

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 34 Psalm 133

by Keith Simons

Keith Simons explores Psalm 133, emphasizing the significance of unity among God's people and the blessings that come from it.

Duration: 23:21

Scripture: Exodus 30:22-33, Leviticus 8:12, Psalm 16:9, Psalm 23:6, Psalm 133, John 3:16

Topics: "KJV Bible", "Unity in the Body of Christ", "The Blessing of Togetherness"

Description

Keith Simons explores Psalm 133, emphasizing the beauty of unity among God's people as they gather for sacred feasts in Jerusalem. He illustrates how the psalm reflects a vision of harmony, where brethren dwell together in peace, akin to the anointing oil on Aaron, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's work in bringing people together. Simons highlights the importance of sharing blessings and the promise of eternal life that God commands for those who worship Him in unity. The sermon encourages believers to foster relationships that reflect this divine unity and to recognize the blessings that come from being together in faith.

Transcript

Welcome. I'd like you to imagine one of the great sacred feasts in ancient Israel. People from across the nation would be gathering into family groups and travelling on foot on the roads up to Jerusalem and up to the sacred temple and meeting with one another.

But would that meeting be harmonious and pleasant or would it give rise to all sorts of arguments and family disputes? Today's psalm is Psalm 133. And my name is Keith Symons. I'm a Bible teacher from England and we're looking at another psalm from the King James Version, looking at the words in it and the meanings in it.

And today's psalm, as I've said, is Psalm 133. It begins with the heading, A Song of Degrees of David. A Song of Degrees, as we've seen in previous talks, is the title of those psalms which were probably intended for those who were travelling on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for those sacred festivals.

They would sing these songs as they journeyed. Degrees suggests walking upwards, walking upstairs or walking up a hill. And as Jerusalem is on a hill, they would have to climb upwards to get to the sacred city.

Of David probably means the psalm was written by David. So let's read verse one firstly then. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Behold means look. Look at Israel's people, the people of God. Look at them because they're not arguing.

They've gathered together for the sacred festival to worship God together. And there they are in unity. We'll see what that means in a moment.

But there they are together. And it's a good sight to see. It's a good and pleasant sight.

Now, in reality, I think we know that like any other group of people, Israel's people gathered together and there wasn't complete unity between them. There were family arguments and family quarrels which might have been caused by them meeting up together. There were disputes between the various tribes or family groups in Israel.

There was a lot of room for conflict at these sacred feasts. But the author of the psalm, who we assume is David, he saw something beyond this. He saw how Israel's people would in the future live in peace and harmony with one another.

How under the rule of the Messiah, God's perfect king, they would know true peace and true happiness. And so it's almost as if when he begins with this word with behold, look, when he begins the psalm with that word, it's almost as if he's seeing a vision. Maybe he was seeing a vision.

Yes, the people were gathering together in the way they normally did and they were talking in an excited way on the holiday. But he saw beyond that. He saw how it will be in the times when the Messiah, God's king, rose.

God's people will be together and they will truly dwell in unity. And that's a good and pleasant thing. That's a wonderful thing.

A thing that should be celebrated for brethren to dwell together in unity. Brethren means brothers. And of course, modern Bibles, modern translations feel uncomfortable about that being a male word.

And I looked in a modern translation this week and it said God's people, because it wanted to include the women there. Well, should it include the women there? It was a man who wrote this and men were gathering groups in ancient Israel separately from women. And this is a picture.

He's looking at the men there. He's not looking at the women who might have come with them or might have stayed at home to look after their homes. He's looking at the men and he's seeing the men, not quarrelling, but in unity together.

These brethren, these brothers, doesn't just mean brothers from one family, although that is the meaning that will appear very specifically in verse two, but it's talking about all of Israel's people. They're together and they're together in peace and harmony while they dwell together, in the words of the psalm, in unity. The word dwell means in English to live, to live together, to live in a group.

As we've already seen, this psalm is much more about a temporary thing. It's only in the holiday that they will be gathering together. Now, if you look at the Hebrew word, it literally means to sit together, to sit.

And when we look at the Hebrew word for unity, that really means together. So we could say that the good and pleasant thing is when brothers sit together. And what happens when men sit together? Well, they talk and they might have different ideas and disagreements and different opinions, but they talk, they make plans together, they discuss their ideas and their thoughts, they respect each other and they give honor to each other.

And if they've got different opinions, they're not in conflict with those opinions. No, they're sitting together. If they were in conflict, they'd be standing and they would be fighting.

But no, they're sitting together because they're in harmony. It's like when people sit together for a meal, you do that with your friends, you do that with your relatives if you're on good terms with them. And if you're not, you probably refuse to sit with them.

That's the picture here. These brothers are sitting together. And these brothers might mean people in the same family or it might mean people in different families across Israel because all the tribes were brothers of each other.

They were all descended from the 12 sons of Jacob. So all Israel's people were relatives. Now, I've referred to how a modern translation translates brethren as God's people.

Is that a good enough translation? Well, one thing that's wrong with it is that God's people have a relationship but with God. But brethren have a relationship with each other. And this is all about the relationship that people have with each other.

In the New Testament, we often find the word brethren or brothers to describe fellow Christians. It was their favourite term for referring to each other. And our modern translations typically replace that with brothers and sisters.

But there's no ancestors in the original language. No, the picture is of men living together or of men sitting together in harmony with each other and talking together gladly and happily into the night, maybe around a campfire. And you ladies who are listening, you'll have to decide how much that refers to you.

But of course, there were different ideas about what men and women should do in Bible times. Our modern translations are embarrassed by that and awkward by that. But when we use the King James Version with these literal translations, it reminds us that this was a different age, a different time from the times we're living in.

And if we want to understand it properly, then changing the words is not really the way to do it. Verse two. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down the beard, even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garments.

Aaron was the name of Israel's first chief priest, the leader of the priests. And from his family came all the priests of Israel. Now, his brother was Moses, and it was Moses who in Leviticus chapter eight anointed Aaron.

He poured oil, or as it says here, ointment upon him. Now, you might want to know what this ointment, what this oil was. Well, the Bible gives us its recipe, Exodus chapter 30 and verses 22 to 33.

So it contained spices, it contained myrrh and cinnamon and calamus and cassia, and it was based on olive oil. And this was a special holy ointment that was to be poured on the head of Aaron as the chief priests and sprinkled on the other priests and on various sacred objects. And its purpose was to make them holy, to separate them for the use of God.

And who was it who carried out the ceremony? Leviticus chapter eight. It was Moses. Moses was the brother of Aaron.

He took some of that precious ointment, that precious anointing oil, and he poured it generously on Aaron's head. We know it was generously because it ran down his beard and went down to the skirts of Aaron's garments. And on that day, we can see that brethren were dwelling together in unity because Moses and Aaron were brothers and they were acting together in harmony with each other.

There was no conflict, no dispute between them. They were dedicating themselves to the work of God. And that is what Israel's people should be doing, not with the anointing oil, but when they gather together, when they gather together to worship God, they should be giving themselves to God in worship.

The oil went down to the skirts of Aaron's garments. The skirts, of course, men wore long garments, reached down to their feet in those days. But the actual word for skirts here could mean the upper opening around the neck, or it could mean the lower opening at the bottom, the skirt, if you like, of it.

We nowadays, of course, only use the word skirt, in England at least, to refer to a woman's garment. But until comparatively recent times, it was normal for men to wear garments like that. They weren't wearing women's garments.

They were wearing men's garments. They just didn't look like the men's garments that we wear today. Now that oil, it was a word picture in itself for the work of God's Holy Spirit.

It was God's Holy Spirit that separated Aaron to do his special work as the chief priest. It was God's Holy Spirit that came upon him at that day to enable him to do it. And God's Holy Spirit has a special work in bringing God's people together, in causing them, in the words of verse 1, to dwell together in unity.

And Aaron's especially important to begin here, because it was Aaron, or rather the chief priest who followed him, who performed the leading role at the ceremonies. But it only begins with Aaron or with the chief priest. It is a whole of Israel's people who must enjoy God's blessing, God's Holy Spirit upon them, who must have God's Holy Spirit to bring them together.

So it is in churches amongst God's people today, it's God's Holy Spirit who brings them together. And as God's Holy Spirit anoints them, that's the old word we used to use for pouring on oil, but God's Holy Spirit must anoint them to bring them together, to do their work for God together. Verse 3, As the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon mountains of Sion, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

Right, now dew, d-e-w, is the water that forms on the ground during the night. As the ground goes colder at night, little water droplets form on it. Hermon is the mountain on the north side of Israel, far to the north of most of Israel, and it's the only really big mountain that there is in that region of the world.

The dew that forms on Hermon is very, very heavy we say, heavy dew. In other words, a lot of water forms on it. That is a picture of God's blessing upon Mount Hermon.

But Mount Zion, Jerusalem, the place where the temple was, well that's in a dry part of Israel, and it can be, it can be very dry, it can be almost like a desert near there. And so we've got this, this double word picture. We understand the dew of Hermon, but what is the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion? Let's look more closely at our words there.

That as the dew of Hermon is in normal type, but then you'll see after that in the King James Bible, and as the dew is written in italics, slanted type. That's the way the King James translators told us that those words are not in the original Hebrew. So the words that are in the original Hebrew are these, as the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion.

So it's as if Hermon, the mountain in the north of Israel, because that's where Hermon is, in the north of Israel, is sharing this abundant water with Zion, Jerusalem, which is near the south of Israel. Remember what we said about the people who were coming to the sacred feast. They were coming from all over Israel in order to worship God at Mount Zion, at his temple.

So if the dew from Hermon descends on the mountains of Zion, it means that the blessing that God has provided plentifully to the north, the water, the dew, has come to Zion in the south, that needed the water. That's how it is when God's people bless each other. They show their kindness to each other.

They bring whatever good things God has given them, and they share them. They share them abundantly with those who have need. And no wonder then that the brethren are dwelling together in unity.

First one, they're sitting together. No wonder it's good and pleasant that God's people have come together, because they've come with whatever good things God has provided for them, and they're not selfishly keeping these good things to themselves, but they're sharing it. They're sharing it liberally.

God's good things that are given to one person are for all his people, or for all the people to whom God sends that person. So Jerusalem shares its blessing, the temple, the sacred house of God, the place of blessing, the place where God is present, shares it with these pilgrims who've come from the north of Israel, and they too have come bearing their gifts, their gifts for the work of God in Jerusalem, in Mount Zion. For there, in Jerusalem, the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

The Lord commanded the blessing. God ordered that there should be a blessing, that there should be good things when Israel's people, when God's people gathered together. And he commanded that that blessing should be there in Zion, in the place where he is present, in the place where he had his special home on earth.

God's blessing. And what is God's blessing? What is this good thing that God gives to all his people who gather together in praise and worship to his holy name? Why, it's life forevermore. God doesn't bring death, and disappointment, and sadness, and pain, and suffering.

No, these things are the work of the devil. God gives his people eternal life, life that never ends. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Yes, it's everlasting life that is God's promise. Now, I don't know how clearly Israel's people understood that God promised them everlasting life, if they would trust in him. They understood their lives on earth.

They understood about graves and funerals. But did they understand that they were waiting for the blessing of everlasting life, and that when they died, they'd be with God in heaven, and that everlasting life would already begin in their lives now, as they trusted him and lived for him? Well, we see hints of that in the Psalms. We see references to that in the Bible.

We think of Job, and how he saw that his current suffering would come to an end, and God would give him everlasting life. And we saw David have the same idea when we studied together Psalm 16. You might like to listen back to that podcast, when David declared in Psalm 16 verse 9, Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices, my flesh also shall not rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

And maybe he saw that again in when he wrote the last verse of Psalm 23, And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Yes, I think God's people did see that God promised them eternal life. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

I'd like you to write to me, my email address is 333kjb at gmail.com. Please say that you heard the talk on Psalm 133. To be good to hear from you, I won't add you to any mailing lists, just want to hear that you've heard this podcast. 333kjb at gmail.com. Now let me read you the whole of Psalm 133.

A song of degrees of David. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down the beard, even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garments.

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