

A PICTURE BOOK OF GOD

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 133

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

[1] Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

[2] It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!

[3] It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

OBSERVATION

The songs of Ascents were written by a psalmist to be sung as people ascended the temple. These were short songs, sung as people would go up the holy mount, to set their minds on God. This psalm speaks of unity (or some translations say “together”) which is helpful for the church today.

- The beginning of the psalm is an abrupt “behold” or “look, take note.” Pausing to look around, one would see the goodness for all when brothers (here the nation of believing Jews) live together in peace. The translator wisely uses “unity” in the idea that they are more than together, they are living in a common peace. Peace among the nation of Israel brought forth goodness and pleasantness. Today a reader may understand how the church can dwell in unity/peaceful togetherness—not avoiding the need to point out sin or different views, but that the union in Christ characterizes the collective people (v. 1).
- Dwelling together in peace can be hard and laborious but the goodness is something very unique. The psalmist compares living in unity with the anointing oil used on the head of Aaron, connecting every Israelite to the oil as it pours down the face of the high priest. For most of us in the Western world, having oil run through our hair, down our beards, and into our clothes sounds dreadful. For the Israelites, the anointing of Aaron as high priest of Israel was an occasion of joy and festivities. The event would have the pleasing fragrance of this precious oil cover the man who would be mediator between God and man. Not only that but as the oil ran down into the garment of Aaron, it would soon cover the breastplate with twelve stones attached that symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel. The union of those who dwelled together is pictured in the celebration and joy surrounding the anointing of Aaron (v. 2).

- The psalmist is not finished with giving pictures to understand the ideal community of the Israelites. David turns another page in his picture book and unfolds the mountain of Hermon. The crown of the Israeli mountains, Hermon would be snowcapped both in winter and spring. The huge peaks would capture precipitation year around, catching dew and moisture that would form its frosted covering. The melting of the snow would pour down the mountain onto the surrounding areas and eventually form the Jordan river. With all the scientific data aside, living in an arid climate, Hermon/Zion mountains and the moisture connected would be a source of life and vitality to those who dwelled in the land. Zion continues to intensify the image to show the place of law and worship that gave the people understanding of God. This picture of dew added to the sacred historical significance of Zion gives the reader a blessing and life ordained by the Lord alone (v. 3).
- The entire chapter sums up the reality that God gives blessing and life forevermore, which is expressed and understood through brothers living in unity. The only answer one can have for the unique union that David points out is the work of God in their lives. Without God, unity is a vain pursuit.

OBEDIENCE

God has given His Word and images of who He is so that believers can live in constant response to Him (worship/obedience). Does the unity around believers image the blessing and life given by God?

- Put aside silly squabbles and embrace the life that God has given you with fellow believers. Run to apologize for petty moments and enjoy the chance to live together and image the blessings/life of God.
- David reflects on the image of unity to point to the works of God; think about ways you can reflect on God. What things around you speak to the grace, love, and glory of God?
- Thank God for all things and seek to live with other believers in peace.

PRAYER

Ask God to give wisdom on how to end petty disagreements with those with whom God has called you to dwell. Pray that God would give you eyes to see, as the psalmist, everything working to display His glory. Finally thank God for everyday images of His work in your life and the lives in your household.