

*The Psalms: Structure, Content & Message*  
Sunday Morning Bible Study  
Chapter 13 – The Psalms and Christ

INTRODUCTION

- It is fitting that, at the end of a study of the Psalms, we should look to Christ. The entirety of the Old Testament points to the coming Messiah, but it is often unclear just how exactly a book like the Psalms point to Jesus.
- Westermann notes that the Psalms (22 and 113) point unambiguously to what has happened in Christ.
  - Are these prophecies? Well, not in the sense that we think, as if a prophecy is a prediction that later generations found in single statements of the Old Testament detached from their context (123). The Christ even is anchored in the Old Testament in a more profound and comprehensive manner.

PSALM STUDY

**1. Psalm 113**

“Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?” – vv. 5-6

- This statement is at the center of descriptive praise. Here, confessing praise has been transformed into a description, a declaration.
- This statement points directly toward Christ, toward the act of God sending His Son
- God looking down on the heavens and the earth became an actual event in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” – Philippians 2:5-8

- The incarnation is the fulfillment, in a genuine and full sense, of the heart of Israel’s descriptive praise of God
- The theme of God looking on the lowly on earth is taken up into the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and the prophecy of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79).

## 2. Psalm 22

- “If God’s looking down from the heights into our depths became reality in Christ, then God’s coming down into “our poor flesh and blood” also means that God became one who suffered, and that this suffering was expressed in lamentation” (124)
- This lamentation is recorded in the New Testament when Jesus quotes from Psalm 22 in the passion story”

“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” – Mark 15:34

- The early church understood that here, when Jesus quotes from Psalm 22, he is making the lament of the Psalmist his own lament.
  - “By taking into himself this last trial of being forsaken by God, Christ descended into the depth of human isolation and made our suffering his suffering to its depths” (125).
    - If we ever feel like God has forsaken or abandoned us, Jesus knows the feeling even more so. He can sympathize with us. He is not unfamiliar with what we are experiencing.
  - “The despairing questions of those who suffer in our world (Why? How long?) are questions which were known by him in whom God’s goodness became human. They are not foreign to him” (125).
- Jesus not only quotes the beginning of Psalm 22, but certainly looks to the rest of the Psalm.
  - He is proclaiming the deliverance that God will soon provide (the resurrection)

“For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.” – Psalm 22:24

- When God raised Jesus from the dead, it was the event of God’s action that we see in the Psalms. God responded to Jesus’ cry and acted. The earliest sermons from the Apostles highlight how the resurrection was seen as the “ultimate” action of God. God finally acted to end the suffering of his people in their sins and provide atonement. (see Rom. 3:21-26)

## CONCLUSION

“The apostles, as messengers of Christ’s resurrection, stand in the succession of witnesses to the great deeds of God. They are witnesses who, in the Psalms, must give an account before the whole congregation about what God had done for them. Now that the time is fulfilled, the call to praise God, which had its origin in this witness to God’s deeds, is the call to follow Christ. As in the Psalms nations and kings were called to join Israel in praising God, so the call now has transformed itself into the message of Christ’s messengers, who carry the call to come to Christ farther and farther, even to the ends of the earth” (126).

## Discussion Questions

- How can Christians find comfort in the incarnation of Christ?
- What does the incarnation tell us about God and about Jesus?
- What does Jesus’ lament on the cross tell us about the reality of the crucifixion?
- How are you carrying forth the message that “God has acted” in the person of Jesus?