

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 29

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 29

Overview

Psalm 29 is a psalm of praise. It begins with a command to the “sons of the mighty” to give to the Lord that which is due to Him. Then it demonstrates why glory and strength are to be given to the Lord by describing the power of the voice of the Lord. Finally all give glory to God in His temple. The psalm then ends with a description of who the Lord is and what the Lord will do for His people.

As we hear and read the psalm, we should hear a description of a storm and behind the storm, as the cause of it, the voice of the Lord. The entire storm is meant to demonstrate the power of the Lord and why glory is owed to Him. The psalm was used on the first day after Sukkot, which was the Jewish Festival of Booths and Ingathering. This Feast, one of the three required pilgrimages of the Jewish people to Jerusalem, celebrated both God’s providence over the people in the Exodus and God’s continued providence in providing from the yearly harvest. The psalm’s emphasis on the power of God emphasizes His ability in the past to care for His people in their wandering and His ability in the present to care for His people by yearly provision.

Outline/Structure

- I. Call for worship and glory to the Lord – 29:1-2
- II. The Voice of the Lord demonstrates God’s power – 29:3-9
- III. The Powerful Lord Will Help His People – 29:10-11

Call for Worship and Glory to the Lord – 29:1-2

:1 - “sons of the mighty” – This is a probably a reference to angels. It is an invitation to the angels to engage in the worship of the Lord. We know that one of the main activities of these divine beings is to the worship the Lord.

Read Isaiah 6:2-3; Revelation 5:11-14

- The glory called for here in verses 1 and 2 is fulfilled in verse 9. The call to ascribe to the Lord glory and strength is justified by the power demonstrated by the voice of the Lord in the next section of the psalm.
- :2 - “Worship the Lord in holy array” – there are three possible ways to understand this idea of “holy array”.
- a. A general description of the splendor that surrounds God, in other words it is the *Lord’s* holy array that affects his entire environment.
 - b. A description of the Lord more precisely as a means of describing his particular appearance as being a holy array. *See Revelation 1:12-16*
 - c. A description of what should be worn to worship the Lord, the *worshippers* should be decked in holy array. Certainly for priests serving to lead the worship in the Old Testament a prescribed clothing was worn.
- Is there a right way to be dressed to worship and attend church? What might be some things that we want to think about?*

The Voice of the Lord Demonstrates God’s Power – 29:3-9

- :3-4 - “voice of the Lord” – *col Yahweh* – This poetic phrasing appears 7 times in verses 3-9. Certainly in poetic literature one should take note of such particularly numbered occurrences. The number 7 represents the divine number of completeness or fulfillment.
- Can you think of times in the Scriptures when the number 7 works this way?*
- “many waters” – This may either refer to the voice of the Lord at creation (*Genesis 1:2-3*) or it may refer to the voice of the Lord over the Mediterranean (*1 Kings 18:41-45*). In either case, and I prefer the notion of the voice of the Lord at creation, it is meant to convey the power and strength of the Lord.
- :5-6 - The cedars of Lebanon were known for their strength – *Read 2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Kings 5:6-9*. The duplication of what the Lord is able to do to the cedars, especially the strong cedars of Lebanon, demonstrates the Lord’s power and strength.
- “Sirion” – this is the Phoenician name for Mount Hermon (*See Deuteronomy 3:9*) The grouping of Lebanon and Sirion together probably brings reference to the Anti-Lebanon Range of mountains and once again serves to elevate our understanding of the power of the Lord.

:7-8 - “flames of fire” – This expression most likely refers to lightning. So by the voice of the Lord lightning comes down. Again, we are maintaining this vision of a storm throughout the psalm.

- “the wilderness...the wilderness of Kadesh” – Repetition in poetry emphasizes the point and teaches it.

What does this mean for how we go about doing church and teaching the faith?

- “Kadesh” – The geographical placement of the “desert of Kadesh” is difficult. Given the geography of the rest of the psalm, it is likely to be located somewhere in the north like the Syrian Desert. However, it is also possible that it is a reference to the desert through which the Israelites passed in the Exodus south of Judah.

:9 - “twists the oaks” (NIV) or “makes the deer to calve” (NASB). The Hebrew word for “oaks”, *eylo*, and “deer”, *ayilo*, are very similar. The translation of “twisting the oaks” fits in well with the second part of the verse “and strips the forest bare”. Yet we have a similar construction in *Job 39:1* which lends credibility to the translation of “makes the deer to calve”. In either way the translation is settled, it is simply another emphasis on the power of the voice of the Lord.

- “Glory” – We have now reached the fulfillment of what was called for at the beginning of the psalm – to give God glory.(29:1-2)

- A contemplation on the awesome power of God in creation cannot help but bring us to sing of His Glory. Consider this famous hymn’s first two verses:

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works
Thy hands hath made,

I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder, Thy pow’r throughout the
universe displayed;

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,

How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,

How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander, I hear the birds
sing sweetly in the trees;

When I look down from loft mountain grandeur and hear the brook
and feel the gently breeze;

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,

How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,

How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

While contemplation on creation brings us to sing in awe of God, what limitations does nature have in revealing God?

Consider how the hymn continues:

But when I think that God, His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in-

That on the cross my burden gladly bearing He bled and died to take away my sin;

**Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!**

The Powerful Lord Will Help His People – 29:10-11

:10 - Having declared the power and might of the Lord and having been brought to worship the glory of the Lord, these last two verses summarize and declare who the Lord is and what the Lord will do.

- The same Lord who had command at the time of the flood will reign forever. The King who brings about and allows destruction is also the King who caused the waters to recede and dry land to appear.

How does the whole story of the flood give us comfort in our current times?

:11 - The psalmist has spent the entire psalm holding up and praising the strength and glory of the Lord. Here in the last verse he brings home why that is most important for us.

How does the strength and glory of the Lord give us, His people, strength?

How does the strength and glory of the Lord give us, His people, peace?

Summary

Psalm 29 gives us the chance to sit on the back deck and watch the power of the Lord in a really good thunderstorm and have it bring us to worship Him. Yet it also ends by demonstrating that all that power that the Lord has He Himself puts to work giving us strength and peace.

Closing prayer