

"Where Is Thy God?"

Psalm 42:1-11

Many scholars consider these two psalms as one, and that's how we will consider them. We will look at Psalm 42 in this message and Psalm 43 in the next.

Some of the reasons they should be considered together:

- The repetition of the "refrain" (42:5, 11; 43:5) which acts like a chorus in a song or poem.
- Thematic continuity - longing for God's presence, spiritual discouragement and hope, oppression by enemies, and a desire to return to worship in the temple.
- Structure and literary flow - together the two psalms form a three-stanza composition: stanza 1, 42:1-5; stanza 2, 42:6-11; stanza 3, 43:1-5.

Considering them as one psalm, they are given the superscription, "To the chief Musician, for the sons of Korah." The word for "Maschil," for all intents and purposes, means instruction or teaching, and gives the purpose of the Psalms with this title.

Many gifted scholars consider David to be the author and point to evidence within the psalms themselves to show this. Whether it was he or someone else (perhaps even the sons of Korah themselves, which is what many believe), this is the first mention of Korah in the psalms.

A few comments on who "the sons of Korah" were is necessary at this point.

- **Korah** was a **Levite** who led a major rebellion against Moses and Aaron as found in **Numbers 16**. He, along with Dathan, Abiram, and 250 leaders, challenged their God-appointed leadership, claiming:

| [Numbers 16:3](#)

³ And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?*

As judgment, **the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and his co-conspirators alive**, and fire consumed the 250 men who followed them. It's one of the most dramatic and terrifying events in the Old Testament.

- **Korah's sons did not die** in the rebellion, however.

Numbers 26:11

¹¹ Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.

- Generations later, the **sons of Korah** became prominent among the Levitical musicians appointed by David to serve in the temple:
 - They were **gatekeepers, singers, and instrumentalists** (see 1 Chronicles 6:31-38; 9:19).
 - They are credited with writing (or being the recipients of) several of the **most heartfelt and poetic psalms** in the Bible.
- What makes this so powerful of an example is because it shows **that your past doesn't define you** – even if your family history is marked by rebellion, pride, or failure. The sons of Korah became **worshippers instead of rebels**, and their legacy is preserved in Scripture forever.

The enemies of the Psalmist were harassing him about his determination to trust in God for his every need. When he got to the place in his life that he could no longer go to the temple like he used to, his enemies were able to shake his faith to some degree and get him to question whether

God was still there. What is seen in these Psalms is that our faith and trust in God is dependent on how much we want of Him and how close we are to Him. There is a certain depression sensed in the writings of this Psalmist, and, to some degree, these Psalms are about dealing with depression and how to get victory over that depression

Notice the number of times the name of God is used – not *Yahweh* (the LORD), but *Elohim* (God) – that more personal, at-hand, presence of the Almighty.

Many will ask us in some way, "Where is thy God?" When we are going through trials and troubles and those around us look at us and we talk about how good God is, they will ask us, "Where is thy God?"

I. HE'S WHERE WE NEED HIM TO BE – 42:1-2A

A. The Psalmist demonstrates at the very beginning his desire to be where He could meet with God in a very real way.

1. The Temple was that place in the psalmist's day, and without that physical presence in the assembly with the Lord there was something lacking in their relationship.
2. Although we have the Person of the Holy Spirit of God indwelling us today, and the church is not the Temple in a technical way, there is the analogy to be made, the application we can draw from the psalmist's desire to be in the presence of the Lord in the house of the Lord with the importance of church attendance today.

Psalm 84:2

² My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

- B. We need to be to the place in our Christian life, where living a life without that very real, heartfelt presence of God would cause us such anguish that we would feel like we couldn't go on without it.**

The analogy is that of a hart in a drought that would literally die without water. The idea expressed here is that of **longing for or desiring intently**.

1. The "hart" here is what we would know of as a deer, and this animal is seen "panting" after water. This word - תַּעֲרֹגַת עֵרֶג - is only found here and in Joel 1:20, and its uncommon usage seems to emphasize the point.
2. "The word properly means to rise; to ascend; and then, to look up toward anything; to long for. It refers here to the intense desire of the hind, in the heat of day, for water; or, in Joel, to the desire of the cattle for water in a time of drought." (Barnes)

Joel 1:20

²⁰ The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

- C. Vs. 2a shows it wasn't just any god that the Psalmist longed for, but "the living God" - demonstrating that the God we love and serve, and that loves us, is very much alive and approachable.**

He's where we need to be - 42:1-2a

II. HE'S WHERE HE'S ALWAYS BEEN - 42:2B-5

- A. "When shall I come and appear before God?" - God hadn't moved; He was there all the time.**

Psalm 102:27

²⁷ But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.

Malachi 3:6

⁶ For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Hebrews 13:8

⁸ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

James 1:17

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

B. Vs. 3 shows the desperation in the psalmist's heart and mind.

1. He was overwhelmed with the constant attack of his enemies, and their persistence in asking, as it were, "If your God is so powerful, and so alive, and so protective, where is He?"
2. We are confronted with that very same question today, especially in times of disaster or trial (whether personal or national or global).

C. Vs. 4 - "I went with them to the house of God" - he was remembering what it used to be like to be where God was, and he desired to get back there.

I believe this verse shows us, for today in the New Testament church, the importance of assembling together, and one of the primary reasons that the church is now, and has always been, under attack. There are those that call themselves "Christians" that say they don't need to go to church to fellowship with God. That may be technically true,

but just as the psalmist here points out, and as the New Testament writers often pointed out, God has designed a purpose in us, a distinct "draw," if you would, to want to be with other believers – we call it the "fellowship of the believer."

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

D. Vs. 5 ends with the phrase "for the help of his countenance" – this indicates the author wasn't where he should be, seen in the third person wording.

1. The question, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" is found three times in these two Psalms (showing them to be connected) – in fact, it's the only time in the Bible they are used – vs. 5, 11; 43:5.
2. He's asking himself a question – rhetorically, but with the intent of needing an answer, albeit knowing the answer would come internally, spiritually, emotionally. He wanted to know why he felt this way, and he knew the only One with the answer, the only One that could help, was His God – "Hope thou in God." The Psalmist is desperate and is crying out in that desperation to put his hope in the only place help can come – "in God."

Psalms 39:7

⁷ And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope *is* in thee.

Psalms 71:5

⁵ For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: *thou art* my trust from my youth.

Jeremiah 17:17

¹⁷ Be not a terror unto me: thou *art* my hope in the day of evil.

3. The word for "hope" – יָחַל – means, in the verb stem used here (הוֹתִילִי), "cause to have hope, to stay, to wait patiently."

There will be times when we don't get the response we would like out of the Lord, and in our desperation for help we may lash out, as it were. We must remember, as the Psalmist did here, that sometimes the hope we have, and the answer we are seeking with that hope may not come when we think it should, nor in the way we think it should. Hence, "Hope **thou in God**" – not the government, not the church, not the preacher, not your parents, not your children – "Hope thou in God."

He's where we need to be – 42:1-2a

He's where He's always been – vs. 2b-5

III. HE'S WHERE WE ARE WHEN WE NEED HIM – VS. 6-11

- A. The first step in getting back to where God is is to recognize where we are – "will I remember thee from..." – vs. 6

Jonah 2:7

⁷ When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

- B. He's there for us when we recognize where we are

even if where we are is in the midst of a violent storm in our life - vs. 7.

The psalmist seems to represent himself as cast away at sea, and by wave impelling wave ["deep calleth unto deep"], is carried to a rock, around which the surges dash in all directions, forming hollow sounds in the creeks and caverns [[the noise of thy waterspouts"]. At last, several waves breaking over him, tear him away from that rock to which he clung, and where he had a little before found a resting-place, and, apparently, an escape from danger. "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" he is then whelmed in the deep, and God alone can save him. (Clarke)

- C. The psalmist seems to recognize that there were times in his life when his relationship wasn't right with God, and it seems that in those times he remembered where he needed to be in order to restore that relationship - he needed to get back into the presence of his Lord - vs. 8 - "the God of my life."**
- D. The last verse shows the author has gotten to where he needs to be, to where God is, seen in the phrase "my countenance and my God" - changes from the third person in verse five to the first person here.**

Conclusion: When the world asks us, "Where is thy God?" just tell them He's where He's always been - where He's needed.

There is an ancient tale from India about a young man who was seeking God. He went to a wise old sage for help. "How can I find God?" he asked the old man. The old man took him to a nearby river. Out they waded into the deep water. Soon the water was up just

under their chins. Suddenly the old man seized the young man by the neck and pushed him under the water. He held the young man down until the young man was flailing the water in desperation. Another minute and he may well have drowned. Up out of the water the two of them came. The young man was coughing water from his lungs and still gasping for air. Reaching the bank he asked the man indignantly, "What did that have to do with my finding God?" The old man asked him quietly, "While you were under the water, what did you want more than anything else?" The young man thought for a minute and then answered, "I wanted air. I wanted air more than anything else?" The old man replied, "When you want God as much as you wanted air, you will find him."