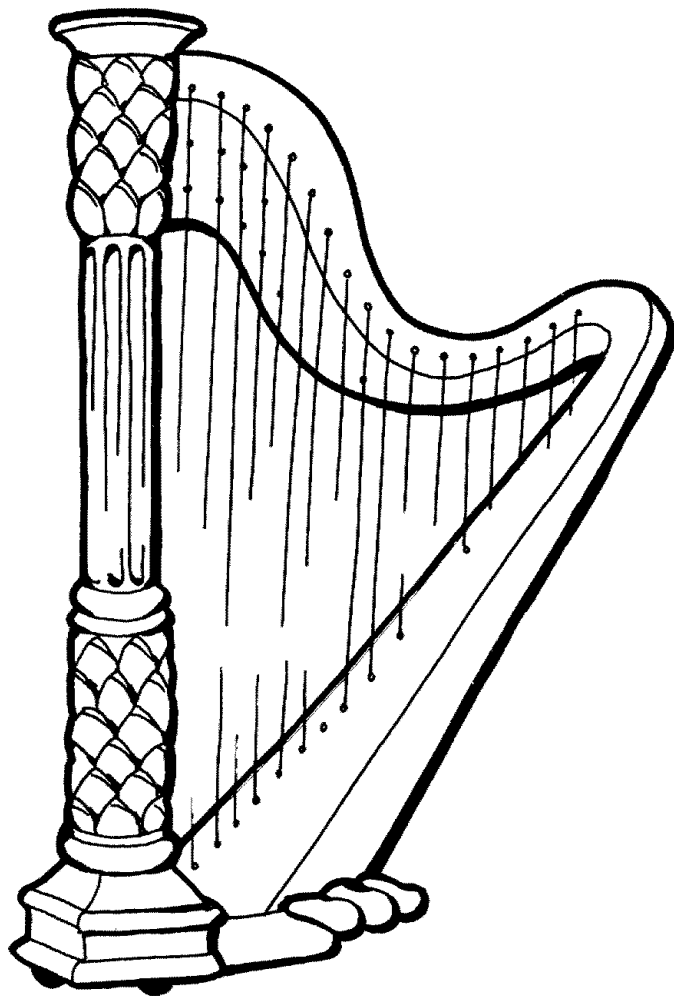


Psalm

94 - 96



Integrated Bible Study Guide

How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of Old Testament studies in Psalms 94 to 96.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work **before** you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

We trust you'll find the guides helpful, and we welcome any feedback you can give us as you use them.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

The LORD of Salvation - Psalms 94-96

When Christ was born into our world, his coming was heralded as God's long-awaited answer to his people's cry for salvation. But what, exactly, is meant in this cry? Psalms 94-96 are three consecutive Psalms which echo three distinct cries for salvation - each with its unique sound. Some sounds will be more familiar than others, but all need to be heard to appreciate fully our LORD who has come as the 'Saviour of the world'. I commend these Psalms to you, for God's sounds are sweet indeed to those who have ears to hear.

Chris Jolliffe (October 2006)

Study I **Psalm 94 - The LORD my fortress**

1. Yesterday the lead story on the ABC news website featured a Christian pastor who had spoken out against police and local authorities for not fully investigating violence against Christians. He had been shot in a ceramics shop by men who approached from behind on a motorcycle.

Have you ever been in a situation where you have been severely persecuted? (If not, have you known anyone who was?) What has been their cry? What would salvation look like under these conditions?

2. Read Psalm 94.

What aspects of this Psalm sit particularly uncomfortably with you? (be specific)

Think carefully ... do these sit uncomfortably because ..

- a) you think the text must be saying something different to what it appears on first glance to be saying?
- b) you think that it exposes a major tension within the scriptures themselves, that are not resolved here?
- c) you think it exposes a major tension between what you think and what God thinks?

3. Looking carefully

vvl-7

- How is God described, and what is the essential call for him to do?

- What is the basis for this call?
- Are the wicked oppressors those from foreign nations, or those within Israel? (see v20-21)

vv8-15

- What call is made here, and to whom is it directed towards?
- What is the basis for this call, and for the hope that is given?

vv16-23

- What does salvation look like here?
- Why?

Stop and think:

Is the call for God to avenge our persecutors a prayer that is right for Christians to pray? Why? Why not?

4. Read Romans 12:9-21

- Is there any place for vengeance for followers of Christ?

- What is the purpose of heaping burning coals on the heads of our enemies?

3. Spend some time praying for God to save our brothers and sisters around the world who are undergoing persecution.

Study 2 **Psalm 95 – The LORD our Rock**

Think back to a time when you stood atop a huge rock – perhaps Uluru, the pinnacles at the Grampians, or the cliff's edge at Remarkable Rocks on Kangaroo Island. Think of your feet, standing on that rock, and what the rock felt like. There is something permanent, timeless, and immovable about a rock like this. It is so *solid*. It has endured countless storms, and has stood firm, without wavering.

This Psalm calls us to come to the LORD God our rock. He is utterly reliable, and dependable. Though the world may shake, and we may endure countless storms which may threaten to engulf us, the LORD our God will not be overcome, and nor shall we – for he is our rock.

READ Psalm 95 and then PRAY that God would teach you of himself, that you may trust him wholeheartedly.

Looking carefully

I. vv1-7, 'Come'

- In verse 1, the LORD is described as the 'Rock of our salvation.' What therefore are we called to come and do? Why is this appropriate?

- What does the LORD's greatness in verses 3-5 have to do with the loud acclamation in verse 1 that the LORD is the Rock of our salvation?

- For a second time, we are called to come to the LORD in verse 6. What is the nature of this call? How does it build on the first call?

Stop:

In 2's and 3's, (or by yourself), spend 5 minutes telling each other how great God is. This is the exercise of praise. It seems strange to begin with, but it is infectious, and you'll soon get into it.

2. vv8-11, 'Do not harden your hearts ...'

- Verses 8-11 are completely different in tone to verses 1-7. How do they follow on from verses 1-7?
- The example of the Israelites perishing in the wilderness because of their decision to harden their hearts against God accents the human responsibility in salvation. What was God's reaction?
- The LORD is still the rock of salvation, yet what does this incident teach us about the LORD?

- What issues does this Psalm raise for you about God? About salvation?
- How are you in danger of hardening your heart to God?

3. Read Hebrews 3:7-4:11

- In David's day, how was Psalm 95 a warning to the Israelites, who came after Moses and the Israelite wandering?
- In the first century and beyond, how is Psalm 95 a warning to Christians today?
- Why? (Whose words are they? 3:7, 4:3, 4:7)
- What have you heard in God's voice today?

Study 3 Psalm 96 - Proclaim his Salvation

Psalm 96 has been considered the great commission of the Old Testament, paralleling Jesus' final words to his disciples:

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

The reason for this is obvious: it calls upon the whole nation of Israel to declare God's glory among the nations. It has a cosmic scope, having implication not just for all the people of the world, but for the trees and the fields as well (v11-12).

Read Psalm 96.

1. Can you think of a time in your life when something has happened, causing you to sing out aloud, because speaking just didn't do justice to the moment? If not, have you ever been excited to sing something? When, and why?

2. Sing a new song (v1-2)
 - Read verses 1-2, then flick over to I Chronicles 16:23-33, and note the original historic context of this Psalm. Who is being called to sing to the LORD? (Ps 96:1, and I Chronicles 15:25-16:7)

- Given the original historical context, what is *new* about this song? (look back to the general events of I Chronicles 14 and 15)?
What 'salvation' is to be proclaimed?
3. Declare among the nations (v3-10)
- Three times in this section, God's people are called to declare God's glory (ie., his 'marvellous' deeds - his acts of salvation) among the nations (v2,7,10). *Why?*
- Is this sufficient motivation for you?
- What does this signal for Israel's 'coming of age'? (cf Exodus 19:5-6)
4. Let the heavens rejoice! (v11-13)
- The implications of the LORD's reign is cosmic, reaching to every part of his creation. Thinking about how sin effected the creation (Gen 3), and our knowledge of what will happen to the physical creation when Jesus returns (Romans 8:18-21), why should the heavens rejoice when 'he comes'?

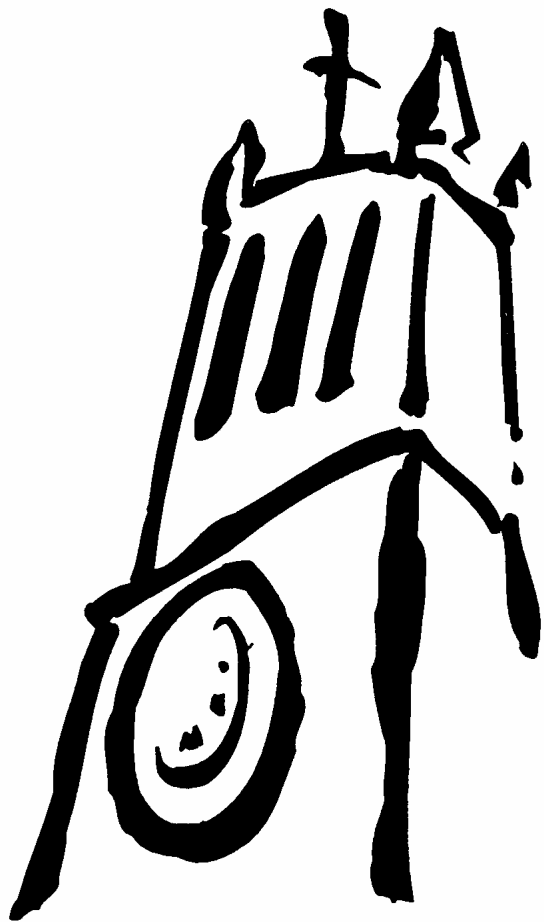
- What particularly is the creation looking forward to in Psalm 96?

Psalm 96 in the book of Psalms.

Stepping back for a moment, it's worth considering what contribution this Psalm makes to the wider message of the whole book of Psalms. Taken as a whole, the Psalter moves from a declaration of Yahweh's blessing of the man who delights in Yahweh over wickedness (Ps. 1), to unrestrained praise of Yahweh (Ps. 150) - indicating that the ultimate blessing of man is to praise Yahweh. Within the Psalter, the movement of Book IV (Psalms 90-106) describes Yahweh's action to achieve this blessing of man: he saves Israel from her position under judgment (Psalm 90) due to her many sins so that she may praise him (Ps 106:47). The praise of Yahweh is the purpose of the judgment and salvation of Israel.

Yet our understanding of Yahweh's purposes are even further nuanced by our present Psalm. Psalm 96 expresses the cosmic implications of the salvation of Israel as that all nations - together with the entire created order - would worship Yahweh as King. Yahweh will accomplish this by judging the world from Jerusalem. Considered within the flow of the whole book of Psalms, Psalm 96 makes clear that Yahweh's marvelous deeds of salvation have cosmic applications that find their essential focus in Israel, and in Jerusalem, through her new King, in the line of David. Within the wider flow of the Bible, the King heralded by this Psalm is the greater Son of David, Jesus Christ - and his coming in judgment shall be acclaimed as a great work of salvation, which will signal the redemption not just of people, but of creation itself. The Psalm calls for us to join in the rest of creation in worshipping with joy the LORD the King, who saves, and who judges righteously.

Spend time praising God.



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