

Psalm 66

Title: God's Powerful Works

Author and Date: Unknown

Key Verses: Psalm 66:3, 5

Type: Praise

Outline

- A. God's work in the earth: universal praise (verses 1-4).
- B. God's work with the Israelites: national praise (verses 5-12).
- C. God's work for the psalmist: individual praise (verses 13-20).

Notes

Title: "For the Chief Musician. A Song, a Psalm." See the notes on the title of Psalm 65.

Summary: Psalm 66 is a call to praise and glorify God for his wonderful and powerful works and deeds. All the earth is called upon to praise God for his works (verses 1-3) and to worship God (verse 4). The psalmist invites his readers to "come and see" the works of God (verse 5). God caused Israel to pass through the Red Sea (verse 6) and to conquer the surrounding nations (verse 7). God is to be blessed (verse 8) because he preserves Israel from falling (verse 9). God tried and tested Israel (verse 10) through hard times (verses 11-12), but he brought them through these adversities and never abandoned them. In verse 13, the psalmist switches to the first person and promises ("I will") to offer the sacrifices and vows he made to God when he was in trouble (verses 13-15). The psalmist invites the people once again to "come and hear" what God has done for him (verse 16). God answers the psalmist's prayer because he is innocent (verses 17-19). God is to be blessed because he hears and answers prayer (verse 20).

Verse 1: Similar wording is found in Psalm 98:4 and 100:1. The "lands" (KJV) or "earth" (ASV) is a reference to all the people that dwell in the lands. This is a universal call or summons (see also verses 4 and 8). All people are called upon to praise God.

Verse 3: "Terrible" (KJV, ASV) here, and in verse 5, means awe-inspiring. God's works are awesome and amazing! The details of some of these works are mentioned in verses 6-12.

Verse 4: For "Selah", see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 6: The “sea” and the “flood” (KJV; “river”, ASV) may be a reference to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21; Psa. 106:9) or the Jordan River (Josh. 3:16).

Verse 7: The “nations” may be a reference to Israel conquering the Canaanite nations. For “Selah”, see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 10: God uses adversity to test and prove his people (Isa. 48:10). God’s proving of Israel here may be a reference to the Assyrian invasion of Sennacherib (Isa. 36-38), the Babylonian exile, or some other national calamity. God tested and tried Israel “as silver is tried” (Job 23:10). Silver-bearing ores were melted over heat to separate the silver from the impurities.

Verses 11-12: These verses may be speaking of slavery (verse 11) and war (verse 12). “Fire” and “water” are symbols of extreme ordeals, adversity, or tumultuous times (Isa. 43:2).

Verses 13-15: Note the singular pronoun, “I will”, repeated four times in this section. The psalmist displays resolve. He fulfills what he has promised to God while he was in trouble or distress (verse 14). David promised a similar thing in 2 Samuel 22:7. For “Selah”, see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 16: “Ye that fear God” (KJV) are the faithful among the Israelites.

Verse 18: The psalmist is sincere, innocent, and pure. There is no iniquity in his heart.

Verse 20: God’s “mercy” (Heb. *hesed*; “loving-kindness”, ASV) is his steadfast love

Questions

1. What does the psalmist call upon the lands (or earth) to do (verses 1-2)?

2. What does the psalmist want said to God (verse 3)?

3. What does all the earth do (verse 4)?

4. What invitation does the psalmist give (verse 5)?

5. What works of God are mentioned that show his mighty power (verses 6-7)?

6. What does the psalmist call upon the people to do (verse 8)?
7. What does God do for the people to support them (verse 9)?
8. What does God do for the people to test them (verses 10-12)?
9. What promise does the psalmist make to God (verses 13-15)?
10. What invitation does the psalmist give to all who fear God (verse 16)?
11. What does the psalmist do and how does God respond (verses 17-19)?
12. What does the psalmist recognize about iniquity in the heart (verse 18)?
13. Why does the psalmist bless God (verse 20)?

Applications for Today

1. God is to be praised and worshipped because his works are amazing (verses 1-4). Who spoke to Job of the wondrous works of God (Job. 37:14)? Why did Jesus perform miracles (Jn. 9:3; Acts 2:22)?
2. God's works are great and the rebellious should not exalt themselves against God (verses 5-7). How did Israel act toward God in the wilderness (Deut. 9:7; Psa. 78:8)? What kind of people did Ezekiel preach to (Ezek. 3:27; 12:25; 24:3; 44:6)?

3. God tests and tries his people as silver is tried (verse 10). What did Job say about his testing in Job 23:10? What happens to Christians when they are tested and tried (1 Pet. 1:6-7)?

4. God is faithful to his people in good times and in bad times (verses 8-12). What does the Lord do for his people (Psa. 121:1-8)?

5. Vows made in times of trouble are often forgotten later. We should keep the promises that we make to God in troubled times (verses 13-15). What vow did Jacob keep (Gen. 28:20-22; 35:3), what vow did Jephthah keep (Judg. 11:30-31, 35-36), and what vow did Hannah keep (1 Sam. 1:11)?

6. God hears our prayer, but he does not hear the prayer of the one who keeps iniquity in his heart (verses 16-20). Who does God not hear (Prov. 28:9; Isa. 1:15; Jas. 4:3)?