

Lesson 12

- The response of God's children to his word
- God gives his people a king
- The Holy Spirit gives faith

Lesson 12a

The response of God's children to his word

The most widely read book in the Old Testament is the book of Psalms. One reason is that this book shows that faith is not merely a matter of the mind but rather a matter of the heart. A believer can come to God with his emotions.

In the psalms we find the believer's emotional response to God, to his words and deeds and to his love or anger. They tell of their joy and sadness, their loneliness and fear. At the same time the psalms are full of admiration of what God has done. The psalms have their special place in the bible because they put into words how we can relate to God.

The structure of the book of Psalms

The book of Psalms exists in five parts:

- Psalms 1-41
- Psalms 42-72
- Psalms 73-89
- Psalms 90-106
- Psalms 107-150

The final psalms of each part all end with similar phrases:

*'Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD.'*
Psalm 106:48

When the people say 'amen', they confirm the song of praise and it is confirmed once more with the phrase 'Praise the LORD' or 'Hallelujah'.

The psalms can be categorised into different types. In this lesson we will look at the most well known of these types.

God receives the praise that He deserves: psalms of praise

In 1 Chronicles 16 we read that certain Levites have the task to sing songs of praise to God during their service in the tabernacle. With the accompaniment of musical instruments they thank God for what He has done. Some of these songs we find in the book of Psalms.

*'Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
Come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.'*
Psalm 100:1-3

The psalms of praise show us that there are numerous reasons to give God the praise that He deserves:

- He is the maker of life: Psalm 100
- All of the earth is the work of his hands: Psalm 104
- He takes care of his people: Psalm 105
- He protects those who love Him: Psalm 145

These psalms sing of the endless power of God. When we read or sing such a psalm we realise that nothing is to be assumed. God made the world and He protects and sustains all life on earth. He deserves all praise and honour.

God reigns: the royal psalms

God made the earth. The world is his. The bible calls God the king of the world. This category of psalms proclaims God as king.

Psalm 47:1-2

*'Clap your hands, all you nations;
Shout to God with cries of joy.'*

*How awesome is the LORD Most High,
The great King over all the earth!*

It sometimes seems as if God is no longer concerned about this world. However, these royal psalms tell us that this is not true, even until today.

Because God is the king of the earth, all other rulers are under his authority. For this reason Israel is a theocracy. The Israelites are aware that God is the true king of their country. Their kings reign in his name and are dependent on Him. This is clear when you read the psalms that have been written for Israel's kings.

Psalm 72:1-2

*'Endow the king with your justice, O God,
The royal son with your righteousness.
He will judge your people in righteousness,
Your afflicted ones with justice.'*

From the psalms that have been written for the Israelite kings we can learn how a king should reign. However, not one single king has been able to reign completely conform to this ideal. The only one who has been able to live accordingly is Jesus Christ. He is the great King that these psalms all refer to. Ever since his ascension He rules over the earth in the name of his Father. Compare Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110 with Hebrews 1:1-13.

A cry for help: the lamentations

In the book of Psalms we find a great number of lamentations. Sometimes the poet speaks the voice of the Israelite nation (for example in Psalms 44, 74, 79 and 80) and at other times these psalms voice the mourning of an individual (for example in Psalms 6, 13, 22, 38 and 143). But even if the poet describes the situation of an individual, it is one that is recognisable for most readers. The life of a believer is not easier than that of a non-believer. A believer can be worried and sad. We know of one of the writers of the Psalms, David, that he had to live as a refugee in his own country, moving

from place to place because king Saul wanted to kill him. He describes this rough patch in his life in the Psalms 54, 56, 57, 59 and 63.

Most of the lamentations have been written in times of despair. The poet cries out and begs God for help. He shows God his fear and loneliness. Even in his despair he knows that only God can protect him and free him from his anxieties. This is why many of the lamentations end in expectation. They are examples of a great trust in God who can save people from the most difficult situation:

Psalm 56:3-4

*'When I am afraid, I will trust in you.
In God, whose word I praise,
In God I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can mortal man do to me?'*

God takes care of us: the psalms of trust

Not only in times of trouble do the writers of the psalms show their trust in God. Other psalms also declare how man should always trust in God (for example Psalms 27, 46, 62, 91 and 121). God wants to take care of us in every circumstance in life. A well-known psalm that speaks of this trust is Psalm 121.

Psalm 121

*'I lift my eyes to the hills –
Where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
The Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip –
He who watches over you will not slumber;
(...)
The LORD will keep you from all harm –
He will watch over your life;
The LORD will watch over your coming and going
Both now and for evermore.'*

The response of God's children to his word

This Psalm shows that God protects the life of his children. The poet knows that he can rely on this protection to such an extent that he has a complete trust in God.

Wanting to serve God: the psalms about the law
Whoever belongs to God should live the way God wants. Faith should be visible in deeds. This is expressed in the psalms about the law. We easily associate the word law with a set of unpleasant rules and regulations. However, God's law should be something to rejoice in as we can tell from the psalms about the law. Psalm 119 is an example of a song about the beauty of God's law. The poet in this psalm longs to do what God asks of him in his laws. He realises that his life only makes sense when God is in charge of it. Only God truly knows what is good for him.

Psalm 119:26-27 *'I recounted my ways and you answered me;
Teach me your decrees.
Let me understand the teaching of your precepts'*

Congratulations!

Some psalms are written to be sung from one person to another. Examples are Psalms 1, 112 and 128. They wish a man well. A man is to be congratulated when he knows God and lives to please Him.

Psalm 128:1 *'Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways'*

The book of Psalms is a widely read book because people recognise themselves in the Psalms. The Psalms often very accurately express feelings of joy, fear, despair or sadness. God has given us the Psalms so that we can echo their words in situations that leave us speechless. The Psalms can be a comfort to us when we go through a difficult time and they teach us to trust in God. He is a Father who always wants to listen to his children.

Questions

1. The book of Psalms has always been used widely.
 - a. Why do you think people like the Psalms?
 - b. What do the Psalms teach us about God?
2. Psalm 2 is a royal Psalm.
 - a. Who is the king that the verses 4-9 speak of? Also read Hebrews 1:5.
 - b. Which verses show us that the kings of the earth are under God's authority?

God gives his people a king

Lesson 12b

God gives his people a king

The time of the judges is the rock bottom in the history of Israel. The concluding words of the book of Judges are: *'In those days Israel had no king: everyone did as he saw fit'.*

Even the priests lose track

The first book of Samuel shows what happens when everyone does what he thinks is right without wondering about God's will. It describes how even the priests misbehave. They steal the meat that is meant for the sacrifices and force people who want to bring a sacrifice to give part of the meat to them. During a war with the Philistines, the priests think they can force God to help the Israelites. They take the ark, the symbol of God's presence, from the tabernacle to the battlefield. They reckon that if the ark is there, God will be there. He will have to make Israel win. It is soon clear that this theory is not valid. The Israelites are totally defeated and the Philistines capture the ark. However, the Philistines cannot keep the ark for very long. God causes disaster to come down on them and they send the ark back as soon as they can.

Samuel

In this time God appoints a man named Samuel, as judge and prophet over Israel. He grows up in Shiloh where the tabernacle is. He is a witness to the bad conduct of the priests. Samuel hears the complaints of the Israelites about the attacks of enemies. He tells them that there is only one way to be saved from the enemies: to get rid of their idols and worship God. The Israelites listen to Samuel. They turn back to God and God accepts their repentance. When the Philistines plan another attack, God confuses them with a large storm and so the Israelites manage to defeat them with God's help.

Israel wants a king

All his life Samuel is judge over Israel. Every year he makes a tour around the country to speak justice and give advice. When he grows old, he instructs his sons to take over his tasks. Unfortunately, they are not very good judges. They are corrupt and the Israelites do not want them. They decide they want a king. The Israelites' request for a king means that they no longer regard God as their king. They had never needed a king before. God gave his people leaders like Moses and Joshua and the judges, but He had been their king. Who could better rule and protect the Israelites than He? The fact that the people ask for a king means they do not appreciate the privilege of having Jahweh for a king.

God tells Samuel to warn the Israelites. A king will not solve all the problems in the country. On the contrary a king can be the cause of many more problems. The king might use his power to make enormous demands from the people. However, the people do not want to listen to Samuel's warning. It rather fuels their enthusiasm. In the end, God gives his people the king they want.

Saul, the first king

God chooses a king: Saul, the son of a farmer. Samuel is to appoint Saul as king over Israel. He has to pour a jar of oil over Saul's head. This way Saul is 'anointed'. Saul is everything the people wanted. He defeats a number of enemies. However, soon enough, it is clear that Saul refuses to be king under God's authority. He does not know his place. Rather than obeying God's commands, he does his own will. Samuel has to bring God's message to Saul: 'God had wanted your sons to inherit your throne, but because you have ignored God's commands, the throne will be taken away from you. God has chosen a man who pleases Him, to be king over Israel'.

David appointed as king

A little while later, God tells Samuel to visit a man named Jesse in Bethlehem. Samuel has to anoint Jesse's youngest son David, a shepherd, as king. This does not mean that David is king with immediate effect. David will have to wait for years before he can become king.

After he has been anointed, David is regularly in touch with Saul. He even becomes Saul's armour-bearer. Saul does not know about David's anointing and becomes very fond of him.

David and Goliath

Read: 1 Samuel 17

17:5 *five thousand shekels*: more than 80 kilograms, a shekel is 36 grams

17:17 *ephah*: over 36 litres

David is to become Israel's king. But what sort of person is he? Why does God call him '*a man after his own heart*'? In this chapter we get to know David a little better.

During a war with the Philistines three of David's brothers are fighting in the army. When David goes out to visit them one day to bring them food, the armies of the Israelites and the Philistines are lined up to confront one another. David sees how a man from the Philistine army steps forward. The man, Goliath, is over nine feet tall and heavily armoured. He calls out insults to the Israelites and challenges them: 'Choose someone to fight me. If anyone beats me we will be your servants. If I beat him, you will be our servants'.

David is astonished to hear this man ridicule Israel and the Israelite army, God's army. He decides to go over to the man himself. Without a sword or a harness, David walks up to Goliath. He only has his shepherd's bag, a few stones and a sling.

When Goliath sees David, he curses him. But David says: 'You have challenged God, but God will give you into my power today. God does not need a sword to conquer you'. Goliath is furious, but as he approaches David, David slings a stone at

him. The stone hits his head and Goliath falls over. David runs over to him and with Goliath's own sword he cuts off his head. The Philistines try to flee, but the Israelite army completely defeats them.

Saul had known David before this incident. However, now he wonders what sort of person David really is. Where does his strength come from? Is he from a special tribe? What Saul does not realise is that David could only defeat Goliath because he trusts in God.

Who is David? From this history we can tell that he was a man who loved God and put God first in his life. It is impossible for him to tolerate that people insult God or his people. He has a solid confidence in God. That is why God calls him '*a man after his own heart*'.

Saul attempts to kill David

After David has defeated Goliath, he is promoted to a high position in Saul's army. Under David's leadership the army wins victory after victory and so David gains enormous favour in the eyes of the Israelites. He soon is more popular than Saul. When Saul realises this he is furious. He sees how the only thing David lacks is the throne. Saul starts to hate David and tries to kill him. However, David does not confront Saul as he did with Goliath. Instead, he flees because he does not want to kill the king who has been appointed by God.

Read: 1 Samuel 24

24:13 "*From evildoers come evil deeds*": If David had been an evil person he would have killed Saul.

After Saul returns from a war against the Philistines he hears where David and his men are in hiding. Saul organises a search party to go out and find them. One day Saul enters a cave to relieve himself. He is totally unaware of how close he is to death in that moment. But David, who is in the cave, does not take the opportunity to finally rid himself of his enemy.

God gives his people a king

Instead he only cuts off part of Saul's robe to prove that he could have killed the king.

When Saul has left the cave David follows him. He tries to convince Saul that he does not want to take the throne off him. Saul is very touched when he hears that David has saved his life. He realises that David will become king one day and asks him not to kill his family. David swears that he will spare Saul's family and then they part.

However, Saul does not remain friendly towards David. Soon enough he is after David's life again.

David as king

Eventually Saul dies in a battle against the Philistines. David becomes king in his place. David's attitude towards God does not change when he is king. Even then God remains first in his life. David does not do anything without involving God in his decision-making. We can tell this from the many psalms he wrote. Whenever David is happy or anxious or sad, he always turns to God before anything else. From the book of the Psalms we can tell that David is aware that he is king under God's authority. He regards God as the actual king of Israel.

After he has become king, David makes Jerusalem, a city in the centre of the country, into Israel's capital. He builds a beautiful palace. However, he does not only think of himself, he also makes Jerusalem into the religious centre of the country. He has the ark of God brought to the capital. Besides, he organises the work of the priests and he appoints people to make music and sing for God. From that time onwards Jerusalem is the place where sacrifices are brought and priests do their work and where people go to celebrate the festivals that God has appointed.

God blesses David

Everything David does shows that God comes first in his life. God blesses David: He makes sure that Israel prospers during David's reign.

David defeats the Philistines who had attacked Israel again and again for years. He wins the victory over Edom to the south, Moab and Ammon to the east and the small kingdoms to the north of the country. All these nations pay tax to the Israelites. During David's reign the work that Joshua had started is completed. All of Canaan now belongs to the Israelites. The author of the book of Samuel explains the cause of David's success:

'The LORD gave David victory wherever he went'.
2 Samuel 8:14

God shows his love for David also in another way. He promises that someone of David's offspring will always be king over Israel. We know from the New Testament that God has kept his promise. One of David's descendants is Jesus Christ, the promised Saviour. About Him the New Testament says:

'The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end'

David's sin

David did not always act as God's representative, as he should have done. The bible gives us a very honest description of David's life. It does not omit to mention his worst mistakes. For example, the bible tells us of how David commits adultery with Bathsheba, a married woman and how he has her husband killed when he finds out that she is pregnant so that he can take her as his wife.

When a prophet comes to him to tell him the truth in the name of God, David repents of his wickedness. God punishes him severely but eventually He forgives him.

Salomon the son of David

After David dies his son Salomon becomes king in his place. During Salomon's reign Israel does not go to war. Israel

Luke 1:32-33

becomes a wealthy nation with a flourishing trade. Salomon's reign is sometimes called 'the golden age of Israel'.

Salomon builds a temple for God. It is a beautiful building. The building materials that are used are collected from all over the world.

The shape of the temple is just like that of the tabernacle except it is much bigger. The ark is brought into the temple and when the building of the temple is finished, a cloud enters into it. God shows that He wants to regard it as his house. God wants to live in Jerusalem. This is why the bible calls Jerusalem the city of God.

Salomon's sin

In many ways Solomon is like his father David. Also in his life God is first. However, when he grows older he marries many foreign women. He forgets God and starts to worship the gods of his wives.

God punishes Salomon and with him Israel. The time of peace comes to an end. Israel comes under attack from other nations. Moreover, God announces how after Salomon's death the Israelite nation will be split into two. We will continue with this in the next lesson.

Questions

1.
 - a. Why did the Israelites want a king?
Read 1 Samuel 8:1-4.
 - b. What is behind their request? Read 1 Samuel 8:19-20.
 - c. What is God's conclusion? Read 1 Samuel 8:6-7.
 - d. Explain why the request for a king is such a major issue for God.
2.
 - a. How are Saul and David appointed as kings?
 - b. What is the significance of this act? Read lesson 5c, under the sub-heading 'Jesus Christ'.
3. Use some examples from his life to explain why God called David '*a man after his own heart*'.

4. In the beginning of Salomon's reign God appears to him in a dream. God asks him what He would like to receive most.
 - a. What does Salomon ask for? Read 1 Kings 3:9.
 - b. What does God promise him? Read 1 Kings 3:10-14.
 - c. How do we know Salomon received what he asked for? Read 1 Kings 3:16-28.

The Holy Spirit gives faith

Lesson 12c

The Holy Spirit gives faith

In the last lesson we were introduced to the diverse work of the Holy Spirit. We mainly looked at the Old Testament. In this lesson we will look at what the New Testament tells us about the Holy Spirit.

Parallels

In many ways the work of the Holy Spirit is the same in the time of the Old Testament and the time of the New Testament. Both in the Old Testament and the New Testament we see that the Holy Spirit works in nature and gives people faith.

Difference

There is also a difference. Something has changed in the work of the Holy Spirit. In the time of the Old Testament the Holy Spirit worked in some peoples lives in a special way, for example in the lives of the prophets. Just as sponge can be completely soaked with water, they would be completely full of the Holy Spirit. The bible often says they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Because they were filled with the Holy Spirit, they could speak the words of God.

Not all people were filled with the Holy Spirit in this way.

Moses once said: *'I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!'* (Numbers 11:29). Centuries after Moses had said this God spoke through the prophet Joel about the day that all God's people would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Joel said:

Joel 2:28-29

'And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.'

A time would come when the Holy Spirit would no longer fill only a few people. God would pour out his Holy Spirit on all his people. When something is poured out over a person, it means they are drenched. Everyone would be drenched by the pouring of the Holy Spirit: boys and girls, old people and young people from whatever class or background. Everyone who belonged to God would be filled and like the prophets they would know the will of God. God would often make his will known to the prophets through a special dream or a vision, but once the Holy Spirit would be poured out, He would make his will known to everyone.

The Holy Spirit was poured out

The thing that Moses hoped for and Joel predicted eventually happened in the time of the New Testament. Jesus had promised when He was on earth that He would send the Holy Spirit to his followers. The Holy Spirit would come to take over his place on earth.

This happened not long after Jesus' ascension. The Holy Spirit came to earth. No one could see Him but everyone knew He was there. People heard a sound like that of a severe storm. It meant the Holy Spirit had come.

No one can see or touch a storm. Nevertheless, everyone will hear and feel a storm and everyone can see the effects of a storm. The trees will move and the waves will rise, leaves will fly across the street.

Just like a storm, the Holy Spirit was invisible. Nevertheless, everyone knew He was present. Not only because of the sound of a storm. Most of all, people could tell because the followers of Jesus all of a sudden behaved like prophets. Every one of them was able to speak about God and know his will. No one could keep quiet about the great things God had done. It could not be anything but the work of the Holy Spirit. Who else could turn ordinary people into prophets?

The coming of the Holy Spirit had significant consequences. The good news that people could be saved from the death by Jesus Christ could be made known to everyone from that very

moment. Every Christian talked about it to neighbours, friends and relatives. Besides, many Christians were led to go out across the world to tell people in every country about Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gave them wisdom and insight to know what to tell to other people.

The residence of the Holy Spirit

Even today the Holy Spirit is with everyone who follows Jesus. The New Testament says that the Holy Spirit wants to live inside people. He takes our bodies as his residence. Paul called the body of a Christian '*the temple of the Holy Spirit*':

1 Corinthians 6:19 '*Do you not know that your body is temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?*'

That is how close God wants to be with us. Through his Holy Spirit He wants to live in our bodies!

In the time of the Old Testament it was an exception for people to be filled with the Holy Spirit and often it was only temporary; the Spirit of the LORD would come over them to give them the wisdom or power for a certain situation.

After the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost it changed. It is no longer an exception for someone to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He wants to live in all God's children and not only from time to time but permanently.

The Holy Spirit gives faith

We have already mentioned that it is the Holy Spirit who causes people to believe in God and to keep their faith. The New Testament proves this over and over again. Whenever someone comes to faith it is the work of the Holy Spirit. No one would believe in God out of his own free will.

One story in the book of Acts very clearly shows that people refuse to believe in God or Jesus Christ if it is up to them. In Acts 17 we read how Paul, a follower of Jesus, goes to Athens to try and convince people to repent and come to God. Paul

tells the people of Athens about the God who made heaven and earth and he argues that they cannot expect anything from their own gods. He calls them to repentance to the only true God and tells them about Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead. When Paul speaks of Jesus' resurrection from the death, the people of Athens no longer want to listen to him. It is impossible for them to believe that a dead man came back to life. They start to mock Paul's message. Nevertheless, there are a few people who do accept Paul's message. They join Paul and come to faith.

How is it possible that these few people do believe? Why are Paul's words meaningful to them? It is because Jesus Christ opens their heart through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit causes these people to believe in God. He causes their resistance to break.

Even now people do not naturally want to believe in God. Only the Holy Spirit can open a person's heart. Only He can change their hate or indifference towards God into love. Only He can give people faith.

Faith means our salvation

Why is faith so important? It is because only through faith we can be saved.

After the Fall man was separated from God. No one can close the gap between him and God in his own power. Only Jesus Christ could do this. He is the bridge across the gap. Only He can lead us back to God.

In order to come to God we do not need to bridge the gap ourselves. We only need to believe in Jesus Christ. Faith in Him is a gift from God. The Holy Spirit causes us to believe. He gives us the faith that we need to be saved.

In summary, you could say: Jesus brought peace with God and the Holy Spirit makes us part of that peace.

The Holy Spirit gives faith

The Holy Spirit changes people

The Holy Spirit gives people faith. He also changes people. He changes them to become more like God so that they can be with Him. He makes them 'holy'. People need to become holy because from themselves people cannot be with God. Since the fall people no longer live the way God wants. Their deeds, words, thoughts and desires are no longer focused on God. God expects people who belong to Him to change. He wants them to turn away from their sins and live a holy life. In the Old Testament God told the Israelites: '*Be holy, because I am holy*' (Leviticus 11:45).

In the New Testament Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, quotes this phrase. He tells people who have become Christians that they need to behave like obedient children. They should no longer be driven by their desires, as they did before they were Christians. Peter tells the people:

1 Peter 1:15-16

'But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: Be holy, because I am holy.'

To be holy means to totally love God and to treat other people well. It means that we should not do or say anything wrong or even think something that is wrong. This is impossible for people after the fall. Just like a bad tree cannot bear good fruit, so a bad person cannot live a holy life. No one can change himself in such a way that he can live the way God wants. However, the Holy Spirit can do what man cannot do. When He comes into our lives, we change. When the Holy Spirit works in us we want to serve God with our lives. The bible often says that our lives should bear fruit, just like a tree. In a way this is impossible because we are bad trees, but the Holy Spirit makes the impossible possible. We start to bear fruit or to put it differently, we start to do good works.

We cannot earn our salvation by doing good works. Our salvation is a gift that we receive freely. But just like we would show our gratitude to someone who saved us from a life-

threatening situation, we can show our gratitude to God. Any one who has been saved by Jesus Christ can show his gratitude by living as a child of God and the Holy Spirit will help him to do so.

What does the life of a child of God look like? The New Testament speaks about this in many different places. For example, Paul tells us how someone who belongs to Jesus Christ should no longer give in to his old, selfish desires. There should be no trace of sexual immorality, impurity, hatred, arguments, jealousy, fits of rage and drunkenness. Whoever belongs to Jesus Christ should make himself available to the Holy Spirit. He will cause his fruits to come into the Christian's life: love, joy and peace, patience, kindness, goodness and trust, gentleness and self-control. The Holy Spirit gives people a new life.

Praying for the Spirit

Such a new life does not come automatically. We have to ask God every day to work in us with the Holy Spirit, to give us faith and to change us. Whenever we ask God these things, He will listen to us. He will give us his Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will give us faith.

If we do not ask God for faith and if we do not take the bible seriously, we can hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Our faith grows when we read the bible and when we use it as our guide. When we read the bible we give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work in us.

Questions

1a. What are the parallels between the work of the Holy Spirit before and after Pentecost?

1b. What is the difference?

2. Without the Holy Spirit no one would be saved. Why not?

3. God asks people to live holy (Leviticus 11:45).

a. What does that mean?

b. Can people live holy? Explain.