PSALMS 135-137

REVIEW…

- Psalms of Ascent…
  - Psalms of Ascent are FIFTEEN songs written for Pilgrims coming to Jerusalem – **Psalms 120-134**
  - THREE times a year they were required to come to City – **Exodus 23:14-17**
  - Jerusalem sits about 1000 meters above sea level [highest in the area]
  - Therefore people always go UP to Jerusalem – they ASCEND…
  - These are the SONGS the Jews have been singing for THREE thousand years…
  - As they came up to Jerusalem – came to WORSHIP the Lord in the Temple!
- **1st – PSALM 135**
  - 1st – The command… vs. 1-2
    - Shine…

- Praise the LORD!
- The commanded [imperative] - is to intensely [piel] PRAISE the LORD
- A command the is repeated FOUR times just in just the first TWO verses…
- PRAISE [הָלַל] – meaning to SHINE for – or BOAST about someone!
- If someone has a favorite SPORTS team – they do not HIDE it…
- They wear the T-Shirt – and BOAST about their team [especially if they win]!
- We are commanded to SHINE for Jesus – put on the T-Shirt…
- Boast to everyone about who our God is – tell the world about Him!

▪ His Name…

- Praise the name of the LORD!
- PRAISE the NAME of the LORD [יְהוָה] – the I AM - the becoming one – **Exodus 3:14**
- Jesus would pick up on this title in the New Testament – the I AM statements!
- If we are lacking - God is our provider – the BREAD of Life…
- If we need comfort He is our SHEPHERD - if we need direction He is our LIGHT…
- We PRAISE the name of the LORD - because He is always WHO we need!

▪ His Servants…

- Praise Him - O you servants of the LORD.
- You who stand in the house of the LORD. In the courts of the house of our God!
- There are TWO places where we are command to PRAISE:
- FIRST – when we are busy SERVING the LORD – we must PRAISE…
- SECOND – when we are standing in the HOUSE of the LORD – in His courts – we must PRAISE!
- We do not PRAISE just when we come to CHURCH…
- PRAISING God is not about GEOGRAPHY - God does NOT live in a building…
- We are to PRAISE everywhere – always – no matter what happens!

○ 2nd – Why we Praise… vs. 3-4

▪ Chosen by God…

- Praise the LORD - for the LORD is good. Sing praises to His name - for it is pleasant.
- For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself. Israel for His special treasure!
- PRAISE [הָלַל] the LORD – because He is GOOD [טוֹב] and PLEASANT…
- How do we know the LORD is GOOD – because He chose JACOB [dirty thief]
- And made him into ISRAEL [governed by God] – a special treasure!
- **Deuteronomy 7:6 –** "Your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

▪ Least of all…

- We might wonder – why did God chose JACOB – make ISRAEL his treasure…
- If we look at their history – it was NOT because they were GOOD…
- The reason was not because they were BEST – it was because they were the LEAST!
- **Deuteronomy 7:7 –** "I choose you because you were… the least of all peoples."
- God does NOT just pick the brightest – beautiful – wealthy – **I Corinthians 1:27**
- God picks us – the FOOLISH [μωρός] - because then the world sees God is us!

○ 3rd – His Sovereignty… vs. 5-6

▪ For I know that the LORD is great - and our Lord is above all gods.

▪ Whatever the LORD pleases He does. In heaven and in earth. In the seas and in all deep places!

- I [אֲנִי] – even I [emphasized] - know the LORD is GREAT [גָּדוֹל]
- He is the MASTER [אֲדֹנָי] over ALL other RULERS [אֱלֹהִים]
- He does whatever [כֹּל] He wants – in HEAVEN – on EARTH – in the SEA – even to the DEPTHS!
- Whatever happens in this life – is caused by – or allowed by God…
- We PRAISE the LORD – because He is SOVEREIGN over everything…
- When life seems uncertain – we can still be confident – knowing ultimately God is in control!
- **Ephesians 1:11** – "[Jesus] works all things according to the counsel of His will…"

○ 4th – His Power… vs. 7-12

- To bless… vs. 7
  - He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain.
  - He brings the wind out of His treasuries!
  - God causes [hiphil] CLOUDS [vapor] to rise up from the distant OCEANS…
  - With strong WINDS He blows those clouds back over land – and RAINS down FRESH water…
  - SEVENTY percent of the earth is WATER – but most is SALT water…
  - Only about ONE percent of that WATER is FRESH [drinkable]
  - The earth would perish if it were not for the WATER cycle!
  - The SAHARA desert used to be a GREEN and lush grassland and forest…
  - But a change in WIND caused the RAIN to stop – and the LAND dried up and DIED…
  - We PRAISE the LORD because He has the POWER to bless [or curse] our lives…
  - He is the one who can command the RAIN to fall on us so that we THRIVE!
- To Save… vs. 8-9
  - He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt - both of man and beast.
  - He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you - O Egypt. Upon Pharaoh and all his servants!
  - God did SIGNS and WONDERS in Egypt [plagues] – on Pharoah and all of his people…
  - God KILLED [hiphil] all their firstborn – both the men and animals…
  - But gave His people a SIGN [אוֹת] that saved them The BLOOD of Lamb – **Exodus 12:13**
  - We deserve to be JUDGED – like Pharaoh and Egypt – **Romans 6:23**
  - But instead God gave us a SIGN – the BLOOD of Lamb of God…
  - Therefore - death PASSES over us – we are forgiven and set free…
  - We PRAISE because through the Cross – the BLOOD of Jesus – we are saved!
  - **I Peter 1:19** – "[We are redeemed] with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."
- To give Victory.. vs. 10-12
  - He defeated many nations and slew mighty kings.
  - Sihon king of the Amorites - Og king of Bashan - and all the kingdoms of Canaan.
  - And gave their land as a heritage - a heritage to Israel His people!
  - God KILLED [hiphil] many unbelievers [גּוֹיִם] – even great KINGS [מְלָכִים]
  - Including King Sihon and King Og – **Numbers 21**
  - Israel feared the people of the Promised Land – **Numbers 14:1-4**
  - Therefore the Lord told them they would wander for FORTY years in the wilderness…
  - In futility the people responded - by trying to go and take the Land [too late]

- **Numbers 14:43** - "But they [fell] by the sword… because the LORD was not with them."
- After FORTY years – the people came again to the Promised Land…
- But this time when Sihon of the Amorites – and Og of Bashan attacked them…
- God was with them – and Israel wiped out both kingdoms – **Numbers 21:35**
- And their land [eastern Jordan] was given to Israel as a possession!
- We can say all day we want to do what is right - live for God...
- But if God is not with us - if we are not empowered by His Spirit - we will fail...
- Only when we depend on the Lord – PRAISE the LORD – will we have victory!

- 5th – His Fame… vs. 13-14
  - Your name - O LORD - endures forever. Your fame - O LORD - throughout all generations.
  - For the LORD will judge His people - and He will have compassion on His servants!
  - The NAME of the LORD is FOREVER [עוֹלָם]
  - His NAME will be REMEMBERED [זֵכֶר] from generation to generation…
  - Because the LORD gives JUSTICE to His people [עַם] – and comfort to His servants…
  - The STORY of how God saved His people – is still told 3500 years later!
  - The famous French philosopher Voltaire [1700] – 100 years the bible will be forgotten…
  - God had a sense of humor – after he died his house became a Bible warehouse!
  - How many countless times has the world tried to PROVE God does not exist…
  - How many foolish ideas – to try and convince the world not to believe…
  - We PRAISE the Lord because His name will endure FOREVER!
  - **Isaiah 40:8** – "The grass dies - the flower fades - but the word of our God stands forever."
- 6th – Empty Idols… vs. 15-18
  - Work of men…
    - The idols of the nations are silver and gold. The work of mens hands!
    - The Psalmist draws a COMPARISON – OUR God and the IDOLS of unbelievers [גּוֹיִם]
    - IDOLS carved out of SILVER and GOLD – made by men [where we are made by God]
    - IDOLS that can NOT help– they can only DISAPPOINT…
    - IDOL [עָצָב] – comes from the VERB to cause PAIN!
  - No Power…
    - They have mouths - but they do not speak. Eyes they have - but they do not see.
    - They have ears - but they do not hear. Nor is there any breath in their mouths.
    - There is a REASON why IDOLS will always disappoint…
    - They have mouths but CANNOT speak [piel] – eyes but CANNOT SEE [imperfect]
    - They have ears but CANNOT hear [hiphil] what people ask of them…
    - But most of all they are NOT [אִין] alive – they do not have a SPIRIT [רוּחַ] in them!
    - We might think we do NOT have idols anymore – but people do NOT change…
    - People still carve IDOLS out of metal – we call the FORD or TOYOTA…
    - People still put their FAITH - in GOLD and SILER – invest for the FUTURE…

- People still look to WOOD [paper money] to SAVE them…
- Yet these things have no POWER to save us – in the end they will always DISAPPOINT!

▪ No Life…

- Those who make them are like them. So is everyone who trusts in them!
- The people who MAKE them – TRUST them – are just LIKE them!
- Those who put their faith in IDOLS rather than Jesus – do NOT have LIFE…
- Which is why we PRAISE the LORD who is greater than any IDOL!

○ 7th – Bless the Lord… vs. 19-21

▪ Bless the LORD - O house of Israel! Bless the LORD - O house of Aaron!

▪ Bless the LORD - O house of Levi! You who fear the LORD - bless the LORD!

▪ Blessed be the LORD out of Zion who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!

▪ Seeing how much better the LORD is than any IDOL [anything we make]

▪ Those who are of the house of ISRAEL [יִשְׂרָאֵל] – the Church [believers]

▪ Those who are of the house of AARON [priests] – the Pastors [elders]

▪ Those who are of the house of LEVI [servants] – the Volunteers [deacons]

▪ Anyone who FEARS God – people who are thinking about accepting Jesus – **Psalm 111:10**

▪ MUST [imperative] KNEEL [בָּרַךְ] before the LORD…

▪ Because only LORD – who is from ZION [Jerusalem] - can BLESS [participle] our lives!

▪ That is why we PRAISE the LORD [הַלְלוּ־יָהּ]

▪ INTENSELY [piel] give PRAISE [הָלַל] – to the LORD [יָהּ] an abbreviation for [יְהוָה]

▪ A WORD that is universal in every language – it should not be translated…

▪ Because in every language this truth is the same – ONLY God is worthy of our PRAISE!

- **2nd – Give Thanks… Psalm 136**

○ 1st – His Mercy… vs. 1

▪ He is Good…

- Oh - give thanks to the LORD - for He is good!
- The GOODNESS [טוֹב] of the LORD – causes [hiphil] us to give [imperative] Him thanks!
- We WOKE up this morning – we have AIR in our lungs…
- We have FOOD on our tables – we are surrounded by FRIENDS…
- The LORD has been very GOOD to us – and given us every reason to give Him THANKS!
- The problem comes when we focus on the WRONG things – look in the WRONG direction…
- Rather than give thanks for what God has DONE – we look at tomorrow…
- But there is no reason to worry about – next week – or next year...
- God has been faithful - and He will continue to be faithful – as we seek Him FIRST!
- **Matthew 6:33-34** – "Seek first the kingdom of God… Do not worry about tomorrow."

- He is Loving…
  - For His mercy endures forever.
  - We do NOT need to WORRY - because [כִּי] FOREVER [לְעוֹלָם] the LORD is MERCIFUL…
  - MERCIFUL [חֶסֶד] – to show KINDNESS – to be LOVING!
  - Too often God is presented as a MEAN dictator – waiting to PUNISH His subjects…
  - But this is a gross misrepresentation of who God is…
  - He is our LOVING Heavenly Father – who will ALWAYS be KIND to His children!
- Responsive…
  - This is an unusual Psalm as it is RESPONSIVE…
  - The PRIEST would read the beginning of each VERSE…
  - The PEOPLE would respond each time by saying – His MERCY endures forever…
  - Because it is so IMPORTANT we remember this – and too easy to FORGET!
  - This is thought to be what Ezra read at the dedication of the SECOND temple…
  - When the people of Israel returned from SEVENTY years of captivity in Babylon…
  - And were trying to rebuild the TEMPLE that had been DESTROYED!
  - **Ezra 3:11** – "They sang responsively… For He is good. For His mercy endures forever."
  - When life is NOT going the way we expect – when things are falling apart..
  - That is the perfect time to say out loud – His MERCY endures forever…
  - Reminding ourselves that EVERYTHING God allows to happen in our live – is for our GOOD…
  - Because above all – we KNOW that God is LOVE – **I John 4:8**

- 2nd – For who He is… vs. 2-3
  - Oh - give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.
  - Oh - give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever!
  - We give THANKS [hiphil] to the LORD – because of WHO He is…
  - FIRST – He is the God [אֱלֹהִים] over all other gods [הָאֱלֹהִים] – likely referring to angels – **Psalm 8:5**
  - SECOND – He is the Lord [אֲדֹנָי] over all other leaders [הָאֲדֹנִים] – worldly leaders [kings]
  - If the Mayor of Bacolod walked into the room – we would show RESPECT…
  - If Michael the Archangel walking into the room – we would fall on our faces!
  - **Ephesians 1:21** – "He is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else." [NLT]
  - Since the LORD is FAR above EVERY other authority [in heaven – on earth – under the earth]
  - Is there any wonder – why we should be worshiping and giving thanks to Him!
- 3rd – For Creation… vs. 4-9
  - Wonders:
    - To Him who alone does great wonders. For His mercy endures forever.
    - God is the ONLY God who can do great [גָּדוֹל] WONDERS [פֶּלֶא]
    - The Psalmist is goes back to Genesis to give us THREE examples!
  - Heavens:
    - To Him who by wisdom made the heavens. For His mercy endures forever.

- FIRST - God was WISE - knowing HOW to make [עָשָׂה] the UNIVERSE [הַשָּׁמַיִם] – **Genesis 1:1**
- The universe with 200 BILLION galaxies – each with BILLIONS of stars…
- And more than likely each of those stars has numerous plants [ours has 8]

▪ Earth:

- To Him who laid out the earth above the waters. For His mercy endures forever.
- SECOND – He stretched out the EARTH – above the WATERS – **Genesis 1:6**
- Our little blue [water] spec in the cosmos gets the honor of its own mention [הָאָרֶץ]
- Because the earth is UNIQUE – there is nothing else like it in the UNIVERSE…
- Oxford university study 2018 - concluded we are likely alone in the knowable universe!
- They used realistic variables for the Drake equation – $1x0.8^{-34}$ probability of alien life!
- From a Biblical perspective there CANNOT be aliens – other inhabited planets…
- Because ALL of creation was cursed at the fall of Adam – **Romans 8:20**

▪ Lights:

- To Him who made great lights. For His mercy endures forever.
- The sun to rule by day. For His mercy endures forever.
- The moon and stars to rule by night. For His mercy endures forever!
- THIRD – God also made [עָשָׂה] great [גָּדוֹל] LIGHTS…
- The SUN that RULES over the DAY – and the MOON and stars over the NIGHT!
- God gave us the sun – moon - and stars so that we would be able to keep track of TIME…
- We know it is day or night because of the sun [day] and moon [night]
- We know the seasons [not so much here] - by where the sun is in the sky [winter or summer]
- Since every person – in the whole world – in every country…
- How much more should we give thanks to the God who made it ALL – **Colossians 1:16**

○ 4th – For Redemption… vs. 10-15

▪ To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn. For His mercy endures forever.

▪ And brought out Israel from among them. For His mercy endures forever.

▪ With a strong hand - and with an outstretched arm. For His mercy endures forever.

▪ To Him who divided the Red Sea in two. For His mercy endures forever.

▪ And made Israel pass through the midst of it. For His mercy endures forever.

▪ But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. For His mercy endures forever.

▪ Israel had a VERY dramatic redemption story – one we all know well!

▪ The TENTH and final plague was the DEATH Angel – **Exodus 11:1**

▪ When God killed [hiphil] the FIRST born of Egypt [and Pharoah]

▪ It caused [sequential] the king to allow Israel to be set FREE…

▪ But God was NOT done – He hardened the heart of Pharoah – **Exodus 14:4**

▪ And Pharoah chased after Israel – boxing them in at the Red Sea…

▪ But God – by His Mighty Hand – parted an ocean for His people…

- And caused it to fall back down on Pharoah when he chased after them!
- When we are going through hard times – it is good to REMEMBER…
- How did the LORD save us – what is our REDEMPTION story…
- Looking back on His faithfulness – gives us confidence in our FUTURE!
- **Philippians 1:6** – "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it."

- 5th – For Second chances… vs. 16-22
  - To Him who led His people through the wilderness. For His mercy endures forever.
  - To Him who struck down great kings. For His mercy endures forever.
  - And slew famous kings. For His mercy endures forever.
  - Sihon king of the Amorites. For His mercy endures forever.
  - And Og king of Bashan. For His mercy endures forever.
  - And gave their land as a heritage. For His mercy endures forever.
  - A heritage to Israel His servant. For His mercy endures forever!
  - God caused [hiphil] His people to walk in the WILDERNESS [40 years]
  - Because they doubted the LORD when they came to the Promised Land - **Numbers 14:1-4**
  - But when Israel arrived the SECOND time – God fought for them - **Numbers 21:35**
  - So they were able to kill GREAT [גָּדוֹל] Kings – Sihon and Og…
  - GREAT and FAMOUS are emphasized – to show these were MIGHTY nations…
  - Israel should NOT have been able to defeat them – BUT God…
  - And they took their LAND as an inheritance for themselves!
  - God is never surprised by our mistakes - when we choose to disobey Him...
  - He knows we are sinners - remembers we are just dust - **Psalms 103:14**
  - The really good news is - when we mess up - God is the God of SECOND chances...
  - There is always GRACE - there is always HOPE - if only we are willing to turn back to God!
- 6th – For Grace… vs. 23-25
  - Who remembered us in our lowly state. For His mercy endures forever.
  - And rescued us from our enemies. For His mercy endures forever.
  - Who gives food to all flesh. For His mercy endures forever.

- Oh - give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever!
- God REMEMBERED Israel – because they were HUMBLE [lowly]
- Therefore [sequential] He rescues [imperfect] them from their ENEMIES…
- And provides [participle] for ALL [כָּל] of their NEEDS [food]
- That is why we must [imperative] give THANKS [hiphil] to the God of Heaven!
- HUMILITY is the KEY that opens the door for GRACE - **James 4:6**
- If the example of Israel teaches us anything – it is that we cannot live for God on our own…
- We are not strong enough – we do not have the power live a GODLY life…
- It is when we are HUMBLE and realize we need Jesus – that we unlock His GRACE…
- Then God gets a hold of our lives – He changes our heart – transforms us…
- And by His Grace – we are able to give THANKS – as we see God provide for all our NEEDS!
- **II Corinthians 4:15**– "Grace - having spread through the many - may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God."

- **3RD – SONG OF CAPTIVITY… PSALM 137**
  - 1st – In Babylon… vs. 1
    - By the rivers of Babylon - there we sat down – yea - we wept when we remembered Zion!
    - Judah [Southern Kingdom] had abandoned the LORD – and followed other gods…
    - The prophet Ezekiel even saw the glory of the Lord depart the Temple – **Ezekiel 10:18**
    - As a result – God allowed Babylon to conquer Judah and Jerusalem!
    - 609 B.C. - FIRST fall of Jerusalem under Jehoiakim [Daniel taken captive] – **II Kings 24:1**
    - 597 B.C. – SECOND fall of Jerusalem under Jehoiachin [Ezekiel taken captive] – **II Kings 24:10**
    - 587 B.C. – THIRD fall of Jerusalem under Zedekiah [destruction of the Temple]
    - The day Nebuchadnezzar besieged the City – January 30 - 588 B.C.
    - Was the day Ezekiel was told by the Lord the city would fall - **Ezekiel 24:1-2**
    - Jeremiah was given the same message - Jerusalem was doomed - **Jeremiah 34:1**
    - The judgment of God should not have come as a surprise – He gave plenty of warning…
    - Right up to the end – the prophets of God stood up to warn the people…
    - Yet to the very end – the people were stubborn – and hard hearted!

- **Isaiah 65:2** – "I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people…"
- People today are just like the Children of Israel – stubborn and hard hearted…
- They go about their daily lives – ignoring the warnings of what is coming…
- They assume they have all the time in the world - tomorrow will be just like today...
- God has been patient desiring that people come to Jesus – saved – **II Peter 3:9**
- But that patience does not mean that the judgment will not come!

- 2nd – The Song… vs. 2-4
  - We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it.
  - For there - those who carried us away captive asked of us a song.
  - And those who plundered us requested mirth – saying - Sing us one of the songs of Zion!
  - How shall we sing the LORDs song in a foreign land?
  - As the Jews sat by the Rivers of Babylon [Tigris and Euphrates]
  - They put their HARPS on the willow trees – they did NOT want to play music anymore…
  - But the Babylonians [who had conquered them - demanded [imperative] to hear a song of ZION…
  - But how could they sing the LORDS song – in a FOREIGN land!
  - We may not FEEL like worshiping – we may FEEL like we are captive in a FOREIGN land…
  - But one of the best things we can do is WORSHIP – sing a song about our LORD!
  - WORSHIP has the ability like no other – to change our perspective…
  - No matter what burden we may have – when we start to PRAISE…
  - We no longer see our PROBLEMS – we see an all POWERFUL God…
  - So wherever we are – whatever we are facing – lets SING to our LORD - **Ephesians 5:19**
- 3rd – Never Forget… v. 5-6
  - If I forget you - O Jerusalem - let my right hand forget its skill!
  - If I do not remember you - let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth.
  - If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy!
  - Why sing about a CITY that they may NEVER see again [in this life]
  - The answer was simple – so they would NOT forget…
  - If they stopped singing about Jerusalem – let them forget about their right hand [cannot work]

- Let their tongue stick to the top of their mouth [cannot speak]
- Unless Jerusalem was what they exalted [lifted up] above all else!
- When we worship about the CITY of God – our TRUE home [Heavenly Jerusalem]
- It puts our focus on what is most important…
- Not the circumstances around us – but the destination ahead of us!
- **Hebrews 11:4** – "Those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland."

- 4th – Remember Edom… vs. 7
  - Remember - O LORD - against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem.
  - Who said - Raze it! Raze it to its very foundation!
  - The singers had a SONG for their CAPTORS – it was a cry for JUSTICE…
  - LORD remember [imperative] what Edom did when Jerusalem fell…
  - They cried out RAZE [piel] – tear the city down to its foundation!
  - The Book of Obadiah was written as a JUDGMENT on Edom…
  - Because they rejoiced – and helped – when Babylon conquered the CITY!
  - **Obadiah 1:10** – "For violence against your brother Jacob… you shall be cut off forever."
  - When a believer is in trouble – and needs help - Christians tend to attack...
  - Rather than picking them up - they instead are quick to judge...
  - Christians unfortunately are famous for shooting their wounded!
- 5th – Remember Babylon… vs. 8-9
  - O daughter of Babylon - who are to be destroyed.
  - Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!
  - Happy the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock!
  - The Jewish singers went on – to sing about Babylon…
  - Women of Babylon – who will be DESTROYED [by the LORD]
  - We will be HAPPY – when God does to YOU – what YOU did to US…
  - When your little children are dashed [piel] onto the rocks!
  - God used Babylon to punish Judah for their SIN – **Isaiah 47:6**
  - But Babylon went TOO far – and that made God ANGRY…

- Therefore - Babylon would ultimately be conquered by Cyrus and Medo-Persia – **Daniel 5:30**
- And just as Isaiah prophesied – God would do to them – what they did to Israel!
- **Isaiah 13:16-19** - "Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes… Babylon - the glory of kingdoms… Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."
- God does not play around when it comes to harming His children – **Luke 17:2**
- He is a VERY protective Father - and gets VERY angry when anyone threatens His kids!