

# Discipleship

## Personal comment:

*At one level, 'glory' is a word like any other, and we can look it up in a dictionary to find out what it means. Incidentally, in the shorter Oxford dictionary, it says 'exalted renown, honourable fame, subject for boasting, splendid, magnificent, intensely delightful.' Frankly, none of this helps me work out what it really means for the angels to sing 'glory to God!' But psalm 96 helps us by connecting up a few spiritual 'dots' to make us realise that to give God glory is to love Him by choice and with complete sincerity. When we see what God has done in the birth of a baby, then we are moved to give Him all the glory we know how to give.*

## Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Take a few moments of relaxation to sit back and 'give God the glory!' How do you do this? Don't be worried about methods or definitions, but just let the Spirit guide your spirit, and as you allow yourself to do so, you will indeed give God the 'glory' that is His due!*
- *Pray for those who find it hard to let themselves go in worship and praise, and are constantly on edge, concerned, critical and inhibited in their response to the 'greatest story ever told on earth'.*

## Final Prayer

We love You, Lord God! Lift up our hearts to give You glory, to praise Your name, and to say thank You, over and over again for the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ. May we never cease to wonder at the amazing revelation to which we are witnesses by faith, and may we re-tell the story of Christmas many times over, and testify to Your Salvation! AMEN

# Psalm 96

No: 19 Week: 171 Thursday 25/12/08

## Prayer

Father, we are so happy, and You must be happy too! Your child is our Saviour and he has come into our world! Thank You, dear Father, thank You! Poets have written about this, preachers have preached about it, musicians have sung about it, and artists have painted it; but nothing compares to the truth! Praise You Lord God; we sing with the angels, ALLELUIA!

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Christmas

*Pray for all any people you know who long to share love and joy on Christmas day, but because of health or age are not able to join in with the festivities as they would wish.*

### On-going prayers

- *Give thanks for this special day and all that it means*
- *Pray for elderly people who have no one left to help or love them*
- *Pray for those who have lost money in recent financial scandals*

## Meditation

*(reflections on words from the 'Magnificat' Luke 1:46-55)*

Surely, the Lord our God has come to bless us!  
He has given us His Son, who is born as a child,  
And He will never stop giving His love and His care!

Surely the Mighty One has done great things for us!  
He has shown us His mercy; it is for all who need it  
And He will continue to be with His people forever!

Surely the Spirit of God is present to heal and save!  
He has sustained the oppressed and raised up the poor  
And He will continue to intervene in our world to help us!

Surely the God of our ancestors has kept His promise!  
He has defeated the strong and proud by His power  
And He will fulfil His promise to bring us true justice!

Surely our God will do all this through Jesus, His only son!

## Bible Study - Psalm 96

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| <sup>1</sup> <i>Sing to the LORD a new song;<br/>sing to the LORD, all the earth.</i>                    | <sup>4</sup> <i>For great is the LORD, He is worthy of<br/>great praise;</i>                              |
| <sup>2</sup> <i>Sing to the LORD, bless His name;<br/>proclaim His salvation day after<br/>day.</i>      | <i>He is to be revered above all gods.</i>  |
| <sup>3</sup> <i>Declare His glory among the nations,<br/>His marvellous deeds among all<br/>peoples.</i> | <sup>5</sup> <i>For all the gods of the nations are<br/>worthless,<br/>but the LORD made the heavens.</i> |
|  | <sup>6</sup> <i>Splendour and majesty are before<br/>Him;</i>   |

power and glory are in His sanctuary.

<sup>7</sup> Give to the LORD, O families of nations,  
Give to the LORD glory and strength.

<sup>8</sup> Give to the LORD the glory due to His name;  
take up an offering and come into His courts.

<sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in the splendour of His holiness;  
come tremble before him, all the earth.

<sup>10</sup> Proclaim among the nations, 'The LORD reigns.'

The world is secured, it will not be overthrown;  
He will rule the peoples with justice.

<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
<sup>12</sup> let the fields be joyful, and everything in them.  
Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;  
<sup>13</sup> they will sing before the LORD, for he comes,  
He comes to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world in righteousness  
and the peoples in his truth.

### Review

This is the morning we all look forward to; a Christmas morning of happiness and joy! Every family has its own traditions with which to celebrate Christmas day, but one of the most memorable features of the season is its great tradition of song. As each year comes around, we sing again the great carols and songs of faith which describe the Saviour's birth and entry into the world. They are a great treasure, and we sing them afresh each year as being to us like 'new songs'.

The call to sing a 'new song' does not mean we have to write a new song for the Lord just to be able to worship Him; the 'newness' comes from the heart of the singer and worshipper. This psalm is a call to worship the Lord with a new heart and with a new attitude, perhaps with new faith and certainly a renewed zeal. Although it was never envisaged that this psalm should have anything to do with the coming of the Messiah, its captivating and uplifting sense of the glory of God and His saving power makes it fitting for this Christmas Day.

**Universal joy!** Our psalm begins with a threefold call to song in praise of God, in verses 1,2 and 3. Each verse has a pair of lines emphasising what is said; firstly the whole world is called to direct songs of praise to the Lord; secondly, everyone is called to proclaim the 'salvation' of God; thirdly, the revelation of God's glory is declared to all peoples. After this powerful introduction, the psalmist develops the theme of the worthiness of God who is able to do things on earth because He is a living God, unlike the gods of wood and stone worshipped by other peoples, who are mocked as 'worthless' (96:4) and ineffective.

On Christmas day, every Christian soul is uplifted by the awesome nature of God, and few turn dry and un-expectant in the face of the wonder and power of its simple story. When we turn up to church on Christmas morning and see the excitement not just in children's faces but in parents and grandparents, then attending church ceases to be a matter of joining in some regular worship experience, but becomes a privilege and a pleasure not to be missed! We happily celebrate the historical fact that the Lord our God has come into the world as a baby boy, who will grow up and become our Saviour! Our hearts are ready to be inspired, and worship comes as naturally as breathing.

**True worship** This is the true sense of worship and zeal for what God has done which is echoed in this psalm. The message of Christmas is something for us to glory in and to

shout aloud; God is active in His world, to love, to bless, and to save. It does not matter what people think, they can accept this or reject it, but for once, God's people have a message which is unashamedly happy, glorious, free, and worthy of such a good party that many people spend more on presents for each other than at any other time of the year! 'For great is the Lord, He is worthy of great praise!' (96:4).

**Give Him glory!** In the central section of this psalm, we are asked to give the Lord 'glory and strength' (96:7) and give Him 'the glory due to His name' (96:8); the psalmist also calls on us to 'worship the Lord in the splendour of His holiness.'(96:9). What can we do to give God glory? Surely He has everything, what more can we give? Surely the reason why God came as a baby was because of the huge gap between Himself and humanity because of our sin; so what could God possibly want or need from us? But to ask such questions is to talk about God as if He was greedy or mercenary.

The language of 'glory' as used in this psalm, and as sung by the angels who serenaded the shepherds in the fields is the language of love, 'Glory to God in the highest!' To give God the 'glory' is to love, honour and respect Him as our creator, and by our personal choice to offer back to Him our love and affection. When we sing 'glory to God!' we cannot single out exactly what it is we are giving to God, as if it was some physical substance or something describable in words. Glory is a matter of the heart, just like love. A young man or woman in love speaks about their lover as the best person in the whole world! A young parent or a grandparent speaks about a new-born child as if he or she was the most beautiful baby in the world, and indeed, they are right! This is the language of glory, and glory is like a heart that is happy, submissive, generous, loving, and prepared to do all things and anything to enhance the object of affection. There is true giving of glory on the faces of those who worship the new-born Christ-child on Christmas day!

**Let all creation join in our praise and our glory!** The last four verses of this psalm speak about the whole world joining in this song of glory to God. Clearly, this 'joining in' will only be complete in the future, but when Jesus came as a baby, the whole world was served notice that God will make this happen. God will 'rule the peoples with justice' (96:10) and the whole of creation will sing praises to God (96:12) and all the promise of the baby born in Bethlehem will be fulfilled when He comes again 'in glory' (96:13).

Today is not a day for analysis or speculation but acceptance and joy, and the giving of glory to God. Psalm 96 invites us to 'sing a new song', and is best known for this call; however, what it does best is to summons God's people to delight the heart of the heavenly Father by giving Him glory for what He has done. What better message could we have for Christmas morning! Let us give God all the service and worship of our hearts, the love, affection, honour and awesome wonder that goes into that single word, 'glory'.

'Glory to God in the highest!'

### Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss in your group the different ways in which you 'give glory' to God. Is it possible to define what 'glory' is?
2. How can Christian people best be made aware of the great and glorious chorus of praise and worship that goes up to God on Christmas day?
3. Do you look forward to the day when God will rule the world with justice? What does this phrase mean to you?