it says in Ephesians 4, descended into the realm of the dead.

There he announced to those who'd died in faith what He'd done to effect the redemption of the human race.

Throughout his ordeal on the cross, Jesus never lost hope in the Father.

Even when He was made sin & fellowship was suspended as he bore our guilt, Jesus still clung by faith to God.

He called out to Him, and God delivered Him.

5 Gracious *is* the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God *is* merciful.

6 The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me.

Each of us have different capacities.

Some are ***intelligent***, others ***not so much***.

Some are ***clever***, others ***awkward***.

Whatever our capacity, God knows us intimately & deals with us according to our uniqueness.

He knows the simple need more grace & gives it.

He's careful with us when circumstances conspire to overwhelm us.

He knows exactly how much is ***too much*** & in mercy won't allow us to be crushed beyond repair.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says –

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

7 Return to your rest, O my soul, For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

The word 'rest' here is plural = ***rests***.

Hebrew sometimes makes a single noun plural to indicate ***abundance***.

We see it when the single noun El/God, is changed to the plural Elohim/gods, & used for God because of the greatness of His glory & power.

The idea here is that God has brought the psalmist into such a safe place of peace, everywhere he turns he sees more of it.

8 For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, *And* my feet from falling.

9 I will walk before the Lord In the land of the living.

Now he looks back when his great trail was beginning to press in on him.

10 I believed, therefore I spoke, “I am greatly afflicted.”

This is akin to what Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane as the plot against Him was unfolding.

11 I said in my haste [or, distress], “All men *are* liars.”

These are not Jesus' words; they're the psalmists.

But Jesus ***did*** experience being forsaken by all in the Garden.

12 What shall I render to the Lord *For* all His benefits toward me?

13 I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord.

14 I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people.

God had been completely faithful to Him; He would be faithful in return.

15 Precious in the sight of the Lord *Is* the death of His saints.

This ought to be a great comfort to us.

There are 2 sides to the death of the believer; Our side, & God's side.

[Passing thru a door]

We see the exit & have sorrow at the long halt to fellowship.

What does God see?

They enter glory! They exit all the stuff that distressed them.

It's like a child walking through the gate into DisneyWorld!

We often say in trying to comfort family & friends at the death of a loved one that God took them because He wanted them in heaven – as though God missed them.

Not really. But because of His great LOVE for them, He does yearn for them put the pain & sorrow of this life behind them and enter in to the fullness of their salvation that only heaven can give.

That's why their death is precious in God's sight.

16 O Lord, truly I *am* Your servant; I *am* Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds.

That makes it clear this is ***prophetic*** of Jesus.

By becoming a man, He became a servant.

In the resurrection, He was not only delivered from death; He was liberated from the physical constraints of a mortal body.

17 I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the Lord.

18 I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people,

19 In the courts of the Lord's house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!

There is both a literal & spiritual way this is fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus.

After the resurrection, the Holy Spirit came to indwell all believers, making them, as Paul says in Ephesians & Corinthians, the temple of God.

But there's a way Jesus will fulfill this literally.

When He comes again, He will set up His throne in Jerusalem.

Psalms 117

1 Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud [Praise] Him, all you peoples!

2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord *endures* forever. Praise the Lord!

In the shortest psalm & chapter of the Bible, all nations are called to worship God.

Paul quotes v. 1 in Romans 15 & shows how it was always God's plan to save the Gentiles.

There's a great hymn by Isaac Watts that captures the essence of this psalm.

From all that dwell below the skies, Let – the Creator's praise arise;

Let the Redeemer's name be sung, Through every land, by every tongue.

Eternal are Your mercies, Lord; Eternal truth attends Your word;

Your praise shall sound from shore to shore, Till suns shall rise and set no more.

Psalms 118

This psalm was most likely written after the Exile in Babylon.

It both looks back to what had happened in the Judah's defeat, but also forward into the future.

Remember what we saw last week

In the Bible, prophecy isn't so much about foretelling a single future event as it is a description of the whole future.

While there's an ultimate fulfillment of prophecy, it's also a pattern form something that occurs again & again so that each generation sees for itself the faithfulness of God & the trustworthiness of His Word.

While some of this looks back to commemorate God's faithfulness in bringing the captives back from Babylon,

another part looks to future deliverance.

We're going to read this Psalm the way ancient Israel did. Stand.

Vs. 1-4 = I say the first half, you say "His mercy endures forever"

BTW – When we read something here that fires you up – Say so!

1 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for *He is* good!

- For His mercy *endures* forever.

2 Let Israel now say,

- "His mercy *endures* forever."

3 Let the house of Aaron [the priests] now say,

- "His mercy *endures* forever."

4 Let those who fear the Lord now say,

- "His mercy *endures* forever."

Then I read thru v. 9 -

5 I called on the Lord in distress; The Lord answered me *and set me* in a broad place.

6 The Lord *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? [Yeah!]

7 The Lord is for me among those who help me;

God stirs up people to assist us.

Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.

8 *It is* better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in man.

Then, to show how important it is that we take that to heart, it's repeated.

9 *It is* better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in princes.

Now, the psalm stretches out to look to the End Times & the Tribulation . . .

10 All nations surrounded me,

- But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

11 They surrounded me, Yes, they surrounded me;

- But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

12 They surrounded me like bees; They were quenched like a fire of thorns;

- For in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

During the last half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will attack the Jews & try to wipe them out.

But God secrets them away to a protected place in Jordan.

There they're kept safe while the Antichrist wastes his forces in trying to attack.

The author speaks to his adversary directly -

13 You pushed me violently, that I might fall, But the Lord helped me.

14 The Lord *is* my strength and song, And He has become my salvation.
Many scholars believe that it's during this time, when Israel is hidden away in their wilderness fortress, as the Antichrist's forces are pressing after them, that the nation finally realizes Jesus IS their Messiah.

And it's then that they cry out with united voice, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"
Saying the name, finally – Yeshua/Jesus!

And **that** is what launches the Second Coming.

For Jesus said in Matt 23:39 He would not come **until** the Israel called, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" **to Him!**

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *Is* in the tents of the righteous;

- The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

They're living in tents because they're in that End Times wilderness fastness in Jordan.

16 The right hand of the Lord is exalted;

- The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

While they're hiding out, they watch as wave after wave of the antichrist's forces assault their positions but are driven back miraculously by God.

Israel will at this time literally stand still & see the salvation of God protecting them.

It will be like the crossing of the Red Sea & the destruction of Pharaoh's army all over again.

17 I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of the Lord.

18 The Lord has chastened me severely, But He has not given me over to death.

And that's exactly what the Tribulation will be – the time of Jacob's Trouble.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them,

- *And* I will praise the Lord.

20 This is the gate of the Lord, Through which the righteous shall enter.

Jesus said He was the door, the gate for the flock of God.

21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation.

To make it crystal this is Messianic, we have several vs. quoted in the NT regarding Jesus -

22 The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.

That's quoted 6 times in the NT!

It refers to Jesus whom the **religious leaders rejected** but has become the foundation for the real work & people of God.

23 This was the Lord's doing;

- It *is* marvelous in our eyes.

24 This *is* the day the Lord has made;

- We will rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save now, I pray, O Lord;

- Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.

That's what the people shouted as Jesus made His triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Now, here's the thing – **IF** the national & religious LEADERS had **joined** the people in shouting this to Jesus, welcoming Him as Messiah, He may indeed have begun His reign.

But they didn't. They pleaded with Him to **silence** the people.

That's why He gave that cryptic reply, "If they were to be silent, the very stones would cry out."

Because, v. 24 –

This *is* the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.

That exact day had been prophesied in Daniel 9.

Since the Word of God cannot be broken, if the people had stopped rejoicing, God would make the stones rejoice.

Because the leaders rejected Jesus as Messiah, they lost everything.

And now their Messiah won't come until they say –

26 Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the Lord!

- We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.

27 God *is* the Lord, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

28 You *are* my God, and I will praise You;

- You *are* my God, I will exalt You.

29 Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for *He is* good!

- For His mercy *endures* forever.

Psalm 119

This is another acrostic, where each line begins with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Vs. 1-8 all begin with Aleph. Vs. 9-16 start with Beth, and so on for all 22 letters.

While Psalm 117 is the **shortest** chapter in the Bible, 119 is by far the **longest** at 176 vs.

EVERY verse is some way or another refers to God's Law.

We don't know who wrote it but the best guess is David because no mention of the temple is made.

From what we find in the psalm it looks like the author wants to live faithfully for the Lord in the midst of a generation that doesn't.

He gets no encouragement to live a godly life so he retreats to God's Word for comfort & solace.

It's not hard to imagine David writing this as a young man who was just beginning to see what things were like at the heart of power in Israel when he first went to serve in Saul's court.

For all of Israel's history as a nation in covenant with God, he didn't see anything to suggest that among those who held power.

And when he suggested those ruling turn to the Lord, he was ridiculed.

That's very much the kind of things the author of this psalm endured.

The psalm is so long, we won't read every verse.

I'll just cherry-pick some along the way.

Let's begin by seeing how every verse refers to the Law . . .

1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the Lord!

2 Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!

3 They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways.

4 You have commanded *us* To keep Your precepts diligently.

5 Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes!

6 Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments.

7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart, When I learn Your righteous judgments.

8 I will keep Your statutes; Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.
A pure & holy life is fostered by studying, meditating on, and applying God's Word.

10 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.
We hide God's Word in our hearts by memorizing it.

18 Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.
It's a good idea when reading the Word to begin with this prayer.

24 Your testimonies also *are* my delight *And* my counselors.
Wise counselors are a valuable resource. What better guidance can we get than from God Himself?

27 Make me understand the way of Your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.
Beyond the details of what the Law commands are principles that stand in truth.
Rather than a slavish observance of a rule, we ought to understand the truth behind the rule and seek to implement that.

For instance, We are to dress modestly. **Why?**

For one reason, immodesty can encourage lust which turns people into objects to use.
Any time a human being is degraded, down-graded from an image bearer of God into an object for pleasure, it does damage to the value of life.

32 I will run the course of Your commandments, For You shall enlarge my heart.
Athletes who engage in strenuous cardiovascular activity have larger & more efficient hearts.
In the Bible, the heart is the center of all a person is as an image-bearer of God.
A larger heart means the person has a greater capacity to live the life God originally intend us to have.
Contrary to the lies the devil tells, living God's Word makes us **more alive** – not less!

36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness.

37 Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, *And* revive me in Your way.
Sight is a powerful stimulant to brain. Certain images can trigger the release of chemicals that alter our internal chemistry & make us desire something.

WE face a specially fierce battle with this because of modern media.

The best counteractant to images that would entice us to sin is to filter them through God's Word.

You're looking through a magazine & see a really nice dress.
And the want for it makes you anxious You're **coveting** that dress.
Then the Spirit reminds you of what Jesus said – "Even Solomon in all his glory didn't come close to the beauty God clothes the flowers of the field in."

57 *You are* my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your words.

As everyone goes through life struggling for their piece of the pie, the enduring heritage of God's people is that they have quit the consumerism rat-race because they've found something better, more satisfying A relationship w/God.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

While we could wish we could learn everything we need to in sunny fields of plenty, the fact is, there are some things we can't learn except on the road marked with suffering.

It seems to be human nature that when everything's going smoothly, we lose the urgency of seeking God.
When trouble comes, we cry for help.

The psalmist recognized his own tendency to do this and thanked God for the hard times a& lessons they taught him.

97 Oh, how I love Your law! *It is* my meditation all the day.

He treasured it like a love letter from his beloved.

98 You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they *are* ever with me.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.

100 I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.

What set the psalmist apart from his enemies & the so-called experts of his day, was his utter reliance on God's Word.

105 Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

His life was directed by the counsel God's word provided.

114 You *are* my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word.

130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

133 Direct my steps by Your word, And let no iniquity have dominion over me.

159 Consider how I love Your precepts; Revive me, O Lord, according to Your lovingkindness.

Psalm 120

Psalm 120-136 are called the ***Songs of Ascent***.

These were sung by the pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem for the annual feasts.

It's thought that as they turned from the Jordan plain around Jericho & began the trip up to Jerusalem, they would sing these psalms to mark off the journey.

1 In my distress I cried to the Lord, And He heard me.

2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips *And* from a deceitful tongue.

This first song of ascent pictures the pilgrim leaving home to make the journey to Jerusalem.

They live among people who are far from God but leave them to make the pilgrimage.

3 What shall be given to you, Or what shall be done to you, You false tongue?

The question can only be asked by one who stands apart from sin.

The pilgrim has begun their journey.

They turn around & say this to show they are separating from evil.

4 Sharp arrows of the warrior, With coals of the broom tree!

Lies are like arrows & hot coals; they wound by piercing & burning.

5 Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech, *That* I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

These were 2 places associated with opposition to God.

6 My soul has dwelt too long With one who hates peace.

7 I *am* for peace;

Peace with God.

But when I speak, they *are* for war.

Because sinners are at war with God.

It seems depressing that these psalms which celebrate going to the temple to Worship God should begin with such a depressing Psalm.

But it's realistic! // We live in a fallen world at war with God.

We're not going to get ANY encouragement to love & serve the Lord from the world.

What we're going to get is constant grief about it.

As you thought about coming tonight, you didn't get any encouragement to do so from people at work, on the radio.

If your family members aren't saved, they didn't encourage you to come tonight.

Don't look to the world for support in living for God; expect opposition.

Then steel your resolve & press on!