

GOD'S PURPOSES IN PAIN - PART 1

**HOW BIG IS YOUR
GOD?**

Jesus mentioned **4 types of people** in His parable of the soils in *Matthew 13:1-9* and explains it in *13:18-23*. For some, *satan steals the truth* that is sown. Others hear the word, but the *cares of the world choke that truth*. Some hear the word, *understand, embrace and bear fruit*. Many hear the truth, *embrace it with joy, but have no root, and when the problems, difficulties, persecution or trials come, they reject what they said they believed*.

Today we begin a new series - *God's Purposes in Problems*. We will study various reasons God has for difficulties into our lives. This will *not be exhaustive*, but I want us to develop a ***Biblical theology of pain***, which is needed in the church, *particularly in the West*, where we are not persecuted yet. Our text is *Psalm 66*.

The Psalms were Israel's song book, written over 1000-years by various writers, while the Jews lived under the Mosaic Law. There are various types of Psalms.

We know God is big, but *do we live that truth out in daily life, and specifically when life gets rough!* Thus, the question...

How Big is
Your God?

Psalm 66:1-20 - Shout for joy to God, all the earth; 2sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise! 3Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. 4All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name.” Selah 5Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. 6He turned the sea into dry

land; they passed through the river on foot.
There did we rejoice in him, 7who rules by
his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on
the nations - let not the rebellious exalt
themselves. Selah 8Bless our God, O
peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard,
9who has kept our soul among the living and
has not let our feet slip. 10For you, O God,
have tested us; you have tried us as silver is
tried. 11You brought us into the net; you laid

a crushing burden on our backs; 12you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. 13I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you, 14that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. 15I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an

offering of bulls and goats. Selah 16Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul. 17I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. 18If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. 19But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. 20Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

A. 66:1-5 - God is Awesome

In the *first 5 verses* the Psalmist calls for all the earth to sing praise and give glory to the *Name of God, or character of God*. The *Psalmist* recalls God's deeds, in context, for Israel and *extolls His power*. So much so, the enemies of God come to Him like dogs with their tails between their legs. *Verse 4* continues with a declaration of *all the earth praising God*. One day *all the earth will do so*, after Christ returns.

A. 66:1-5 - God is Awesome

He is the Creator, Sustainer, Savior, and Judge. He is eternal, all knowing, all powerful, doesn't need anything or anyone, but is self-sustaining. He is *holy, holy, holy*. He is love, truth, full of grace, mercy, compassion, justice, wrath, and righteousness. He has revealed Himself as *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*.

A. 66:1-5 - God is Awesome

He spoke and the universe into existence out of nothing in 6 days. He sent His Son, the eternal 2nd Person of the Tri-une Godhead, who took on human flesh, and die on a cross for our sins, and resurrect 3 days later. He has total authority over all events in history. He has told us what will happen at the end. He has a plan and purpose for all things, and when we see Him as He is in His awesomeness, problems become small.

B. 66:6-7 - God's Power Over Creation

The writer gives a *specific historical event* in the life of Israel. It may refer to the parting of the Red Sea in *Exodus 14*, or to the Israelites crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land in *Joshua 3*. It is probably referring to the **Red Sea**, as that is often cited in the Psalms as a reminder of the power of God and His faithfulness to His people.

B. 66:6-7 - God's Power Over Creation

Part of what a *miracle was and is*, revolves around **God overruling natural law to do something out of the ordinary**. The *parting of the Red Sea* was one of those things. Other examples include: *creation in 6 days, God parting the Jordan River, the miracles Elijah did by God's power, Jesus walking on water, healing the sick, the lepers, raising the dead, casting out demons, and more.*

C. 66:8-12 – God Brings Us To and Through Trials

For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. 11You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs; 12you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

C. 66:8-12 – God Brings Us To and Through Trials

Contextually, this is probably about the slavery of Israelites in Egypt - crushing burden on their backs, and going through the fire and water, or Red Sea. The place of abundance was the Promised Land. They did not go into slavery because they disobeyed the Law.

C. 66:8-12 – God Brings Us To and Through Trials

Sometimes we look back on a trial, we learn that *the Lord brought us to and through that situation*. When we go through trials, at the time, we may not know **why**, and sometimes never know why, but that is *where **faith** comes in*. For the Psalmist, he looked back and saw God's purpose.

D. 66:13-15 - God is Worthy of Worship

Because He is awesome, controls creation and brings us to and through trials, He is worthy of praise and worship. This is the ***theme of this Psalm***. We have seen in in many verses: 1-4, 8. Now the Psalmist stops looking back at *Israel's history*, and turns to his present.

D. 66:13-15 - God is Worthy of Worship

In the *Mosaic Law*, particularly *Leviticus*, God prescribed different kinds of offerings that *involved sacrificing animals and more*. There was a sin offering, a guilt offering and more, each pointing to Jesus.

God is **worthy of worship!**

E. 66:16-20 - God is Involved in Our Lives

In the *closing verses of this Psalm*, the Psalmist thanks God for answering his cries. He says *he did not have iniquity in his heart*, and *God has not taken His covenant keeping love from him*. This was based under the Law and God's promises that if the people obeyed, they would be blessed, though God always looks at the heart, and not just external practices.

E. 66:16-20 - God is Involved in Our Lives

The same principles go for Christians today! If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, *He hears your cries, He hears your prayers, He knows your sorrow, He knows your pain, and He is involved in it!* We may not "**feel**" His presence, but **our faith is not based on feelings or sensing Him near.**

E. 66:16-20 - God is Involved in Our Lives

It is **great** when He does **feel near**, but it is in the difficulties, when He seems silent, when He seems far away, or when it seems like He doesn't care, that He **IS** still there and **IS** involved. The question is:

Will we believe?