

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 48 Psalm 111

by Keith Simons

Psalm 111 emphasizes the importance of remembrance, specifically remembering God's good things, covenant, and promises, and encourages obedience to God's commandments as a guide for righteous living.

Duration: 20:48

Scripture: Psalm 111:1

Topics: "KJV Bible", "Praise and Worship", "Remembrance"

Description

Keith Simons emphasizes the importance of remembrance in Psalm 111, encouraging believers to praise God wholeheartedly for His great works and everlasting righteousness. He explains the psalm's acrostic structure, which serves as a teaching tool for remembering God's commandments and His covenant with His people. Simons highlights God's graciousness, compassion, and the significance of gathering in worship to honor Him. He concludes by affirming that true wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, leading to a life of obedience and continual praise.

Transcript

Welcome. Today's psalm is all about remembrance. Remembering the good things God has done, remembering his covenant, his promises to his people, remembering his commandments.

Today we're looking at Psalm 111. My name is Keith Symons. I'm a Bible teacher from England and I present these talks on how to understand the King James Version of the Bible by using the psalms.

So Psalm 111. In the King James Bible it doesn't have a heading, but in the Hebrew Bible it does have a heading which has entered the first verse in the King James Bible. That heading is the opening words of the psalm, praise ye the Lord.

In other words, that's the Hebrew word hallelujah. It's a declaration and encouragement for God's people to give him praise and honour and worship. And then the psalm begins.

And this psalm is an unusual psalm in that it's an alphabetical psalm. What does that mean? Well, it's all about remembering things. When I was at school, they wanted to teach me the colours of the rainbow in order.

And so instead of teaching me red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, they taught me a little saying, Richard of York gave battle in vain. And the first letters of that saying, it's what's called an acrostic. R-O-Y and so on, red, orange, yellow.

And Psalm 111 is one of a number of psalms which are also acrostics, but they're done on the letters of the alphabet. The biggest of these is Psalm 119, where each group of eight verses begins with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. They're called Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet.

And you'll see those in the headings of the King James Bible if you turn to that psalm. But of course, we're staying with Psalm 111, where there are no headings to help us. But if we had the Hebrew text in front of us instead of the English, we would see that each half verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

So Aleph and Bet, the first two letters appear in verse one, and then verse two continues with the next two letters and so on. And then verses nine and ten have three letters each, making a total of 22 letters, because there's 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. So we begin with Aleph, which is a section of verse one which says, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.

Oh, the author of our psalm wanted to praise God, and he wanted Israel's people, as we've seen, to praise God with him. Maybe the psalm has this alphabetical structure because it was taught to children, perhaps to teach them to remember the letters of the alphabet. But more than that, to teach them that they should praise God, that they should give honour to God with their whole heart.

In other words, not just with their lips, not just with saying the right words and saying the right things, but that the praise that they gave to God should come from their heart, from their whole heart, not hiding anything away from God, but giving to him their whole heart. The heart describes the inner part of the person. We might refer to the person's spirit.

And our praise to God should not just be words, but should come from deep inside, but it should come out. The second letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Bet. And from that letter, with that as the first letter, the psalm continues, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.

In other words, the author of the psalm was declaring that he would praise God when God's people gathered together. The upright people are the people who live in a good and right way. The congregation means the people who've gathered together.

When would they gather together? Where would they gather together? They'd gather together outside the temple building, the house of God. They'd gather there on the sacred feasts of Israel to give thanks to God, to praise him and to remember the good things that God had done for their nation. And that is what the works of God mean.

The works of God are the wonderful things he's done. There's plenty about the works of God in verses two to four, so let me read you those three verses and then I'll comment on them. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

His work is honourable and glorious and his righteousness endureth forever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

So when we think of the wonderful things that God did for Israel's people in particular, well he chose them, he chose their families from all the nations on earth. At the time of Abraham, he declared to Abraham that they would be a blessing to all the nations on earth, that God would bless those people who blessed them. But God did more than choose them, he also saved them.

He rescued them when they were slaves in Egypt and he brought them to the promised land, the land he had given to them, so they could live there. He gave them the temple and he taught them to worship him in the way that is good and right, by sacrifices which would point to God's perfect sacrifice in the future. And he did many other wonderful things for them.

He gave them his law, the Bible. At the time of the psalm, they probably just had the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. All these wonderful things God had done and all through God had provided for them.

He'd given them their food and the things they needed, rescued them from many battles, often when the enemy was much stronger than them. And as Israel's people remembered these things, they remembered that the works of God are great. Verse two, sought out for them that have pleasure therein.

In other words, those who are pleased with the works of God study them, they search them out, they look for them, they observe carefully what God has done and what God has done pleases them, because God's work is honourable and glorious. This is a wonderful thing that God has done and it proves God's righteousness, that God is good and right and perfect in his character. And that was not just for the past.

We remember the past, but we're grateful that God's character hasn't changed. His righteousness endureth forever. It will last even when the sun and the moon and the earth are no more.

God in his perfect righteousness, his perfect goodness. And so we remember his good works and we declare that they are evidence that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. Verse four, God is a kind God.

God cares for his people and especially he cares for them and helps them when they are in need. So we move on to verse five. He, that's God, hath given meat unto them that fear him.

He will ever be mindful of his covenant. He's given meat. Now often when we see the word meat in the Bible, it's a general word for food and that might be so here.

So if that's the meaning here, it's saying that God provided food for the people that fear him, for the people that respect him, for the people that give him honour. But the word for meat here in the Hebrew Bible does particularly mean meat or a prey, like when an animal chases after and catches another animal or a portion, a share that's been divided. So this verse might mean that God's given a portion, a place, an inheritance to his people.

And that was true, is true about Israel's people as well. God gave them the place that they received in the promised land, land that formerly belonged to other people but which God turned over to them and gave to them as their permanent inheritance. Why? Because God will ever be mindful of his covenant.

Or we've been talking about us remembering but God remembers too. He remembers his covenant. He remembers the promises that he made to his people.

He remembers his special relationship with them. He's not forgotten them. Even if circumstances and troubles in their lives seem to show or seem to suggest that he has forgotten them, no, God has not forgotten them.

And they, in their difficult situations, must turn to God in prayer. They must put their trust in the living God, the God whose promises will never fail. On to verse six.

He, that's God, hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. That third word shewed, it's the word which today we say showed, and that is the meaning of it. He has shown his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

This is a reference to how God gave to Israel's people the promised land, the land now called Israel, which was formerly called Canaan, the land where the Canaanites and many other nations formerly lived. But they became very evil people and God acted against them because of their cruelty and their wickedness. And he promised that land to Abraham's descendants, to Israel's people.

So that was the heritage, the inherited land of the heathen, of the people from other nations. But it became God's gift to his own people. Verse seven.

The works of his God's hands are verity and judgment. All his commandments are sure. So God did these wonderful things for Israel's people and when he did so, he acted in verity, that's truth, and judgment, justice.

He was true to his promise. He acted in justice. He didn't wrongly take that land from the heathen, the people who formerly lived there.

No, it was an act of justice against them because God is a God of justice and God is a God of truth. All his commandments are sure. The commandments that he gave to Israel's people, they're definite commandments.

We look at the ten commandments and they teach us what God considers to be moral. We might say, some Christians do say, the law doesn't still apply. Well, of course it still applies.

The ceremonies that God gave to Israel's people, they don't need to be followed today because those ceremonies are fulfilled in Christ. And as for the laws that God gave, which was to separate God's people, Israel's people from the other nations, like the law about the food they were to eat, well, those laws were specifically for Israel's people. But the commandments that God gave to teach what is right and good and moral, well, they're sure.

They're for all time. They don't change. Verse 8, they stand fast forever and ever and are done in truth and uprightness.

Once more an emphasis that God has given those commandments as an act of truth. He's truly taught what's right and uprightness. It's the right and proper thing that God is teaching us in his law, in his commands.

Verse 9, he, God, sent redemption unto his people. In other words, redemption means rescue. God rescued Israel's people when they were slaves in Egypt and gave them freedom.

And if God has taken you when you were a slave to something and rescued you, that is a great reason to praise God. You know, God has rescued his people, his people today, the people who are truly Christians from sin and from death and from hell and from the devil's power. God has sent redemption unto his people in Jesus.

And in Jesus, they know a right relationship with God. Redemption means to be brought back, to be rescued, to be freed. He hath commanded his covenant forever.

God's promises to his people are like his commands. They're permanent. God won't turn back on his commands, and nor will he turn back on his promises or on the relationship that he's established with his people.

We might turn back on those. We might make a promise to someone and not obey it and not carry it out. But God always carries out his promises because holy and reverend is his name.

In other words, God's character is holy. His character is perfect. He always does what is right and good.

And his name is reverend. We say sometimes revered or revered or to be feared. God's holy name is to be respected by people, by all people.

We should give great honour to God. That word which is translated reverend in verse 9 in the Hebrew language is the same as the word that's translated fear in verse 10. Verse 10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

This is a statement repeated a few times in the Bible. What it means is that if you want to be wise, if you want to make the right and good decisions in life, then you begin by respecting God. Give God the proper place in your life, in your heart.

And that is how you begin to be wise. And you begin at that point because God will teach you from there. God will show you by his word how he wants you to live, how he wants you to do what is right and good in this world.

Because a good understanding of all they that do his commandments. Those who obey God's law have understood correctly how they're to live. God has taught them.

God has shown them the right way to live. And so with the last verse of the Hebrew alphabet, our psalm concludes with the declaration that his praise endureth forever. Oh, this psalm began by urging us to praise God.

And now it tells us, you know, as we remember all these good things that God has done, and as we remember that his righteousness endureth forever, verse 3, his commandment is forever, verse 9. Now his praise must endure forever too. We must continue to praise and give honour to our great and wonderful God, the God who has done so many good things for us. Please write to me.

My email address is 333kjb at gmail.com. If you haven't written before, it would be lovely to hear from you. 333kjb at gmail.com. Now let me read to you the whole of Psalm 111. Praise ye the Lord.

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endureth forever.

He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion. He hath given meat unto them that fear him.

He will ever be mindful of his covenant. He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of his hands are verity and judgment.

All his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption unto his people.

He hath commanded his covenant forever, holy and reverent is his name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.

His praise endureth forever.

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