

Ezra 3:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

Analysis

The responsive singing 'because he is good' echoes Psalm 136 and numerous other passages celebrating God's hesed (steadfast, covenant love). This wasn't innovative worship but rooted in Scripture, demonstrating that biblical praise transcends circumstances. The phrase 'mercy endureth for ever' translates le'olam chasdo, emphasizing God's unchanging faithfulness despite Israel's unfaithfulness that led to exile. The people's great shout accompanied the foundation laying, not the completed temple, showing faith in God's promises before seeing fulfillment. This illustrates the biblical pattern of praising God for what He will do based on His character and past faithfulness. The communal nature—'all the people shouted'—shows genuine, widespread joy in restoration.

Historical Context

Temple foundations required massive stone blocks, some weighing several tons, carefully positioned to support the superstructure. Ancient Near Eastern foundation ceremonies often involved pagan rituals and foundation deposits (objects buried beneath cornerstones). Israel's foundation ceremony was distinctively focused on Yahweh worship and biblical praise. The responsive singing pattern (one group singing, another responding) characterized Levitical

worship from David's time (1 Chronicles 16:34). This musical tradition, maintained through seventy years of exile without temple, demonstrates oral preservation of worship forms and Scripture memorization that characterized exilic Judaism.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does praising God at the foundation-laying rather than completion teach about faith and biblical worship?
2. How does grounding praise in God's unchanging character ('his mercy endureth forever') provide stability amid changing circumstances?
3. In what ways can modern worship balance emotional expression with theological content rooted in Scripture?

Interlinear Text

וְעַל	בְּפָלֵל	וּבְהָזֵד תִּתְהִנֵּה:	כִּי	יְהָוָה:
And they sang together by course	in praising	and giving thanks	of the LORD	H3588
H6030	H1984	H3034	H3068	
וְבַיִת	לְעוֹלָם	מִסְפָּד וְ	עַל	וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל
because he is good	endureth for ever	for his mercy	toward Israel	H3605
H2896	H5769	H2617	H3478	
בְּפָלֵל	גָּדוֹל הַ	תְּרוּעַ הַ	יְהָוָה:	
And all the people	shouted	shout	in praising	of the LORD
H5971	H7321	H8643	H1419	H3068
בַּעַד	הַזֶּבֶחַ	בֵּית	יְהָוָה:	
because the foundation	of the house	of the LORD		
H5921	H3245	H1004	H3068	

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 16:34 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 106:1 (Grace): Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 107:1 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms 103:17 (Grace): But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

Jeremiah 33:11 (Grace): The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

Psalms 135:3 (Resurrection): Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

Psalms 118:1 (Grace): O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.

Nehemiah 12:24 (Resurrection): And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward.

2 Chronicles 7:3 (Grace): And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

Isaiah 12:6 (References Israel): Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

