

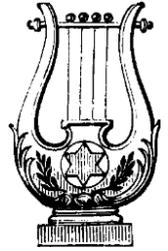


Meeting God in the Psalms

Summer 2017

Psalm 85 Longing for Restoration

(sermons: Aug 6)



Introduction

The ancient title of this psalm says it was written by one of 'the Sons of Korah'. They were part of the tribe of Levi who were descended from Korah, who led a rebellion against Moses in the desert, when many of the family died. They were Temple musicians.

Psalm 85:1-3 Remembering God's Mercy

v.1 you showed favour to your land – no particular time is indicated but the psalmist is remembering God's mercy in the past as a basis for his prayer for his people at the time he is writing.

v.2 Selah – no-one is sure what this means; it seems to be an instruction to the musicians.

1. What is the psalmist remembering about what God has done for his people in the past, both materially and spiritually?

When do we pause to remember what God has done for us individually, as a church, and as a society?

When is looking back worthwhile – and when can it be unhelpful to us?

Psalm 85:4-7 Pleading for Restoration

v.4 Restore us again – it is unclear whether the psalmist is asking for spiritual revival, or for economic recovery, or for a return to their own land after exile: perhaps all these aspects of restoration

2. Why, do you think, does the psalmist believe that God is displeased with his people?

Do we feel that God is angry, or displeased, or disappointed with us, with our church, or our nation?

3. What is the psalmist longing for God to do for his people? Do we share the breadth of his concern?

Psalm 85:8-13 Focussing on God's Character

v.8 he promises peace to his people – peace (shalom) is more than an end to conflict; it is health and well-being, harmony in the community, people flourishing

v.8 let them not return to folly – folly is life lived without regard for God (as Psalm 14:1, see 111:10)

4. Where does the psalmist find hope? Do we long that God's 'glory may dwell in our land' (v.9) ?

5. Verse 10 describes the Character of God; how are the qualities here seen in the life and death of Jesus?

6. Verse 11 describes a coming-together of God's sphere (*heaven*) and the human sphere (*earth*). Again, how was this shown in the life of Jesus? What does it say about our response to God's mercy?

7. Verses 12 & 13 suggest that spiritual renewal can affect other aspects of social life and the environment. As we look at the world today, where can we see a spiritual dimension to the problems of our society?

8. **From the whole psalm**, pick out phrases that challenge, or encourage, you – and use them in prayer.