

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School  
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## Psalm 95 — Adoration and Admonition

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 95

- This psalm continues the collection of theocratic psalms (Psalms 93–100).
- In the synagogues this psalm has often been used to commence the evening service on the Sabbath.
- “Psalm 95 tells us how to worship. Indeed, it does more. It is a call to worship; it explains how and why we should worship; and it warns of what can happen if we do not worship but harden our hearts instead.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 2:775.
- Hebrews 3:7–4:13 is a sermon on Psalm 95:7-11.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 95 (NAU)

- 95:1** O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD,  
Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.
- 95:2** Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,  
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
- 95:3** For the LORD is a great God  
And a great King above all gods,
- 95:4** In whose hand are the depths of the earth,  
The peaks of the mountains are His also.
- 95:5** The sea is His, for it was He who made it,  
And His hands formed the dry land.
- 95:6** Come, let us worship and bow down,  
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
- 95:7** For He is our God,  
And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

- Today**, if you would hear His voice,  
**95:8** Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,  
**95:9** “When your fathers tested Me,  
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.  
**95:10** “For forty years I loathed *that* generation,  
And said they are a people who err in their heart,  
And they do not know My ways.  
**95:11** “Therefore I swore in My anger,  
Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 95

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. A Summons to Collective Worship (vv. 1-7b)
  - A. To Worship the Great God (vv. 1-5)
  - B. To Worship the Good God (vv. 6-7b)
- II. A Summons to Corrective Warning (vv. 7c-11)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “sing . . . shout”
  - Joyful singing and shouting mark a celebratory mood and a festive atmosphere.
  - The recipient of such exuberant praise is “the LORD . . . the rock of our salvation.”
    - ✓ The first biblical identification of God as the rock of Israel’s salvation comes in Deuteronomy 32:15 in the “Song of Moses.” This implied association with Moses fits the overall message of this psalm, due to its references to Creation and the Exodus.
    - ✓ Note, especially, that the rock was the source of water in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:2-13—a situation to which Psalm 95:7-11 alludes).
    - ✓ David also employed this phraseology (2 Samuel 22:47; Psalms 18:46; 62:2, 6)—which might be why Ethan employs it in his psalm about the Davidic Covenant (89:26).
- **vv. 2** Partial Chiasm
  - A Let us come before His presence
    - B with thanksgiving,
    - B’ with psalms.
  - A’ Let us shout joyfully to Him
  - The focus is on the means of worship: thanksgiving and psalms.
    - ✓ Thus we gain insight about how we ought to utilize the Book of Psalms—and, more specifically, how to employ the theocratic psalms like Psalm 95.

- **v. 3** “a great God”
  - Compare Titus 2:13.
- **v. 3** “a great King”
  - Compare Psalms 47:2; 48:2; Malachi 1:14; Matthew 5:35.
- **v. 4** “the depths of the earth . . . the peaks of the mountains”
  - This merism expresses the totality of all the earth. All the earth belongs to God and is within God’s sovereign control.
    - ✓ “Depths” occurs nowhere else in Scripture.
    - ✓ “Peaks” is used elsewhere of the horns of the wild ox (Numbers 23:22; 24:8) and in Job 22:25 either of that which is “choice” or “best,” or a “pile.”
- **v. 5** “it was He who made it”
  - The Hebrew emphatically declares that God Himself made the sea.
- **v. 6** “worship . . . bow down . . . kneel”
  - These verbs speak of submission—physically lowering oneself in the presence of a superior.
  - Without humility, true worship cannot take place.
  - The great Creator not only fashioned the earth and the sea, He formed man from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7)—He is our Maker.
    - ✓ Therefore, we belong to God (cp. Job 33:6; Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 43:1) and we must recognize His sovereignty and His omniscience (cp. Isaiah 29:15-16 with Psalm 94:9).
- **v. 7a-b** “He is our God . . . we are the people”
  - In the Mosaic Covenant this is the formula of identification by which God identifies His people (Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 29:12-13; Ezekiel 34:30-31; cp. 2 Corinthians 6:16).
  - Asaph employed “the sheep of Your pasture” in Psalms 74:1 and 79:13. “The sheep of His pasture” occurs in a psalm of thanksgiving (100:3). Compare “the sheep of My pasture” in Jeremiah 23:1 and Ezekiel 34:31.
- **v. 7c** “Today”
  - Psalm 19:4 is another example of a third line of a tricolon (3 poetic lines in one verse) commencing a new section.
  - The key word in this section is “Today”—something to which the writer of Hebrews also testifies:

### **A First Century Sermon: Hebrews 3:12–4:13**

*Text:* Psalm 95:7-11

*Theme:* It is extremely urgent that we obey God now—*today*.

*Outline:*

- I.** Beware of Unbelief (Hebrews 2:12-19)
- II.** Be Afraid of Falling Short (4:1-10)



### III. Be Diligent to Enter (4:11-13)

- Obedience (the meaning of “hear His voice”; cp. Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 11:13; 1 Samuel 12:15) must not be delayed. Without obedience, true worship is impossible.
- v. 8 “Meribah . . . Massah”
  - Meribah means “quarrel” or “strife” and Massah means “trial” or “test.”
  - These place names refer the reader/hearer to the events recorded in Exodus 17:1-7 (cp. Deuteronomy 33:8; Psalm 81:7).
    - ✓ Israel’s rebellion against the leadership of Moses was actually rebellion against the word and authority of God Himself.
- v. 10 “know My ways”
  - See Exodus 33:13; Psalm 25:4; and Isaiah 58:2.
- v. 11 “I swore in My anger”
  - See Numbers 32:10-12.
  - Divine wrath is not blind, senseless rage. God’s anger refers to His resolve to execute justice without compromise
- v. 11 “My rest”
  - Although many interpreters take this to be a reference only to the physical possession of the Promised Land, it implies something more.
  - See Genesis 5:29; Exodus 33:14; 1 Kings 8:56; Psalm 116:7-8.

## 4.0 Singing Psalm 95

### Psalm 95

Come let us sing for joy to the Lord  
Let us shout joyfully  
To the Rock of our salvation  
Let us come before His presence  
With thanksgiving  
Let us shout joyfully to Him with song

Let us sing, let us shout  
Let us come, and cry out  
For the Lord is a great God  
And a great King above all gods  
Let us sing, let us shout  
Let us come, let us shout  
For the Lord is a great God  
And a great, great King above all gods



### Come Let Us Worship and Bow Down

Come let us worship and bow down  
Let us kneel before the Lord our God our Maker  
(repeat)

For He is our God  
And we are the people of His pasture  
And the sheep of His hand  
Just the sheep of His hand

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#### 5.0 Praying Psalm 95

- Praise the Lord! He is the rock of my salvation. [v. 1]
- Lord, You are a great, great God! [v. 2]
- Father, I bow down before You, because You are my Maker. [v. 6]
- O God, help me to obey You today. [v. 7]
- Teach me Your ways, Lord. [v. 10]
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#### 6.0 Applying Psalm 95

- Our worship ought to be vocal and joyful.
- True worship begins with humility and obedience.
- It is extremely urgent that we obey God now—*today*.

Not infrequently in the psalms, Israel is referenced as God's "flock" or "sheep." This eminently domestic image highlights God's guidance and sustaining care of Israel, whether through the hostile wilderness (78:52) or at God's dwelling place, a setting of sustenance for the needy (68:10). . . . Such imagery provides a basis for praise. . . . As God's flock, Israel is established and claimed by God. As the sheep of God's pasture, Israel is lavished with covenantal care . . . . As Shepherd, God's claim on Israel is a claim of rulership over a subject people. . . . But Israel does not celebrate God's sovereignty only for its power; the community sees itself in salutary relation to its Maker, a people subjected not by coercion but by the bounty of divine beneficence. . . . God's "shepherdship" is a rulership of compassion that constitutes Israel's existence. Israel's identity as God's flock, in turn, enjoys the *succor* of divine kingship.

— William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*  
(Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 151-52