

In Judah is God known

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 January 2021

Preacher: John Woods

[0 : 00] Well, good evening. Welcome everybody to this evening meeting for here at Calvary Evangelical Church in Brighton.! I welcome you if you're a regular or if you're a visitor. Just to introduce us, we're an independent Baptist church in Brighton, which is on the south coast of England, south of London.

My name is Philip Wells. I'm going to be leading this evening and our speaker is John Woods and we're once again really grateful to him for ministering God's Word to us.

The order of events is up on the screen by my head there. And so having welcomed and given that very brief introduction, let me say that we're going to sing in a moment.

But let me read these verses from Romans chapter 1, which set the scene for the gospel that the Apostle Paul preached. It begins with this negative and then brings in wonderful good news.

But it starts like this. For the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

[1 : 18] Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him. But their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

And that's the background to the wonderful good news, which Paul says he's not ashamed of. I'm not ashamed of the good news. For in the gospel, the good news, a righteousness from God is revealed.

A righteousness that is by faith from first to last. So against that dark background of rejection of God, we have the wonderful good news of how to be reconciled to him.

And who is this God? He is the creator of the ends of the earth. As we read, his eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen, whether people agree with it or not.

[2 : 30] So let's sing Psalm 100 in version A, if you happen to have the book there. All people that on earth do dwell. Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Serve him with joy. His praises tell. Come now before him and rejoice. That's exactly what human beings were meant to do and ought to do. And so let us willingly sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Psalm 100, 100, version A. All people that on earth do dwell.

Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Serve him with joy.

His praises tell. Come now before him and rejoice.

[3 : 41] Know that the Lord is God indeed. He formed us all without our aid.

We are the flock he loves to feed. A sheep who by his hand are made.

O enter then his gates with praise. Give thanks and bless him all your days.

Let every tongue confess his name. The Lord of mighty God is good.

His mercy is forever sure. His truth at all times firmly stood.

[5 : 06] And shall promise to age and yore. So let's now come to God in prayer.

Let's pray. We bow before you almighty God. Creator of the ends of the earth. The one who gloriously made the stars.

Made the utter reaches of the cosmos. The God who is so wonderful in his detail that he made the smallest subatomic particle.

And in his glory and wonder has made us as his image bearers. Men and women in this world that you have made for us.

Our minds get dizzied and put off kilter if we try to think about how great everything is. And we simply bow before the wonder of your greatness and magnificence.

[6 : 11] We bow before the nature of your holiness and perfection. We come in wonder at your love that you have made us in your image.

And as we come this evening we pray that you will draw us to yourself. Show us again who you are. Focus us on the things upon which we ought to focus.

And put within us a right and reverent fear of God. Which makes everything else take its proper place in our thoughts and feelings.

So come and be with us. Come and speak to us. And help us not only to be attentive listeners. Deliver us from being distracted. But help us take into our hearts and lives. The things that your word says. And the things of which your word speaks. So forgive our sins as we come this evening.

[7 : 10] And draw us to yourself. Fill us with yourself. Focus us upon yourself. For we ask it in the name of our redeeming Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Let's sing number 480. Crown him with many crowns. I've chosen this song because it locates Jesus Christ in the great scheme of things.

The one through whom the worlds were made. The one for whom everything is made. The one who reigns all things. The Lamb upon his throne. And it traces through his death upon the cross. His triumphant resurrection from the dead. The program by which his kingdom is extended. Crown him the Lord of peace.

Let praise fill every land. From pole to pole let warfare cease. His kingdom is at hand. Forever he shall reign. And it also crowns him as the Lord of eternity forever.

[8 : 18] So here is a song to the glory of Jesus Christ. It's number 480. Crown him with many crowns.

The Lamb upon his throne. While hymns eternal anthem drought. All music but its home.

Awake my soul and sing. Love him who died to be. Your saviour and your majest king.

Through all eternity. Crown him the son of God. Before the worlds began.

Let all who tread where he has trod. Crown him the son of man. Who every grief has known.

[9 : 30] By which we are oppressed. And takes and bears them for his own. That all in him may rest.

Crown him the Lord of life. And triumphed from the grave. Who rose victorious from the strife.

For those he came to save. His glories now we sing. Who died and rose on high.

Who died eternal life. To bring and lives and death may die. Crown him the Lord of love.

Behold his lands and sight. Those wounds yet visible. All above in beauty glorified.

[10 : 35] No angel in the sky. Can fully bear that sight. But down the fence is burning light.

That mystery's so bright. Crowd him the Lord of peace. Let grace fill every land.

From home to home. Let all fear cease. His kingdom is at hand. Forever he shall reign.

And earthly princess fall. Before his throne. The land once slain. The sovereign Lord of all.

Crown him the Lord of years. The potent date of time. Creator of the rolling spheres.

[11 : 40] In majesty sublime. All hail, Redeemer, hail. For you have died for me.

Your praise shall never, never fail. Through all eternity. Before John comes to speak.

Let me read this psalm. That he's going to be speaking about. Psalm 76. So please find Psalm 76.

It says for the director of music.

With stringed instruments. A psalm of Asaph. A song. In Judah God is known. His name is great in Israel.

His tent is in Salem. His dwelling place in Zion. There he broke the flashing arrows. The shields and the swords. The weapons of war.

[12 : 45] Selah. You are resplendent with light. More majestic than mountains. Rich with game. Valiant men lie plundered.

They sleep their last sleep. Not one of the warriors can lift his hands. At your rebuke, O God of Jacob. Both horse and chariot lie still.

You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry. From heaven you pronounced judgment. And the land feared and was quiet.

When you, O God, rose up to judge. To save the afflicted of the land. Surely your wrath against men brings you praise.

And the survivors of your wrath are restrained. Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfil them. Let all the neighbouring lands bring gifts to the one to be feared.

[13:45] He breaks the spirit of rulers. He is feared by the kings of the earth. Amen. A wonderful psalm.

Let's pray and then I'll hand over to John to speak to us. Help us to hear your word with benefit and blessing and transformation in our hearts and lives.

Amen. Thank you for your welcome to Calvary Church again. Very pleased to be with you for your evening service and to participate in your series on the book of Psalms.

Psalm 76 is a psalm that depicts the magnificence of God and the hostility of human beings.

In a sense it is the whole biblical story in miniature. The tussle and tension that exists between human beings and their creator. The irresistible force meeting the immovable object.

[14:48] What is God like? What is our responsibility toward God? And how does God work out his purposes in our world?

These are really important themes for us. When I meet people I will usually, in pre-Covid times anyway, reach out my hand and say, Hello, my name is John.

John, my name means gift of God or God is gracious. And I reflect on my name and I begin to wonder, do I live up to my name?

Am I a gracious person? Do people experience me as a gift, a benefit from God?

Or am I a distraction from God? Do I divert people's attention from him or maybe make it more difficult for people to believe? What does your name mean?

[15:56] And I wonder whether you live up to your name or whether, in fact, you fail to do that. The first verse of the psalm says that in Judah is God known.

His name is great in Israel. Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob and one of the tribal heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.

And Judah, the name Judah, has the meaning praise. It's something that Paul picks up in his letter to the Romans and explores whether the people of Israel live up to that name of Judah.

Whether they praise God and show his honour and reputation well in the world. Or whether they, in fact, dishonour God by their reputation and their behaviour.

It's a very important question for those who claim to be followers of the living God. Do they make God's name glorious?

[17:00] Or do they bring shame upon that name? Certainly it's been the case through history. That some people have demonstrated the wonder of God's reputation by their words and their works.

Others have besmirched the name and reputation of God by their name. Through manipulation. Through attempts at control. Through abuse.

Through rigidity. In Judah, is God known? God's reputation is known through his people.

The idea is your praise, your fame, your renown is made known through Judah. God's people are a mirror that reflects something of the character of God.

Sometimes that reflection is glorious. Sometimes that reflection is ghastly. It's worth reflecting, isn't it, on our own individual lives and the life of the church.

[18:07] Is my life, is my church, is my church. A mirror that allows people to see the glory of God. Ye servants of God, your master proclaim.

And publish abroad his wonderful name. As Peter writes, the Christians in 1 Peter chapter 2. We are to declare the praises of him who brought us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

We are to be adverts. Billboards. Proclaiming the praises, the virtues, the beauties of the God that we know and serve.

That's who we are. That's our identity. And that's our purpose. Of course, we do know. That every professing believer and every professing church is an advert for God.

It's just the question, is it a good one? Or is it a lousy one? In Judah is God known. His name is great in Israel.

[19:21] My prayer today is that the testimony of Calvary Church and the members of Calvary Church will show the greatness and glory and wonder of who God is.

His tent is in Salem and his dwelling place is in Zion. This is one of the songs of Zion in the book of Psalms, just like Psalm 46 and Psalm 48, which both have some similarities to Psalm 76.

And it's a reminder that God has been pleased to make himself known in Salem, Jerusalem, in Zion. That there, the holy place, the temple has been built.

And there God has given the symbols of his presence and favour with his people. God delights to come and identify with specific people in specific places.

But it's important to recognise that God is not restricted to any specific time or place. Although he allows himself to be accessible in those places, he is free to break the boundaries of any place.

[20 : 51] We've realised during the last year the folly of thinking that the church is the building. If the church was the building, many of us would be in a great deal of trouble in the past year when there's been infrequent opportunities to gather as God's people in church buildings.

We know that the place that God meets with his people is when the people of God gather, whether that's in a dedicated church building, a school or in the open air.

God is bigger than any of our buildings. He's bigger than any of our institutions. When he says that he dwells in Salem, he dwells in Zion.

It's a symbol of his willingness to be met in a geographical location. But the important thing to recognise is that God is not limited to that.

He is present in the whole world. God can meet with his people in India and in America and Africa and in Brighton and do so all at the same time.

[22 : 10] Because God is bigger than our categories. He's bigger than our limited understanding of space and time. The God who dwells in this place deserves to be honoured and glorified.

But this psalm is a psalm that is steeped in the language of battle. There he broke the flashing arrows, the shields and swords, the weapons of war.

Interesting, isn't it? God is focused in terms of his presence in the temple. And the language is that from there he broke the flashing arrows.

Now we know that the arrows that are referred to here were not fired in the temple precincts.

Probably this is a reference to that great deliverance of the people of Israel in the attack of Sennacherib upon them.

That's recorded in 2 Kings chapter 19 and again in Isaiah 36 and 37, indicating how important it was. How without any real contribution by the armies of Israel themselves, God supernaturally brought confusion to Sennacherib's camp and disarmed the camp.

[23 : 40] He broke the arrows. He destroyed the apparatus of war. So the threat, the very real and present danger to God's people was diffused.

And the key thing here is that we're seeing that God is the actor. God is the prime mover in history to bring protection to his people, to bring deliverance and victory to them.

So there in verse 6, God smashes all the implements of war.

It's like a rerun of Psalm 46, where we have that amazing description of God overcoming the hostile forces against his people and his city.

In verse 6, we get another description of this, that your rebuke God of Jacob, both horse and chariot lie still.

[24 : 54] And it's a reminder that this intervention of God is something that has happened throughout Israel's history and throughout the history of time. Here's a reference back to the very first deliverance.

The deliverance of God's people from the place of conflict coming out of Egypt as God stopped the Egyptian army in their tracks, made it very plain that they could not go any further as the waters engulfed them and engulfed the horses and chariots that were pursuing God's people.

Tim Keller has said that the horse and chariot were the latest technology in conflict in the world of the Bible writers.

No foot soldier could stand against them and certainly not a group of fleeing refugees with no weapons to protect themselves.

But God is more powerful than any human force. At your rebuke God of Jacob, horse and chariot lie still.

[26 : 15] God is a God who deserves our praise and our honour. But the fact of the matter is that in our world and in our history, God is dishonoured.

He is devalued. People rebel against him. People seek to marginalise him. People show indifference towards him.

And sometimes people seek to dismantle the whole apparatus of belief in the living God. But this God deserves our praise and honour.

We are to make his name glorious. How do we honour and praise this God? How do we go about it?

How do we make God famous in a world that wants to eradicate his memory from the whole world? And act as though we are able to somehow rub his name out of the script of human life.

[27 : 20] Verse 4 tells us, Light and provision.

Everything necessary for human life and experience. God is light.

1 John chapter 1. It is God who said to the darkness, Let there be light. You are resplendent with light.

There is no life without light. And God is the source of light. There's that amazing picture in the book of Revelation that there will be no sun or moon because God is the light.

God is the light of the new heavens and the new earth. God is the source of light of every good thing, of power, of grace, of mercy, of joy, of hope, of peace.

[28 : 46] Everything. You are resplendent with light. We are in darkness unless we meet him.

Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness.

The condition of human beings by nature will not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. What a remarkable thing it is to become a Christian.

Become a Christian after sleeping through life. Blindly stumbling through life. And then suddenly discovering the light that fills us completely.

Amazing grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found. Was blind. But now I see.

And of course the remarkable thing about seeing as a Christian is that not only do we see ourselves clearly now and our need for God clearly but we see him clearly.

[29 : 48] And in the light of him we see everything else clearly. It's as though a light switch has been flicked in our lives. And now suddenly everything is illuminated with astonishing clarity.

You are resplendent with light. And you are to be feared. It's a picture. The praise and honour of God is a picture of experiencing God with awe and wonder.

Now when we think about awe and wonder we can have some wrong pictures of that. Kind of think about the description of the first Gulf War. When in the strategy of bombing strategic points in that war.

The allied forces spoke about the tactics of shock and awe. And there is that kind of frightening shock and awe that certainly leaves people speechless and defenceless.

But we need to recognise that the God that we fear is not a God who is revealing himself with naked raw power. But a God who is a God of love and a God of grace.

[31 : 21] It is you alone who are to be feared. Who can stand before you when you are angry.

From heaven you pronounced judgment. The land feared and was quiet. God is a consuming fire.

Yes. He is light. Eternal. Eternal. And we don't mess with such a God. In the book of Revelation. In Revelation 6.

That question arises. Who can stand? Who can stand before this God? Well we can stand can't we? If we are in Christ. We can stand if we have experienced the light of Jesus Christ in our lives.

We can stand because we are forgiven. The wrath of God has been turned away through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we have no leg to stand on if we have not taken refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our sin bearer. Our wrath bearer. The one who turns aside the wrath of God. That we might experience the mercy of God. So that we might fear and be quiet.

[32 : 28] It's important that we see that God's interventions in history are not simply to shut people up.

Or to put people in their place. God is at work we're told in verse 9 to save all the afflicted in the land. God demonstrates his power.

He lays bare the arm of his power. Not to sort people out. But to rescue people. To save all the afflicted in the land.

He has a particular concern. The living God. With those who are vulnerable. With the widow and the fatherless. He has a particular concern for those who are lost.

Alone. Helpless. Without him. He is particularly concerned. To rescue. To save. What did Jesus say when he came into the world?

[33 : 32] Luke chapter 19. The Son of Man came to seek and to save. That which was lost. It's interesting to observe the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus came and he reached out to those who were sometimes socially outcasts. For those who were at the bottom of the pile of human history. We talk about levelling up in British society.

Levelling up the disparity between the North and the South. The haves and the have-nots. Well the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was the ultimate levelling up in human history.

When God sent his son Jesus to raise people up from the ash heap. And sit them amongst princes.

[34 : 34] To save the afflicted in the land. God comes to crush opposition. In order that he might lift up those who have been crushed by the opposition.

He is particularly concerned to rescue. To care for. To nurture. Those who are broken.

The remarkable thing that God works to break the arrow. But in the words of Isaiah he does not break the bruised reed. He does not snuff out the smouldering wick.

God is the almighty God who is to be feared. But he is also the tender gracious God. Who rescues and preserves.

We can cast our care upon him because he cares for us. Verse 10 says even human wrath will praise you. You will clothe yourself with wrath that remains.

[35 : 36] This is a remarkable statement. There's kind of some issues with the translation. And sometimes it speaks about God's wrath praising him. But probably it seems that the best translation of the original is that human wrath will praise you.

That the residue of human wrath will somehow be gathered up by God and brought to praise him.

That somehow even human hostility will be used by God to promote his glory and praise.

This morning I heard someone speak about Philippians chapter 1. How the imprisonment and the opposition that the apostle Paul experienced in Philippians at that time.

That even this served the cause of the gospel and the advance of the gospel. Human fury praises you.

How ironic. But of course this is part of the biblical story. So we read in Genesis 50 of Joseph talking to his brothers who had sold him into slavery and said, You intended to harm me.

[36 : 50] But God intended it for good. The wrath of man will praise you. Sometimes human beings will do their worst against God and God's people.

But God will even make this redound to his glory and show his honour and fame in the world. And of course we're reminded that human and satanic fury brought the son of God to the cross.

By the hands of wicked men, Peter says in Acts chapter 2, he was nailed to the cross. Yet it was through God's set purpose he was placed on the cross.

God uses the wrath of man to praise him. How astonishing it is that the hostility that nailed Jesus to the cross was used by the living God to fulfil his purpose.

To bring salvation to sinners. The very ones who were seeking to harm him. How in the Acts of the Apostles we see Saul of Tarsus carrying letters to Damascus to arrest Christians, to imprison them and to execute them.

[38 : 13] Breathing out threats. And yet God humbles Saul of Tarsus. Brings him the faith in the very Jesus that he opposes. And uses the force and the energy of that persecutor.

And redirects it. So that the same force and energy, now re-energised by the grace of God, becomes a mighty instrument in God's hand to bring the good news to the whole world.

Even human wrath will praise you. Let me tell you about Dimitri. Dimitri was a student at the Latvian Biblical Centre some 10 or 15 years ago.

And during Soviet times he had a job in the censorship department in Riga. And his particular role within this department was to assess the religious material that had been found in Latvia.

And some that was being published in Latvia at that time. And some that had been confiscated. He needed to read this religious material and assess whether it could be permitted or whether it needed to be banned.

[39 : 29] Now you know how the story is going to end, don't you? Dimitri, reading this material, found that he was not able to censor this material.

This material scrutinised him and showed him his need of Jesus. And Dimitri came to faith in Jesus as a censor of religious material.

The wrath of men was directed towards Christians and their publications. But God used the wrath of men to praise him.

And he still does. Sometimes we might struggle with our own circumstances and wonder, how is God going to get me out of this?

But God can. Verse 11. Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfil them. That all the neighbouring lands bring gifts to the one who is to be feared.

[40 : 35] The psalm concludes with an invitation. An invitation to the nations. Stop opposing. Lay down your weapons. Be still and know that I am God.

I'll be exalted in the earth. Come and bring God his due. Your praise. Your faith.

Your repentance. Your willingness to submit to him and his authority. He is the king. He has the huge crown.

You feel that you might be a king. You feel that you rule your own world. Verse 12. He breaks the spirit of rulers. He is feared by the kings of the earth.

We are not the rulers of our own destiny. We are not the centre of the universe.

[41 : 31] God is the centre of the universe. Christian faith is saying, I now believe that God is God. And I will worship him alone.

I will love him alone. I will trust him with my life and my destiny. Forgive me my rebellion. Make me new. And help me to follow Jesus.

The king of the world. And the king of my life. So step up and promise yourself to the Lord your God. And live in line with your promises.

And all people everywhere offer everything they have as tribute to the only one who matters. Rebel rulers. Give up. Realising how useless it is to resist him.

Do not resist him. Submit to him. Because he delights to rescue you. And to work in your life.

[42 : 33] Let's pray. Heavenly Father we come to you and we thank you for this opportunity to pray. We thank you that you are king of our world. And we pray that you would be king of our lives.

We thank you that when things are beyond our control. When things appear to be chaotic. When there are those who oppose us.

And we feel that our lives are being squeezed. That you are not at a loss. You are not scratching your head and wondering what to do.

That you do not need ideal circumstances to fulfil your plans. We thank you that the rough wood of the cross. And the cruel nails of the cross.

Are a reminder. That even in a place of apparent weakness. And apparent folly. You are able to fulfil your wise.

[43 : 37] And all powerful plan. We thank you that we can commit ourselves to you. Knowing that you do all things well. Knowing that you will never let us down.

Knowing that you will demonstrate your glory. And you will keep us. You will hold us. Fast. Fast. Because you. Are the king.

You are the living God. You are the almighty one. And we commit. Ourselves. To you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. John. Thank you so much for that talk. And we're going to close by singing a version of Psalm 76.

We've heard it explained and now we're going to sing it. The tune I think you'll gather as we go through. So we're going to sing Psalm 76.

[44 : 40] And then I'll say a prayer to close. Psalm 76.

Psalm 76.

desde than the mountain steep.

The plundered warriors once so bold are wrapped in depths and yielding sleep.

O God of Jacob, at your will, both force and chariot now lies still.

[46 : 57] What terrors does your wrath compare? For who can stand when you appear?

From him your solemn verdict fell. The earth was dumped, transfixed with fear.

When you, O God, in judgment rose to save your rest from all their foes.

For human wrath shall be transformed to praise your name and wait for you.

Then may your people serve the Lord. And Gentile lands bring tributes too.

[48 : 27] In this world's tyrants, land bear like, what terror must your judgment say?

Let's close our meeting with this doxology from Jude.

Amen. To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

To the only God our Saviour. To the only God our Saviour. Be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. That's the end of our meeting. And we will meet again soon. No doubt.

[49 : 35] Until then, it's bye bye from me. Bye bye.