Psalms 95-100 • The Messiah in the Psalms

Introduction
Hebrew scholars from old have identified these Psalms as speaking of the Messiah. There are even Hebrew scholars today who believe this even though they reject Jesus as the Messiah. So as a kind of exercise, the following study assumes that this observation is correct and seeks to discern what they tell us about the Messiah, what the people of Jesus’ day were probably expecting, and how it ultimately compares with what we know of Christ’s ministry.

1 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the Lord is a great God And a great King above all gods, 4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. 5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. 6 Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, 9 When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. 11 Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest.”

[Read Psalm 95]
Q: What are the main characteristics of the Messiah in terms of what He is called in this Psalm?
1. “God” (v.3)
2. “King” (v.3)
3. “Maker” (v.6)
4. And by inference to the fact that we are His sheep residing in His pasture, Shepherd. (v.6)

Q: From these qualities, was the Messiah expected to be just another man?
A: The qualities and titles assigned to the Messiah indicate that He is on the same level as God Himself, Ruler over both heaven and earth, and present from the beginning as Creator.

Point: The Old Testament Hebrew scholars identified the Godhead as comprised of God, the Holy Spirit, and a third person they called the “Metatrone”, who we recognize as Christ the Son of God. In theological terms, He is called the “pre-incarnate Christ” whenever He appears in the Old Testament.

Q: And what example is given of the pre-incarnate Christ’s presence in this Psalm?
A: That He was present with Israel in the wilderness. In fact, it was He with whom they were actually dealing.

Q: How were their dealings with Christ in the Old Testament similar to His earthly incarnation as Jesus in the New?
A: Although they saw His work bringing them out of Egypt to the Promised Land, they did not fully accept and believe Him, instead testing and trying Him. In the same way, during Jesus’ ministry on earth, they witnessed His signs and miracles and yet tested Him by asking for even more. Both generations failed and therefore did not “enter into My rest”.

Point: Those who truly hear His voice become obedient to His Word and ways as sheep who follow the Shepherd and live in the pasture He designates; those who do not fail to enter into that place and relationship with Him.

[Read Psalm 96]
Q: What is the chief characteristic or title of the Messiah in this Psalm?
A: Judge. (v.13)

Q: How is this role described? Of what does it consist?
1. He is not just over the whole earth (v.1), all the nations and all the peoples (v.3), and even the heavens (v.5), but is “above all gods”(v.4) and deserving of praise by everyone and everything.
2. He is to be worshiped in “His courts” (v.8) and “in holy attire” (v.9). This is the Old Testament way of stating that one must be spiritually clean – unpolluted by sin – and properly consecrated for His service.
But the LORD made the heavens.
6Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.

7Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
8Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name; Bring an offering and come into His courts.
9Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.
10Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.”

11Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; 12Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy 13Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.

1The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad.
2Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. 3Fire goes before Him And burns up His adversaries round about. 4His lightnings lit up the world; The earth saw and trembled. 5The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the LORD of the whole earth. 6The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples have seen His glory. 7Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods. 8Zion heard this and was glad, And the daughters of Judah have rejoiced Because of Your judgments, O LORD. 9For You are the LORD Most High over all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods.

3. His standards of judgment will be “in righteousness” (v.13) and “in His faithfulness” (v.13). In other words, according to God’s Word.

**Point:** The Messiah was not just supposed to be merely accepted as God, but the people’s response was supposed to be as that provided in the Law for approaching, worshiping, and serving God in the temple. The right response to the Messiah was to be rid of personal sin (be consecrated) and to embrace God’s standards of righteousness and faithfulness. He would judge according to these standards, not merely coming as a liberator allowing people to live as they pleased.

**Point:** One of the chief results of the Messiah’s work is to be true spiritual revival where all false beliefs and wrong behavior are cast aside in favor of embracing His Word and ways exclusively. It wasn’t merely about Him becoming King over Israel and the earth, but King over each individual’s heart.
10Hate evil, you who love the LORD, 
Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; 
He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
11Light is sown like seed for the righteous 
And gladness for the upright in heart. 
12Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, 
And give thanks to His holy name.

Q: How would you characterize the chief characteristic of the Messiah emphasized in this Psalm?
A: The final and ultimate working of God’s salvation.

Q: How will God’s salvation be publicly displayed? By what things will it be universally acknowledged that it has come to mankind?
1. It will be revealed “to the house of Israel”. (v.3)
2. It will be revealed “in the sight of the nations”. (v.2)
3. It will be revealed to “all the ends of the earth”. (v.3)

Q: How is this different from “the day of the LORD” which is often referred to throughout Scripture?
A: The “day of the LORD” speaks of final judgment, when time has run out and those who rejected God must pay the ultimate, eternal price for their decision. What is being referred to here is the experience of those who accept the Messiah and are seeing the work of salvation completely fulfilled. It’s not a time or day of final judgment for punishment and destruction of the unbelieving, but of celebration for the obedient.

Point: The role of the Messiah was to be inextricably linked to God’s work of salvation. He’s to be the One through whom God’s plan of salvation is to be completely fulfilled.

1The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; 
He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake!
2The LORD is great in Zion, 
And He is exalted above all the peoples. 
3Let them praise Your great and awesome name; 
Holy is He. 
4The strength of the King loves justice; 
You have established equity; 
You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. 
5Exalt the LORD our God 
And worship at His footstool; 
Holy is He.

Q: What is the chief attribute of the Messiah highlighted in this Psalm?
A: “Holy is He” (v.3), “Holy is He” (v.5), and “holy is the LORD our God” (v.9)

Q: What is the chief action to which people are called to do in this Psalm?
A: “Worship at His footstool” (v.5) and “worship at His holy hill” (v.9). In other words, they are to come into His presence and worship Him.

Point: The only way one can come into the presence of holy God and worship Him is to be spiritually cleansed so as to be acceptable according to His standards of holiness.

[Continued on the next page.]
Moses and Aaron were among His priests,  
And Samuel was among those who called on His name;  
They called upon the Lord and He answered them.  
He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud;  
They kept His testimonies  
And the statute that He gave them.  
O LORD our God, You answered them;  
You were a forgiving God to them,  
And yet an avenger of their evil deeds.  
Exalt the LORD our God  
And worship at His holy hill,  
For holy is the LORD our God.

Q: What examples are given as people who were able to not only come into the presence of holy God, but actually speak with and be heard by Him?  
A: Moses, Aaron, and Samuel.

Q: What do these 3 have in common where sin is concerned?  
A: Each one stood in the gap, so to speak, of when the wrath of God broke forth because His holiness had been insulted; they were all intercessors on behalf of man's transgression of God's holiness.

Q: What is the implication of this where the Messiah is concerned?  
A: Not only that He would be the ultimate intercessor, but that through Him we would have this kind of access to and relationship with God.

Point: The Messiah would remove the obstacles set in place so that only a few could come and serve in His presence, which was limited in the Old Testament to those authorized to go into the Holy of Holies. The Messiah would enable unprecedented access to and service of God and still maintain all the requirements of His holiness.

[Read Psalm 100]

Q: How will the Messiah change the way His people worship and serve Him?  
1. They will be “His people”, devoted to no one else but the One True God. (v.3)  
2. They will be “the sheep of His pasture”, a description of following only His voice and living only where He decides, not according to the world’s or our own desire. (v.3)  
3. They will “enter His gates...and His courts” with “thanksgiving” and “praise”. (v.4) In other words, they won’t need to come to the temple to seek forgiveness for sins and needing to start over with a clean slate, but will be living rightly so as to already be in the right spiritual condition even as they first enter the gates leading to His presence.

Point: The Messiah will induce righteousness and faithfulness from the heart which will be visibly evident in changed behavior rejecting sin and a lifestyle embracing God’s Word and ways.
Epilogue

From these Psalms are derived the following expectations concerning the Messiah:

- Psalm 95: He won’t just be a man, but equal with God. He will work signs and wonders just as He did for the generation coming out of Egypt but, like them, be tested and rejected by many who themselves He will reject from entering into His rest.

- Psalm 96: He will come as Judge according to the standards of God’s righteousness and faithfulness established by His Word.

- Psalm 97: The right response to the Messiah is spiritual obedience which in turn opens one’s eyes to what God is doing personally and throughout the whole earth. It’s about Him becoming the King of our heart.

- Psalm 98: He is the One through whom God’s plan of salvation is to be completely fulfilled.

- Psalm 99: He would enable unprecedented access to God such as only the likes of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel experienced, and still maintain all the requirements demanded by God’s holiness.

- Psalm 100: He will effect changes that will be visibly evident in changed behavior.

As you can see, if you expected the Messiah to come and accomplish all these things at the same time, it would be difficult to understand how He could simultaneously change hearts, fulfill the plan of salvation, and render judgment for all things at the same time. We have the benefit of understanding how these describe one Messiah, two comings. Many things were fulfilled at Christ’s First Coming, the rest are awaiting His Second Coming.

Application

- Do you see that His complete fulfillment of those things at His First Coming are a testimony to the fact that He will completely fulfill the remaining at His Second Coming?

- How well do you see that our required response to any or all of these things to is to live a changed life according to His Word and ways?

- Are you fully responding to Jesus as the Messiah by submitting your will and ways to His? Or are you holding back in some area? Where do you think that will eventually lead?