

Thoughtful of God – Thankful for God

Scripture Reading: Psalm 97

The Bible gives us many reasons to rejoice in the Lord. In a nutshell, we should rejoice in the Lord because His glorious knowledge and power is united with His glorious mercy, grace, and love. That is how we can approach God and be helped now and be saved from our sins for all eternity (Psalm 20:5; 21:1; 28:7; 35:9; 40:16; 105:3; 130:3-8). The heathen gods, that men have created, are scary. They are fickle and faulted. They are attributed with lots of power, but are subject to instability and change. That's why Psalm 97:12 is so important: "... *give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.*" The word "*holy*" means "*separate.*" God is not subject to weaknesses or change. Things in this world do not influence God, as they do men. That's why God doesn't lie or sin. He is not the product of men, or of anything else. You can trust God forever.

A healthy desire to be near God can cause us to ponder, "Where is God?" It is no small thing that we have come to love and to celebrate someone whom we have not seen (I Peter 1:8). Without God's Word and God's Spirit, we could not know God (Psalm 97:11 cp. John 6:63; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-31; 2:1-16). Our mere mortal minds and hearts could not keep track of Him. So, it is a mystery to say that God is everywhere at the same time (Jeremiah 23:23-24) and God is always here (Psalm 46:1).

Let's examine a few statements that tell us where God dwells. They should be able to help us figure out how we can enjoy close intimacy with God.

"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the spirit of the contrite ones." (Isaiah 57:15)

God, who is high and lofty, inhabits eternity. This not only means that He lives forever, but that God is not limited to the things of time-locked mortality. He is transcendent. At the same time, He has committed himself to meet with men who worship Him. To dwell in the high and holy place is a reference to the tabernacle and temple of Israel. Today, in New Testament times, we are not so concerned with a geographical location or building, but rather the quality of worship. We are to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:19-24; Ephesians 2:11-22; I Timothy 3:14-15). God is seeking to fellowship with people who are humble and contrite (i.e. sorry for their sins) before Him. If you want to be close to God, you must be willing to deal with pride, worldliness, and impurity (I John 2:15-17).

“Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest. For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist,’ Says the LORD. ‘But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and him who trembles at My word.’” (Isaiah 66:1-2)

God’s authority, power, and presence fills all the universe. Earth is like a place to put His feet. Yet, sitting at someone’s feet is an expression of those who seek to be taught by someone. God did not establish a house for His comfort and protection. It only represents where men may meet with God and learn of Him and from Him. Again, God says that He is looking for the poor in spirit (i.e. the humble – Matthew 5:3) and the contrite (i.e. those that mourn – Mathew 5:4). He also notes how their fear of the Lord is connected to their relationship with God through His Word (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). If you want to be close to God, let His Word humble you and guide you into the right spirit, as you seek His presence (Habakkuk 3:2; John 6:63; 8:30-32; Colossians 3:16).

“But You are Holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.” (Psalm 22:3 – NKJV, NASB, ESV)

The KJV says that God “... *inhabits the praises of Israel.*” In either case, God is pleased to be in the environment of men’s faithful praise and worship. Psalm 22:1-3 makes us realize that these words connect us to Christ and the redemption / reconciliation that He made on the cross. From the cross, Jesus cried out “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Jesus wanted us to go back to this Psalm, in its entirety, and see the tremendous fulfillment of prophecy that occurred on the cross. The question, in the first verse, is answered in the third verse. The Father forsook His Son because our sins were laid on Him. The Holy Father had to pour out His wrath on those sins. The Son of God became sin for us, so that we could be made righteous (Isaiah 53:1-12; II Corinthians 5:17-21). If you want to be close to God, you must come unto the Father through Jesus, His Son (John 14:1-23; Hebrews 9:27-28; 13:20-21; I Peter 3:18).

Note: Isaiah 37:16 – the maker of heaven and earth is described as dwelling between the cherubim. This is a reference to the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies of the tabernacle / temple. On either side of the mercy seat would be two Cherubim (Exodus 25:18-20). At this mercy seat, the blood of atonement was offered. This is a further picture of how we cannot approach God without the shedding of innocent blood. Where the perfect sacrifice is made for man, God will dwell there (Hebrews 9:1-28; 10:10-14; Romans 8:31-34).

If we are grateful for a holy God, we should take heed unto His call for us to also be holy (I Peter 1:15-16). May we seek Him with our whole heart, through His Word. May we collect His promises and use them to follow Him and spiritually grow. See Psalm 62:5-8; Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Matthew 7:7-11; Romans 10:9-13; James 4:6-10; I Peter 5:6-11; II Peter 1:2-11; 3:18.