

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAISE
LESSON SIXTEEN: MORNING PRAISE

by Sandy Harber

"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longest for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Psalm 63:1

The book of Psalms was Israel's hymnbook. The lyrics of these songs are preserved for us in our Bibles. But the music - the tune - is missing. We generally read the psalms as poetry. We've lost that musical element. Praise has a musical element to it, which is why we refer to our song leaders as the "Praise Team" or the "Worship Team." We sing hymns before the sermon because praising the Lord in song prepares our hearts and minds to receive His message from His Word.

The early Church began every morning service with the singing of Psalm 63. According to John Chrysostom (347-407 A.D.), Archbishop of Constantinople, it was ordained and agreed upon by the primitive church fathers that Psalm 63 would be sung publically every day without fail. Thus, any public gathering included the singing of this hymn. Psalm 63 is a prayer of David who longs for his God body and soul. It is filled with praise, thanksgiving, and rejoicing. Do you start your day with praise?

The superscription over Psalm 63 informs us that David wrote this psalm when he was in the wilderness of Judah. As a young man David was pursued through the wilderness by a jealous King Saul and his army (I Sam. 23:14). Many years later, King David's son, Absalom, attempted to usurp the throne and David was forced to flee to the wilderness of Judah temporarily (II Sam. 15:23). Most likely the psalm was composed on the second occasion since David refers to himself as "the king" in verse 11.

David addressed God directly in Psalm 63. And he personalized it: "thou art my God" (v. 1). He was seeking, thirsting for, and longing for an encounter with his God in the "dry and thirsty" wilderness. He was actively searching for satisfaction for his spiritual (soul) and physical (flesh) ache for his Lord. David's search began early (v. 1) and he ended the day meditating into the night watches (v. 6). Israel had three night watches: 1) sunset to 10 p.m.; 2) 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; and, 3) 2 a.m. to sunrise. Do you sometimes find yourself praying in the night watches when you can't sleep?

David was in a tough situation. He was betrayed by a beloved son as well as many of his people. His trusted counselor, Ahithophel (Bathsheba's grandfather), turned against him and counseled the rebellious Absalom (II Sam. 15:31). David was in exile with the people who were loyal to him. Absalom and his soldiers sought the king's life. But David's focus in Psalm 63 was more on the spiritual than the physical plane. He praised (vv. 3, 5) and blessed (v. 4) God. He raised up holy hands (v. 4) and rejoiced (vv. 7, 11) in the power, glory, and loving kindness of his God (vv. 2-3), Who helped, protected, and upheld him (vv. 7-8). David's only mention of his enemies was to note that they would fail (vv. 9-10). They would fall by the sword, be prey to wild animals (v. 10), and end up in hell or the grave (v. 9).

Psalm 63 is a hymn of praise composed to honor a faithful God by a grateful embattled king. In the midst of his desperate situation David rejoiced (vv. 7, 11). From his protected position in the shadow of God's wings (v. 7) David had peace and joy because he knew the God Who helped him in the past (v. 7) would uphold him in the present (v. 8).

Start your day reading a psalm or singing a praise chorus. It will give you peace and joy and set the tone for your day. End the day with your focus on God, thanking Him for specific blessings. Rejoice and praise the Lord.

"Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." Psalm 63:3