

This psalm centers its theme on glorifying God, urging us to do so with songs of praise. The psalmist even instructs us in what to say in these songs of praise and reminds us of the mighty things that God has done. He even tells us that the entire earth will eventually glorify God and sing His praises once they see His mighty power.

To the chief Musician, A Song or Psalm

“To the chief Musician” – We are not given the author of this psalm, but this portion of the psalm’s title indicates that it was intended to be given to the “chief musician” (the worship leader or the one in charge of musical worship at the tabernacle/temple). This psalm was to become part of his inventory of psalms to be used in the worship of the LORD.

“A Song or Psalm” – The use of both the words “song” and “psalm” to describe Psalm 66 implies that it was written either to be sung or merely read, as the occasion called for. The word “or” is not in the original and other psalms have a title translated as “A Song and Psalm,” indicating that the translators merely inserted the word that they felt appropriate in the context.

1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:

The Hebrew word translated “joyful noise” means “to shout in triumph” or “to shout in applause.” The idea is a joyful celebration of God. The phrase “all ye lands” literally means “all the earth.” The psalmist is urging the entire earth to celebrate the glory and honor of God.

2 Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.

“Sing forth the honour [glory; reverence] of his name” – Singing has long been the way people use to express praise and honor to something or someone. The name of God represents His person and the psalmist is urging us to sing in honor and reverence to God’s name.

“make his praise [praise; praise-song] glorious [glory; reverence]” – The Hebrew word for “glorious” is the same as the one translated “honour.” The psalmist is speaking of singing to bring glory and honor to the name of God and he says that this singing should be “glorious” so that it is consistent with the glory and reverence of God’s name. God’s name deserves the best and most glorious singing that we can provide, which does not necessarily mean by the most talented singers or musicians. Too often gospel singing is a matter of “style over substance” and is done to impress the listeners. Singing the praises of God should always be in reverence of God’s glory and never done for the glory of the singers.

3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

“Say unto God, How terrible [to cause fear, astonishment, and/or reverence] *art thou in thy works!*” – The psalmist now instructs us on the content of the praise that we should give to God. We should praise Him for the awesome nature of His works, which are capable of inspiring fear and astonishment in the people. They also cause us to reverence the great power of God.

“through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee” – Those that hate God will be compelled to surrender and submit themselves to God when they see how great His power is. They will realize that rebellion against Him is pointless when they recognize His overwhelming power.

4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.

“All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee” – When the earth sees the greatness of God’s power, all who are in it will be compelled to worship Him and sing His praises. **Rom. 14:11** “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” **Phil. 2:10-11** “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

“they shall sing to thy name” – The name that these people have cursed and rebelled against in the past will then be the name that they will be praising and glorifying in song. They will finally recognize God’s glory and holiness and that His name deserves to be glorified.

“Selah” – Most commentators believe this word is instruction to pause and reflect on what has just been said. After describing how that the whole earth will sing praises to the name of God, the psalmist may be saying to us: “Just stop and think about that!”

5 Come and see the works of God: *he is terrible* in his doing toward the children of men.

“Come and see the works of God” – We are invited to remember the awesome and glorious things that God has done.

“he is terrible [to cause fear, astonishment, and/or reverence] in his doing toward the children of men” – The wicked should be in fear and reverence of God as they remember that He judges the ungodly. God’s people should also fear and reverence God because of the mighty things He has done for their benefit. In either case, God has done astonishing things through His might power.

6 He turned the sea into dry *land*: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

“He turned the sea into dry *land*: they went through the flood on foot” – As part of his invitation to “come and see the works of God” (v. 5), the psalmist gives us an example of what God has done by reminding us of the day God parted the Red Sea so that Israel could cross and escape from Pharaoh’s army (Ex. 14:21-22). OT writers considered the crossing of the Red Sea the ultimate demonstration of God’s power.

“there did we rejoice in him” – Israel sung praises to God in the aftermath of the Red Sea crossing (Ex. 15:1-21). They rejoiced in the fact that God had protected them from Pharaoh’s army and set them free from Egypt’s bondage.

7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

“He ruleth by his power for ever” – God is sovereign and He will be eternally in control over all of His creation.

Psa. 47:7-8 *“For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.”*

Psa. 22:28 *“For the kingdom is the LORD’s: and he is the governor among the nations.”*

“his eyes behold the nations” – God sees what all of the nations of the earth are doing. The implication is that not only can they do nothing without His knowledge, but they also cannot do anything without His permission. God determines when nations appear and disappear and He controls the size of their borders. World leaders can only do what God has ordained that they can do.

Acts 17:26 *“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;”*

Prov. 21:1 *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”*

“let not the rebellious exalt themselves” – The psalmist warns those who would rebel against God’s will to not attempt to “exalt themselves.” This exaltation may be in rebellion against God Himself in a challenge to His sovereignty, or an exaltation over others (such as war in the case of nations or oppression in the case of individuals) in order to benefit at the expense. God is watching over the nations (and the individuals within them) and those who attempt to exalt themselves will suffer His wrath because He is in control.

“Selah” – The rebellious should stop and think about the fact that they will answer to God for their deeds before they bring His judgment upon themselves.

8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:

“O bless our God, ye people” – The “ye people” are the people who belong to God (“our God”). The psalmist is likely primarily thinking of God’s people Israel, but today this phrase can apply to all Christians who belong to Jesus Christ. We are urged to bless God and thank Him for Who He is and what He has done.

“and make the voice [sound] of his praise to be heard” – The way we are to bless God is by letting our praises be heard by all. Whether they share our opinion of the goodness of God or not, we should always be ready to praise God in front of others. The lost need to hear about the love of Jesus Christ and what He did for their salvation.

Verses 9-20: The psalmist continues to give us reasons why God is worthy of our praise. God takes care of us (v. 9) and chastises us when we sin in order to purify us and lead us to repentance (vs. 10-12). The psalmist then promises to fulfill his vows to God with thank-offerings (vs. 13-15). Finally, the psalmist declares to us some of the things that God has done for him, including hearing and helping him when he called on God (vs. 16-20).