

Bible Study on Psalm 115 – Leader Notes

Introduction...

Ps 115 Praise of the Lord, the one true God, for his love and faithfulness toward his people. It was composed as a liturgy of praise for the temple worship. It may have been written for use at the dedication of the second temple (see Ezr 6:16) when Israel was beginning to revive after the disruption of the exile.

The psalm was traditionally used at the conclusion of the Passover meal as the worshipers prepared to return home. (LL)

1. a. Spoken by the congregation/people

Praise of God's love and faithfulness toward his people, which silences the taunts of the nations. (CSB)

115:1 *Not to us ... not to us.* Israel's existence, and now her revival, is not her own achievement. (CSB)

The psalmist realizes that Israel's identity as the people of God could lead to ungodly pride, to a kind of spiritual one ups-man-ship in which they would begin to take credit for their relationship with their Lord. As Christians, our relationship with God is one that is based on His mercy and love, not on any worth in us apart from Him. He alone is worthy of glory. (LL)

b. Spoken by the Levitical choir leader

115:9–11 The call to trust in the Lord, not in idols (see v. 8). For triple repetition as a liturgical convention see note on 96:1–3. For the same groupings see 118:2–4; see also 135:19–20. (CSB)

c. Spoken by the congregation/people

115:12–13 The people’s confession of trust. – The attitude of the speakers in the psalm changes. The note of assurance now becomes strong. (Leupold)

d. Spoken by the priests

115:14–15 The priestly blessing. (CSB)

For one major disadvantage of the nation of Israel after its re-establishment was that it was few in number. Healthy growth in numbers was in OT times always regarded as a signal blessing from God. This marked a basic need of the nation. (Leupold)

e. Spoken by the congregation/people

People exist on earth and have some understanding of it. Human idols are bound to earth. God’s existence covers all realms, even the realm of heaven, where His perfect will operates without hindrance. (TLSB)

2. The fact that we attend worship shows other that we give God an important place in our lives. As we worship, our spoken responses, our hymns of praise, and our prayers are verbal witnesses to what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. They witness concerning all the great things God does for us as His people. Our worship also empowers us for words and deeds of love and service – our witness outside the worship service.

3. When faced with the question, “Where is (your) God”? , we can reply that our God is in heaven. There He lives and acts for us. Our God is in control of all the universe. Our God is also beside us as we face any difficulty. He is our help and shield. We can be confident that He will act for us in the way that is best for us. After all, He sent His only Son, Jesus, to suffer and die to save us from our sins. He will not withhold from us any other good thing.

4. Verses 4-8 warn that those who make and trust idols will become like them, spiritually blind, unable to speak, smell, feel, or walk. Idolaters endure a living death.

5. Let the group members comment without naming names. Those who live for the gods of pleasure, possession, power, or popularity will discover sooner or later that their idolatry smothers their hearts. A life lived like that ends in emptiness and joylessness. And it results in life apart from the true God, the source of joy and love forever.

6. The triple repetition occurs in verses 9-11, because God's people needed to hear these truths repeated in light of the idolatry around them.

7. Like God's OT people, we need to hear these truths repeated as well. WE live surrounded by false gods. We are bombarded with messages to turn to things other than God for security, strength, and everlasting life. Satan tempts us to put our faith in the things of this world. In His Word God invites us to turn to Him for help. He is our hope.

8. God repeats the words "bless" or "blessed" five times.

9. God is a giver. It's His nature to want to give; to want to bring true joy and lasting pleasures into His people's lives. God is good and greatly to be praised.

10. God has entrusted the earth to the care of His human creatures. He's not only a giver, He's a good Father who wants to see us grow in responsibility, in understanding, in knowledge, and in trustworthiness.

11. Let participants comment, basing their answers on their particular roles or stations in life. The privileges and responsibilities could

include any areas of caretaking, discovery, creativity, exploration, and service they get to take part in.