

Psalms 95-100 • The Messiah in the Psalms

Introduction

Hebrew scholars from old have identified these Psalms as speaking of the Messiah. There are even Hebrew scholars today who believe this even though they reject Jesus as the Messiah. So as a kind of exercise, the following study assumes that this observation is correct and seeks to discern what they tell us about the Messiah, what the people of Jesus' day were probably expecting, and how it ultimately compares with what we know of Christ's ministry.

¹O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD,
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our
salvation.

²Let us come before His presence with
thanksgiving,
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

³For the Lord is a great God
And a great King above all gods,

⁴In whose hand are the depths of the
earth,

The peaks of the mountains are His also.

⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made
it,

And His hands formed the dry land.

⁶Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.

⁷For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture and
the sheep of His hand.

Today, if you would hear His voice,

⁸Do not harden your hearts, as at
Meribah,

As in the day of Massah in the
wilderness,

⁹“When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My
work.

¹⁰For forty years I loathed that generation,
And said they are a people who err in
their heart,

And they do not know My ways.

¹¹Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”

¹Sing to the LORD a new song;
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.

²Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation
from day to day.

³Tell of His glory among the nations,
His wonderful deeds among all the
peoples.

⁴For great is the LORD and greatly to be
praised;

He is to be feared above all gods.

⁵For all the gods of the peoples are idols,

[Read Psalm 95]

Q: What are the main characteristics of the Messiah in terms of what He is called in this Psalm?

1. “God” (v.3)
2. “King” (v.3)
3. “Maker” (v.6)
4. And by inference to the fact that we are His sheep residing in His pasture, Shepherd. (v.6)

Q: From these qualities, was the Messiah expected to be just another man?

A: The qualities and titles assigned to the Messiah indicate that He is on the same level as God Himself, Ruler over both heaven and earth, and present from the beginning as Creator.

Point: The Old Testament Hebrew scholars identified the Godhead as comprised of God, the Holy Spirit, and a third person they called the “Metatrone”, who we recognize as Christ the Son of God. In theological terms, He is called the “pre-incarnate Christ” whenever He appears in the Old Testament.

Q: And what example is given of the pre-incarnate Christ's presence in this Psalm?

A: That He was present with Israel in the wilderness. In fact, it was He with whom they were actually dealing.

Q: How were their dealings with Christ in the Old Testament similar to His earthly incarnation as Jesus in the New?

A: Although they saw His work bringing them out of Egypt to the Promised Land, they did not fully accept and believe Him, instead testing and trying Him. In the same way, during Jesus' ministry on earth, they witnessed His signs and miracles and yet tested Him by asking for even more. Both generations failed and therefore did not “enter into My rest”.

Point: Those who truly hear His voice become obedient to His Word and ways as sheep who follow the Shepherd and live in the pasture He designates; those who do not fail to enter into that place and relationship with Him.

[Read Psalm 96]

Q: What is the chief characteristic or title of the Messiah in this Psalm?

A: Judge. (v.13)

Q: How is this role described? Of what does it consist?

1. He is not just over the whole earth (v.1), all the nations and all the peoples (v.3), and even the heavens (v.5), but is “above all gods” (v.4) and deserving of praise by everyone and everything.
2. He is to be worshiped in “His courts” (v.8) and “in holy attire” (v.9). This is the Old Testament way of stating that one must be spiritually clean – unpolluted by sin – and properly consecrated for His service.

But the LORD made the heavens.
⁶Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the
peoples,

Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His
name;

Bring an offering and come into His
courts.

⁹Worship the LORD in holy attire;

Tremble before Him, all the earth.

¹⁰Say among the nations, "The LORD
reigns;

Indeed, the world is firmly established, it
will not be moved;

He will judge the peoples with equity."

¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the
earth rejoice;

Let the sea roar, and all it contains;

¹²Let the field exult, and all that is in it.

Then all the trees of the forest will sing
for joy

¹³Before the LORD, for He is coming,

For He is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness

And the peoples in His faithfulness.

¹The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice;
Let the many islands be glad.

²Clouds and thick darkness surround
Him;

Righteousness and justice are the
foundation of His throne.

³Fire goes before Him

And burns up His adversaries round
about.

⁴His lightnings lit up the world;

The earth saw and trembled.

⁵The mountains melted like wax at the
presence of the LORD,

At the presence of the LORD of the whole
earth.

⁶The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen His glory.

⁷Let all those be ashamed who serve
graven images,

Who boast themselves of idols;

Worship Him, all you gods.

⁸Zion heard this and was glad,

And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.

⁹For You are the LORD Most High over
all the earth;

You are exalted far above all gods.

3. His standards of judgment will be "in righteousness" (v.13) and "in His faithfulness" (v.13). In other words, according to God's Word.

Point: *The Messiah was not just supposed to be merely accepted as God, but the people's response was supposed to be exactly as that provided in the Law for approaching, worshiping, and serving God in the temple. The right response to the Messiah was to be rid of personal sin (be consecrated) and to embrace God's standards of righteousness and faithfulness. He would judge according to these standards, not merely coming as a liberator allowing people to live as they pleased.*

[Read Psalm 97]

Q: How do v.1-5 summarize what was viewed as the ultimate work of the Messiah?

A: Everything not measuring up to God's standards of righteousness and justice would be melted away, removed from the whole earth when His presence was finally and permanently established on earth.

Q: How do v.7-9 describe one of the chief works resulting from the establishment of the Messiah's reign?

A: All spiritual matters will be put to rest once and for all in that it will finally be crystal clear to everyone that there is only One True God and that all others are false.

Q: What is the right, personal response to the Messiah and why?

A: To "hate evil" – that is, to reject the ways of the world and embrace His wholly and enthusiastically – so that one can experience His "light" and "gladness" which He reserves for "the upright in heart". In other words, obedience to His Word and ways opens our eyes to what His Word and ways are accomplishing both in this life and the one to come.

Point: *One of the chief results of the Messiah's work is to be true spiritual revival where all false beliefs and wrong behavior are cast aside in favor of embracing His Word and ways exclusively. It wasn't merely about Him becoming King over Israel and the earth, but King over each individual's heart.*

¹⁰Hate evil, you who love the LORD,
Who preserves the souls of His godly
ones;
He delivers them from the hand of the
wicked.

¹¹Light is sown like seed for the righteous
And gladness for the upright in heart.

¹²Be glad in the LORD, you righteous
ones,
And give thanks to His holy name.

¹O sing to the LORD a new song,
For He has done wonderful things,
His right hand and His holy arm have
gained the victory for Him.

²The LORD has made known His
salvation;
He has revealed His righteousness in the
sight of the nations.

³He has remembered His lovingkindness
and His faithfulness to the house of
Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the
salvation of our God.

⁴Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth and sing for joy and sing
praises.

⁵Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
With the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn
Shout joyfully before the King, the LORD.

⁷Let the sea roar and all it contains,
The world and those who dwell in it.

⁸Let the rivers clap their hands,
Let the mountains sing together for joy

⁹Before the LORD, for He is coming to
judge the earth;
He will judge the world with
righteousness
And the peoples with equity.

¹The LORD reigns, let the peoples
tremble;

He is enthroned above the cherubim, let
the earth shake!

²The LORD is great in Zion,
And He is exalted above all the peoples.

³Let them praise Your great and awesome
name;
Holy is He.

⁴The strength of the King loves justice;
You have established equity;
You have executed justice and
righteousness in Jacob.

⁵Exalt the LORD our God
And worship at His footstool;
Holy is He.

[Read Psalm 98]

Q: How would you characterize the chief characteristic of the Messiah emphasized in this Psalm?

A: The final and ultimate working of God's salvation.

Q: How will God's salvation be publicly displayed? By what things will it be universally acknowledged that it has come to mankind?

1. It will be revealed "to the house of Israel". (v.3)
2. It will be revealed "in the sight of the nations". (v.2)
3. It will be revealed to "all the ends of the earth". (v.3)

Q: How is this different from "the day of the LORD" which is often referred to throughout Scripture?

A: The "day of the LORD" speaks of final judgment, when time has run out and those who rejected God must pay the ultimate, eternal price for their decision. What is being referred to here is the experience of those who accept the Messiah and are seeing the work of salvation completely fulfilled. It's not a time or day of final judgment for punishment and destruction of the unbelieving, but of celebration for the obedient.

Point: The role of the Messiah was to be inextricably linked to God's work of salvation. He's to be the One through whom God's plan of salvation is to be completely fulfilled.

[Read Psalm 99]

Q: What is the chief attribute of the Messiah highlighted in this Psalm?

A: "Holy is He" (v.3), "Holy is He" (v.5), and "holy is the LORD our God" (v.9)

Q: What is the chief action to which people are called to do in this Psalm?

A: "Worship at His footstool" (v.5) and "worship at His holy hill" (v.9). In other words, they are to come into His presence and worship Him.

Point: The only way one can come into the presence of holy God and worship Him is to be spiritually cleansed so as to be acceptable according to His standards of holiness.

[Continued on the next page.]

⁶Moses and Aaron were among His priests,
And Samuel was among those who called on His name;
They called upon the Lord and He answered them.
⁷He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;
They kept His testimonies
And the statute that He gave them.
⁸O LORD our God, You answered them;
You were a forgiving God to them,
And yet an avenger of their evil deeds.
⁹Exalt the LORD our God
And worship at His holy hill,
For holy is the LORD our God.

¹Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.
²Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.
³Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
⁴Enter His gates with thanksgiving
And His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
⁵For the LORD is good;
His lovingkindness is everlasting
And His faithfulness to all generations.

Q: What examples are given as people who were able to not only come into the presence of holy God, but actually speak with and be heard by Him?

A: Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

Q: What do these 3 have in common where sin is concerned?

A: Each one stood in the gap, so to speak, of when the wrath of God broke forth because His holiness had been insulted; they were all intercessors on behalf of man's transgression of God's holiness.

Q: What is the implication of this where the Messiah is concerned?

A: Not only that He would be the ultimate intercessor, but that through Him we would have this kind of access to and relationship with God.

Point: *The Messiah would remove the obstacles set in place so that only a few could come and serve in His presence, which was limited in the Old Testament to those authorized to go into the Holy of Holies. The Messiah would enable unprecedented access to and service of God and still maintain all the requirements of His holiness.*

[Read Psalm 100]

Q: How will the Messiah change the way His people worship and serve Him?

1. They will be "His people", devoted to no one else but the One True God. (v.3)
2. They will be "the sheep of His pasture", a description of following only His voice and living only where He decides, not according to the world's or our own desire. (v.3)
3. They will "enter His gates...and His courts" with "thanksgiving" and "praise". (v.4) In other words, they won't need to come to the temple to seek forgiveness for sins and needing to start over with a clean slate, but will be living rightly so as to already be in the right spiritual condition even as they first enter the gates leading to His presence.

Point: *The Messiah will induce righteousness and faithfulness from the heart which will be visibly evident in changed behavior rejecting sin and a lifestyle embracing God's Word and ways.*

Epilogue

From these Psalms are derived the following expectations concerning the Messiah:

- *Psalm 95: He won't just be a man, but equal with God. He will work signs and wonders just as He did for the generation coming out of Egypt but, like them, be tested and rejected by many who themselves He will reject from entering into His rest.*
- *Psalm 96: He will come as Judge according to the standards of God's righteousness and faithfulness established by His Word.*
- *Psalm 97: The right response to the Messiah is spiritual obedience which in turn opens one's eyes to what God is doing personally and throughout the whole earth. It's about Him becoming the King of our heart.*
- *Psalm 98: He is the One through whom God's plan of salvation is to be completely fulfilled.*
- *Psalm 99: He would enable unprecedented access to God such as only the likes of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel experienced, and still maintain all the requirements demanded by God's holiness.*
- *Psalm 100: He will effect changes that will be visibly evident in changed behavior.*

As you can see, if you expected the Messiah to come and accomplish all these things at the same time, it would be difficult to understand how He could simultaneously change hearts, fulfill the plan of salvation, and render judgment for all things at the same time. We have the benefit of understanding how these describe one Messiah, two comings. Many things were fulfilled at Christ's First Coming, the rest are awaiting His Second Coming.

Application

- *Do you see that His complete fulfillment of those things at His First Coming are a testimony to the fact that He will completely fulfill the remaining at His Second Coming?*
- *How well do you see that our required response to any or all of these things is to live a changed life according to His Word and ways?*
- *Are you fully responding to Jesus as the Messiah by submitting your will and ways to His? Or are you holding back in some area? Where do you think that will eventually lead?*