

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

1 CHR. 16:23 Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation.

24 Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations.

25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods.

26 For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

27 Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place.

28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

30 Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.

31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.

32 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein.

33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth.

NOTES

Worshipping God in His Sanctuary

Lesson Text: 1 Chronicles 16:23-33

Related Scriptures: 1 Chronicles 16:1-7;
Psalms 19:1-6; 96:1-13; 145:1-21; Revelation 7:9-12

TIME: about 977 B.C.

PLACE: Jerusalem

GOLDEN TEXT—“Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth” (1 Chronicles 16:31).

Lesson Exposition

THE CALL TO PROCLAIM THE LORD—1 Chr. 16:23-29a

The Chronicler called the people to proclaim the greatness of God and provided several reasons for doing so. He explained how the Lord was different from the multitude of false gods. The verbs used in this section all focus on telling everyone about the glory and greatness of the one true God.

His salvation (1 Chr. 16:23). The first reason to praise God is that He is able and willing to save His people from calamity. The only reason the incredibly outnumbered Israelites had not been wiped out as they entered the Promised Land was that the Lord had protected them (vss. 18-22). God's people succeed because of the Lord.

His marvelous works (1 Chr. 16:24-26). Next, the Chronicler urged the people to follow a principle that had been emphasized in the past but apparently forgotten. God's glory, displayed in His work of creation, was destined to be declared among every nation, not just among the Israelites (Isa. 66:19-24).

The Chronicler warned the people that the gods of the nations, in contrast with the one true God, were powerless to perform even the smallest act of deliverance (cf. 1 Chr. 16:25-26; 2 Chr. 14:11-15). False idols are utterly powerless, vain, and worthless (1 Chr. 16:26). In contrast, the one true God is worthy of praise, because He created the heavens. Anyone seeking to steal His honor was a worthless impostor.

He alone is worthy (1 Chr. 16:27-29a). The Chronicler encouraged the people to spread the news about the Lord because of His works of salvation and creation, and because He alone is worthy. The Lord alone is the source of all splendor, strength, and gladness (vs. 27).

THE CALL TO WORSHIP THE LORD —1 Chr. 16:29b-30

The original readers of 1 Chronicles had just returned from years of captivity at the hand of the conquering Babylonians (cf. 2 Chr. 36:22-23). By the time Chronicles was written, the altar and the temple had likely been rebuilt;

however, temple worship had apparently stalled due to the sinful actions of the people (cf. Ezra 9; Neh. 13:15-31).

Worship requires a personal offering (1 Chr. 16:29b). The elements of worship described in this section should remind us of previous instructions in Scripture. First, the people were instructed to bring an offering and come before the Lord. Though the text does not specify what type of offering to bring into His presence, the intent is plain. From Cain and Abel's era (Gen. 4:3-5) all the way to the end of the Old Testament, which would shortly be completed (Mal. 1:13; 3:3), God's Word consistently showed that an offering given in faith was required in order to enter God's presence and worship Him rightly.

Worship requires holiness (1 Chr. 16:29c). Those approaching the Lord to worship Him must also be dressed for the part, so to speak. They are to worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. The image may have reminded early readers of the high priest clothing himself in holy garments before entering the Most Holy Place to present the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. Those who sought to enter God's presence needed to be purified and cleansed of all stain and sin.

Worship requires reverence (1 Chr. 16:30). Finally, those who seek to worship God by bringing an offering to Him must do so with an attitude of reverence and fear. The Chronicler called them to tremble before God.

THE CALL TO REJOICE IN THE LORD—1 Chr. 16:31-33

It is interesting that up through verse 22, Israel was being exhorted to trust in their covenant-keeping God. The aim of verses 23-33, however, shifts the focus to exhort everyone and everything else to follow Israel's lead in worshipping the Lord. The bookend

verses indicate the overall intention—verse 23 calls for all the earth to sing to the Lord, and verse 33 describes a future date when the trees will sing out at the presence the Lord. Earlier, the returnees were told to spread the good news about the God of Israel among all nations (vs. 24). Although Israel did not always follow that command, the good news has always been for all the earth. Sadly, both in David's time and later in the time when the Chronicler wrote, the people ultimately succumbed to unfaithfulness and paid the price.

Around the time Chronicles was written, Malachi also wrote to Israel. The prophet declared that, despite Israel's profane and offensive attempts to worship God, His name would nevertheless be great among the Gentiles, and He would be worshipped in a way that glorified Him (Mal. 1:6-14).

Amazingly, the Chronicler did not stop there. After calling all the families of the earth to rejoice in the Lord, he likewise commanded all the created order to sing praises to Him. The end goal is that everyone and everything—including the heavens, the earth, the sea, the fields, and even the trees—will joyously adore the one true God, who alone created all, who alone can save, and who alone ultimately comes to judge the earth.

THE ULTIMATE KEY TO SUCCESS: THE LORD AMONG US

The events described in 1 Chronicles 16 occurred around 977 B.C. About five to six centuries later, the Chronicler used Psalm 96 to recount the same events to those who had recently returned from the Babylonian Captivity and had begun to reestablish temple worship. But why did that need to happen? Both historical circumstances have something in common that may suggest the key factor in determining whether God's people succeeded or failed to remain faithful.

It is interesting that the Chronicler was recounting a time when David and the people were praising God because the ark of the covenant, representing God's holy presence on earth, had returned to dwell in their very midst. God's covenant people were in the Promised Land worshipping Him. It seemed that all of God's promises and plans were finally coming to pass.

The Chronicler's fifth- or fourth-century B.C. audience faced a similar situation. The people had begun to return to the land, the temple had been rebuilt, and the recently constructed altar was ready for sacrifice once again. There was a key difference, however. Unlike David's time, when the people were rejoicing that the ark had finally returned to its proper place in their midst, the Chronicler's audience could not do the same.

The ark had likely either been hidden away or destroyed during the Babylonian invasion. The ark, which represented God's presence, was no longer among His covenant people. God's presence is what separated the Israelites, and indeed us, from everyone else in all creation! His presence (God with us) is always the key to success!

Despite this stark difference, the Chronicler still exhorted the people to act in covenant faithfulness and to sing to everyone on the earth about the greatness of their glorious King. Even though the ark was not in its proper place, the sovereign Lord clearly was at work among them. Despite their unfaithfulness, their God had not forgotten them. His eternal, redemptive plan remained intact. Because of that, the people were to proclaim His greatness to everyone and everything. They alone could tell others about Him, worship Him, and rejoice in Him, because they alone had experienced the covenant-keeping God acting faithfully to accomplish His purpose and

promises in their midst! After all, you can only properly proclaim, revere, and rejoice in someone you know personally.

Hundreds of years later, in the opening pages of the New Testament, an angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph that the virgin Mary would conceive and bear a son who would be called Emmanuel, which means "God with us" (Matt. 1:23). God once more dwelled among His people! Although the ark may not have returned to Jerusalem in the Chronicler's day, Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem to joyous praise (cf. 21:1-11). He is now with His people always (28:20).

—Jim Leavenworth

QUESTIONS

1. What was the first reason the Chronicler gave that the Lord should be praised?
2. What forgotten principle did the Chronicler remind the people of?
3. What did the Chronicler say about the gods of the nations?
4. What reasons did he give to encourage the people to proclaim the Lord's greatness?
5. What was the historical background of the Chronicler's readers?
6. What was the first element of worship the Chronicler encouraged?
7. How are worshippers called to approach the Lord?
8. What is the proper attitude of worship?
9. What scope did the Chronicler picture for the Lord's worship?
10. Even though Israel no longer had the ark, what truth did the Chronicler remind the people of?

—Tom Greene

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. All the earth—including us—is called to praise the Lord for His salvation (1 Chr. 16:23).
2. We should declare God's glory to those who do not know Him (vs. 24).
3. We should reject all other gods as false, powerless idols (vss. 25-26).
4. We must find our strength in the Lord (vs. 27).
5. We should worship the Lord with both our praise and offerings (vss. 28-29).
6. We must fear the Lord! He upholds the world (vs. 30).
7. Let us rejoice, for the Lord rules and will judge justly (vss. 31-33).

—Tom Greene

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. There are many reasons to praise God here. Are there any we tend to ignore?
2. Can we declare the Lord to all nations without moving overseas?
3. If glory and honor are already in the Lord's presence (1 Chr. 16:27), how can we give Him glory?
4. What does it mean to fear the Lord? How can we develop a proper fear of the Lord?
5. How can we fear the Lord and rejoice at the same time?
6. How can inanimate objects like the fields and the sea praise God?
7. Why is the Lord's judgment a reason to rejoice (vs. 33)?
8. What should we do if we do not feel like praising God?

—Tom Greene

Golden Text Illuminated

"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth" (1 Chronicles 16:31).

The imagery in this verse portrays the unity of all creation joining in worship and proclaiming the reign of the Lord. Let us explore three key aspects.

"Let the heavens be glad": This first portion describes a celebration taking place in heaven as its inhabitants delight in the presence and reign of the Lord. As we worship God, let us be mindful of the heavenly dimension of our worship, imagining our voices joining with the heavenly hosts.

"Let the earth rejoice": The invitation for the earth to rejoice signifies the participation of all created beings, including humans, animals, and nature itself. The earth is God's creation and reflects His glory. Let us engage with all our senses and recognize that everything on earth has a role in worshiping God.

"And let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth": We have a role in proclaiming the reign of the Lord among the nations. Be intentional in sharing God's love, grace, and redemption with others. Let our lives and words reflect the truth that God reigns and is worthy of all honor and praise.

Let us strive to worship God with joy and reverence. Let our worship permeate every aspect of our lives and be a testament to the reign of the Lord and an invitation for others to join in proclaiming His greatness. Ultimately, may our worship bring glory to His name and draw us closer to Him, experiencing the fullness of His presence.

—Page Brooks