

Praise the Lord, O My Soul!

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Introduction

I have an unforgettable praise until I die. That praise is “My Savior’s Love.” The reason I can’t forget this gospel song is because the indwelling Holy Spirit made me to sing this song after my first baby Charis died. I still remember it. After our Charis died in my arms, my wife and I decided to cremate her. After we did so, we took the small box filled with Charis’ ashes and went to spread it in the water. After my wife spread Charis’ ashes in the water, we were coming back to the land. I was on the back of the small boat and was driving the boat and my wife in front of the boat. Suddenly she turned around and looked at me and said “Titanic” with tears dropping from her eyes. When I heard her saying “Titanic” and saw her tears, the indwelling Holy Spirit opened my heart and mouth and made me to sing this praise to God vigorously: “I stand amazed in the presence Of Jesus the Nazarene. And wonder how He could love me, A sinner condemned, unclean. How marvelous, How wonderful And my song will ever be How marvelous, How wonderful Is my Savior’s love for me.” It was only later that I realized that God fulfilled the promise Word that He gave to me, Psalms 63:3

It was the Sunday afternoon when I visited the Los Angeles Children Hospital Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to see Charis. After I washed my hands and wore a gown, Charis’ doctor came up to me asked me whether to let her die quickly or slowly. I was very shocked. And I told the doctor to let her die slowly. Then when I went into the ICU room where Charis was, I saw my wife pouring out her tears as she was looking at Charis who was slowly dying. She was very beautiful in my eyes. Next day, Monday morning, I happened to read the Bible Psalms 63:3 and I was blessed by that Word of God: “Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” Somehow, I applied this Word like this: ‘God’s eternal lovingkindness is better than our baby Charis’ 55 days of her life, my lips will praise God.’ So I share this Word of God and how God blessed me with it with my wife. And together we decided to let Charis die quickly. So my wife called the hospital and let Charis’ doctor know our decision. I called my parents, older brother and my younger sister so they all came to the hospital and my father who is a pastor led the final worship. Then everybody, including my wife, went to the next room. Then the Charis’ nurse took out all the hoses and needles and so on. Then she gave Charis to me. That was my first and last time holding her. And she died in my arms. I cried and cried and I thought I was going to die because I couldn’t breathe. When I went to the next room, everybody were crying except my father. When I sat beside my wife with Charis in my arms, my father came to me and asked for the baby. So I gave her to him. Then he held the baby in his arm and laid another hand on Charis’ head. And he memorized John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

We cannot help but to praise God because of the Lord’s great lovingkindness and everlasting truth toward us (Ps. 117). The Lord’s great lovingkindness and everlasting truth toward us was demonstrated “in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). Therefore, we who have received “the free gift of God”, that is “eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23) must praise “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

Nearer my God to Thee as I desire to praise the Lord until my last breathe,

Pastor James Kim
(February, 2020)

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.” (Psalms 150:6)

Our church New Year's motto is "Praise the Lord, O my soul! And the New Year's motto verse is Psalms 150:6 – “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.” Our goal this year is threefold: (1) to praise and worship God every Sunday, (2) to have once a month family worship and (3) to sing praise every day alone. Based on Psalms 150:6, let us consider four things under the heading, “Praise the Lord, O my soul!”:

The first thing I want to think about is “Where’ do we praise God?”

Look at Psalms 150:1 – “Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse.” The Bible tells us to praise God “in His sanctuary” and “in His mighty expanse.” We must go up to the temple of God and praise Him. And we must go up to the house of God and praise Him with the hope that we will praise Him forever in His expanse that is in Heaven. We must praise God as we fully mobilize places to praise (Ps. 148) (Park Yun-sun). In other words, we must praise God everywhere.

The second thing I want to think about is “Why’ should we praise God?”

There are two reasons for this: (1) The first reason is because of God's mighty deeds. Look at Psalms 150:2a – “Praise Him for His mighty deeds” What, then, are the mighty deeds God has done for us? For example, God's mighty deeds are God holding us, leading us, protecting us and so on. Especially when we talk about God's mighty deeds, what we cannot miss is the power of God's salvation. (2) The second reason is because God's excellent greatness. Look at Psalms 150:2b – “... Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.” Our God is the great God. We must praise God for His excellent greatness. Especially when we think of the grace of salvation that this great God who loves us with great love and saved us with His great power, we should praise God. We must praise God for His mighty deeds and for His excellent greatness.

The third thing I want to think about is “How’ do we praise God?”

Look at Psalms 150: 3-5: “Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals.” The Bible encourages us to praise God with trumpet, harp, lyre, tambourine, dancing, stringed instruments, pipe and cymbals. What does it mean? It means to praise God with all the instruments that we can fully mobilize (Park).

The fourth and last thing I want to think about is “Who’ should praise God?”

Look at Psalms 150:6 – “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” This means that we should fully mobilize everybody who can praise God and praise Him (Park).

In the New Year, let's praise and worship God with thanksgiving in our hearts for God is worthy to be praised. Let's praise God wherever we are. And let's praise God with all the instruments we can fully mobilize. Let's fully mobilize everybody who is willing to praise Him. Let's praise God until we have last breath.

Longing to praise the Lord until my last breath,

Pastor James Kim

Why should we praise God?

[Psalms 47]

It is often said that praise speak of three powers: First, praise is 'the power to go up'. Praise is the power to go up means that praise functions as bringing us closer to God by praising Him. The praise as the power to go up may be called 'the guide of faith'. Second, praise is 'the power to penetrate into our hearts'. The praise that brings us comfort, peace, repentance, joy, determination, and courage is the power to penetrate our hearts. The praise that comes to our hearts and gives us joy and courage is 'the guide of hope'. Third and last, praise is 'the power to go out'. The praise that arouses faith and hope has another important function. It is 'the guide of love', which is the power that goes out. The praise comforts our sad hearts, comforts our hearts when we are depressed, gives us thankful hearts, and organizes the messy thoughts. Those who sing praise vigorously during worship are those whose hearts are concentrated on God and who are moved by the worship. Therefore, if we want to overflow with grace, we have to praise God (Internet).

We are to give this powerful praise to God. What is the reason? Why should we praise God? I want to look for three reasons in Psalms chapter 47. I hope and pray that we will be able to praise God with right reasons.

First, we must praise God because God is the Lord Most High.

Look at Psalms 47: 2, 9b – “For the LORD Most High is to be feared, A great King over all the earth. ... For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted.” What does “the Lord Most High” mean? It means that God is the Most High God and the most precious God. We must not forget God's "dignity" in praising the Most High God. It means that God is the object of our awe. In other words, we must be reverent in our hearts when we praise the Most High God. Despite this being natural, I think we are more liberal than being in awe in praising God. In other words, we forget our position in praising the Lord Most High and think that we can praise Him freely and comfortably. Let's think about it. Isn't it natural for the lowest being to have awe in praising the Lord Most High?

Is the praise given to the Lord Most High already exalted to the Most High, or is it to exalt ourselves? I remember the story of the Israelites during the Exodus time in which the Israelites made a golden calf, “the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Exod. 32:6) and dancing (v. 19) when Moses was on Mount Sinai. I am concerned that maybe we are praising the Lord Most High by eating, drinking, singing, and dancing like the Israelites. We need to apply John 3:30 in praising the Lord Most High: ““He must increase, but I must decrease.” In other words, in praising the already Most High Lord, we must decrease. We must be lowered and smaller.

We must praise the Lord Most High humbly. I remember the chorus of the hymn “How Great Thou Art”:
“Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee How great Thou art, How great Thou art
Then sings my soul, My Savior God, to Thee How great Thou art, How great Thou art.”

Second, we must praise God because He is the Lord who loves us the most.

Look at Psalms 47:4 – “He chooses our inheritance for us, The glory of Jacob whom He loves. Selah.” God's love was to choose the Israelites and give 'the glory of Jacob' that is an inheritance, the promised land of Canaan. This God's choice is the ultimate love of God for the ones whom He chose (Park). That is why the Bible

says in Ephesians 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him In love.” We who are chosen by God and who are God's most loved ones must praise God. The reason is because God chose us in Christ so that we would be to the praise of His glory (v. 12). In other words, we, who are the chosen, exist for the praise of God's glory' (Park). The ultimate purpose of our redemption is to praise God's glory.

Therefore, we must praise God's saving grace. We must praise Him with joyful heart, using the musical instrument to sing praises (Ps. 47:5). I remember the hymn “The Love of God is Greater Far” verse 1 and chorus: “The love of God is greater far Than tongue or pen can ever tell; It goes be-yond the highest star, And reaches to the lowest hell; The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; His erring child He reconciled, And pardoned from His sin. Oh love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forever more endure, The saints' and an gels' song.”

Third and last, we must praise God because God is the King who reigns over us.

Look at Psalms 47:8 – “God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.” We must praise God because He who sit on the holy throne is “A great King” (v. 2), “the King of all the earth” (v. 7) who reigns over the nations (v. 8). The Bible exhorts us to: “Sing praises to God, sing praises; Sing praises to our King, sing praises” (v. 6). The reason why we, who are Abraham God’s people, are gathered to praise God as King is because the Lord our God is protecting us. Look at verse 9: “The princes of the people have assembled themselves as the people of the God of Abraham, For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted.”

We are to praise our King and our God with “a skillful psalm” (v. 7). This means that we should praise God with the heart of wisdom that knows God rightly. This is indeed important. The reason is because we aren’t praising God based on the right knowledge of God. There is danger of pleasing ourselves instead of God in emotional praise that isn’t based on the right knowledge of God. We must praise God, our King. I remember the gospel song “I bless You my God the King”: “I will exalt You, My God the King; I will praise Your Name for ever and ever.”

As I was meditating on Psalms chapter 47, it reminded me the hymn “My Life Flows Rich in Love and Grace.” This hymn was wrote and composed by Robert Lowry (1826~1899). This is how the song goes: (v. 1) “My life flows on in endless song; above earth’s lamentation, I catch the sweet, though far off hymn that hails a new creation,” (v. 2) “Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing. It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?” (v. 3) “What though my joys and comforts die? I know my Savior liveth. What though the darkness gather round? Songs in the night he giveth,” (v. 4) “The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing! All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from singing?” and (Refrain) “No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that Rock I’m clinging. Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?” As I read the part of this song “My life flows on in endless song”, I thought that our praise and our lives cannot be cut off or be separated. So let’s praise the Lord Most High who loves us the most and who reigns over us as our King until we have the last breath in this earth.

Enjoying the grace in praising God,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Moses (1): The song of victory

[Exodus 15:1-18]

Do you have a favorite hymn or gospel song? If so, what is the song you love to praise these days? Why do you enjoy singing that praise? For me, I am enjoying praising the Korean hymn, “Face to Face With Christ My Saviour.” When I sing that hymn with the longing hope that I will be able to see the Lord face to face at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, I often experience my heart becoming heaven. Especially when I sing verse 3 and the chorus, I miss the heavenly life that will be with Jesus forever: “What rejoicing in His presence, When are banished grief and pain; When the crooked ways are straightened And the dark things shall be plain. Face to face shall I behold Him, Far be-yond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!” When I sing this song to God, I think of the ancestors of the faith who died first. When I feel that I missed them and I want to meet them again, I long to see Jesus more than before and dwell in Heaven forever. And when I think of the Lord who gave this living hope and the hope and grace of eternal life, I cannot help but to sing praise to Him.

The ultimate reason why we praise God is because we are saved. In other words, the purpose of our salvation is to worship God. Look at Exodus 3:12 – “And He said, “Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain.” The Bible tells us that the purpose of God's raising up Moses and use him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt was for them to serve (worship) God. So God sent Moses to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, saying, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me’” (8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7, 8, 26). In other words, God wanted to save the Israelites from Pharaoh's hand through Moses so that they could worship God. Look at Ephesians 1:4-6: “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” The purpose of God's love for us and chose us in Christ and predestinated us to be children of God is to praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In a word, we who are saved by God's grace and became the children of God, we must praise and worship Him.

The Bible Exodus 15:1-18 is the song that Moses and the sons of Israel sang to the Lord (v. 1) after they experienced the God's grace in saving the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians (14:30) by overthrowing the Egyptians in the midst of the Red Sea (v. 27). In other words, it is the song that concludes the most important historical event, the Exodus, and the finale. It is a song that Moses and the Israelites sang to God as they witnessed the death of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. It is the song of God's victory and salvation in the Red Sea that ended in victory in Pharaoh's confrontation with God. Therefore, we can say that this song of Moses is the song of victory. As we meditate on the Moses' song of victory in three ways, I pray that we will receive the instructions God gives to our church so that we may obey them and glorify God as we sing to God the song of victory like Moses and the Israelites.

First, the song of victory that our church must sing to God is to praise God as He is.

Look at Exodus 15:1b-2a: “...”I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. “The LORD is my strength and song,” The song of victory sung by Moses and the sons

of Israel was the song of confession and acknowledgment of God as He is. They praised God who “is highly exalted” and who is “my strength and song.” Such praise cannot be sung to God without faith. In other words, we cannot offer the song of confessional and acknowledgment of God in our unbelief and in doubt. And we have no choice but to acknowledge that faith in God is a gift of God's grace to us is because even though the Israelites saw the ten plagues that God did in Egypt in the days of the Israelites living in Egypt, God leading them with the pillars of cloud and pillar of fire in the wilderness and so on, they didn't believe in God and continued to complaint to God in unbelief. Then the Israelites saw the Lord who is “a warrior” (v. 3), covered the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen with water in the Red Sea, leaving no one but annihilated them completely (14:28). “When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believe in the Lord and in His servant Moses” (v. 31). With this faith, the Israelites praised God as He is in fear of Him. They sang to the Lord, ‘God is highly exalted and He is my strength and song and He has become my salvation’ (15:1-2). We can find the similar hymn in Psalms 118:14 – “The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation.” This psalmist's song was sung by the Israelites when the Israelites returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem under Ezra's leadership (Wiersbe). At the time, there was the sound of joyful shouting and the sound of salvation (or the sound of victory) in the tents of the righteous, the Israelites (v. 15). After all, God delivered the Israelites from the hands of the heathen nations, whether Egypt or Babylon, so that they could witness the power and glory of God. And as a result, the Israelites by faith sang the song of salvation or the song of victory which acknowledged that God is God.

We are God's people saved by God's grace. God has forgiven us our sins by His death and resurrection because He gave His only begotten Son Jesus on the cross and called us righteous. In short, God saved us through Jesus Christ. We who receive this gracious gift of salvation, what is our duty? It is to praise God. We should lift up the confessional praise by faith that acknowledge God as He is (His being) with gratitude and gladness. I hope and pray that as we meditate more deeply on the cross of Jesus and give thanks to God for the grace of His salvation, we may offer the joyful praise to our God of salvation and our Lord of victory. I hope and pray that we may sing praises to our Almighty God, God our strength and God of salvation who delivered us from all sins. I pray that we all praise the Lord's greatness, and the sound of triumphant song among us may become louder and louder.

Second, the song of victory that our church must sing to God is to praise what God has done.

As we read the Old Testament, there are times when we see a duel between God of Israel and the Gentile gods. An example is the battle between Elijah and the Baal prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18). In the battle, the duel was about whether the God of Israel is the true God or the gods of the Baal prophets is? As we know, the result was that the God of Elijah, the God of Israel, is the true God. But about five centuries earlier, in Egypt, there was a duel between the God of the slave Hebrews and the polygods served by the great empire Egyptians who commanded the world. And that duel was the ten plagues that Moses did before the king of Egypt before Moses and the Israelites came out of Egypt. The background of those ten plagues was intended to disable the gods of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, while demonstrating that only God of Israel was genuine (Exod. Chps. 7-12). For example, the first plague, turning the Nile into blood, was the incapacitation of the Nile guardian god, Khnum, whom the Egyptians served. The second plague was the frogs disaster that caused the entire Egyptians to suffer. This was striking the frog-headed god Heqt. The third plague was all the dust of the earth became gnats and it was striking the god of the earth Sep. From the fourth to the tenth plague, God plagued Pharaoh king of Egypt and the Egyptians through Moses, so the gods they were serving were Hatkok, the god of insects (fourth plague), Apis, the god of fertility (fifth plague), Imhotep, the medical god (sixth plague), Nut, the god of sky (seventh plague), Seth, the grain guardian god (eighth plague), Re, the sun god (ninth plague), and the tenth is the death plague of the firstborn of all the Egyptians, including the king, and the firstborn of all livestock which was a disaster that neutralized Orisis, the

god that gives life (Internet). In the end, God proved that God is the only true God who lived through Moses by incapacitating the gods of the world's strongest Egyptians.

The song of Moses in Exodus 15 is also a confession that God is the only true God. And Moses and the sons of Israel are praising what the only true God did for His people, the Israelites. In particular, in Exodus 15:4-12, we can see that Moses and the Israelites praising what God had done for them. The content of their praise was that the Lord, "a warrior" (v. 3), sent forth His burning anger (v. 7) and shattered the enemy with His right hand (v. 6). More specifically, Moses and the Israelites praised God the Almighty Creator who casted Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, his chariots and his army into the sea (v. 4) and then blew with His wind (v. 10) and thus the sea covered them (vv. 5, 10). They praised God for His marvelous work in the Red Sea, especially in verse 11: "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" Moses and the Israelites confessed that none of the gods are like the Lord God, and praised the Lord God, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises and working wonders. This confessional praise implies that the God of Israel is the true God and all the Egyptian gods are false.

In praising God, we must praise God, knowing that "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" (Deut. 6:4) In particular, we must praise God, remembering the wonderful and marvelous things God has done. Of those wonderful and marvelous things of God, we must praise God, remembering the great saving grace that He bestowed upon us because He sent His only-begotten Son Jesus to this earth and let Him be crucified. The work of the Lord on that cross was a wonderful and marvelous work of the Lord's victory over Satan, and we are to sing a song of victory to that one and only God. May this triumphant song ring in our church.

Third and last, the song of victory that our church must sing to God is to praise what god will do in the future.

Moses and the Israelites, who witnessed the wonderful and marvelous work of God in the Red Sea, praised God for who He is and what God had done for them. And in Exodus 15:13-18, they praised God for what He would do in the future. What God would do in the future was that after God delivered the Israelites out of Pharaoh's hand and made them triumphant, the Lord led the redeemed people by grace and by His power to the Promised Land that is the land of Canaan. In the process, God promised that the nations would hear the wonderful event of salvation that delivered the Israelites from Egypt and that all the people would tremble. Look at Exodus 15:14-16: "'The peoples have heard, they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.'" Not only did God promise to lead the Israelites and plant them in Jerusalem, the land of Canaan, the land of His inheritance, but also to make it for His dwelling, the sanctuary which His hands had established (v. 17). And the Lord promised to reign over God's people forever and ever (v. 18). This word of promise never ended with God bringing the Israelites to Canaan, the Promised Land. Furthermore, this promise of God was fulfilled when Jesus, who is the true Moses, died on the cross and resurrected for us, the church, and made us the temple of God and reign over us. But this too is not the final fulfillment of God's word of promise. The final fulfillment is that the Lord will come back to us and lead us, the church of the true God, to God's dwelling place, the true New Jerusalem, heaven, where He will reign over us forever. When we think of the Lord's work to be done in the future, we cannot but praise the Lord who will come again. May we all be praying, expecting, and waiting in faith for the wonderful things the Lord will do in the future and sing the song of salvation and of victory to God.

I personally enjoy singing "How Great Thou Art: (v. 1) "O, Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the

universe displayed. (v. 4) “When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!” When my soul praises how great my Savior God is as I think about His second coming, there are times when my heart becomes full and hot tears come out. How can we not praise our Savior God who sent His begotten Son into the earth and crucified Him for us, for our salvation? Let us all sing praises to the Lord our God for His greatness.

Praising the Lord for His greatness,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Moses (2): The song that must not be forgotten

[Deuteronomy 32:1-43]

Do you have a song you will never forget in your lifetime? If so, why have you not forgotten that song? One of the songs I will never forget is Hymn “How Great Thou Art.” When I sing this hymn, it reminds me couple of people and some moments that I will never forget. The couple of people are our church former pastor Andrew Kim and grandma Eul Soo Jang. And I can't forget the moments when they sang this hymn until they died. Our church grandma Eul Soo Jang enjoyed singing this hymn until she died in a nursing home bed. Whenever I visited her at the nursing home, we sang that hymn together. And since this memory remains in my heart, I often remember her whenever I sing that hymn. I remember the moments when Pastor Andres Kim sang that hymn “How Great Thou Art.” For example, when I went to Tijuana, Mexico with him, I remember the moment when Pastor Andrew sang that hymn chorus in Spanish in a nursing home. And when the whole family members gathered at my brother's house on January 1st the New Year before his death, I still remember the moment when Pastor Andrew came out of a room to the living room, even though I am sure it was very hard for him due to last stage of cancer, he sang the hymn “How Great Thou Art.” And even more unforgettable memory that I cannot forget is seeing God's glory and experiencing God's presence when we praised the hymn “How Great Thou Art” at the viewing service of Pastor Andres Kim. It was his last will for me to lead his view service so I had privilege to lead his viewing service. Indeed, it was deeply moving moment rather than sadness and tears. So I can't forget the hymn “How Great Thou Art.”

We have already meditated on the first song of Moses, the song of victory (salvation), found in Exodus 15:1-18. The song of victory was that Moses and the Israelites sang who God is (His Being), what He had done for them and what He was about to do in the future after they witnessed God's salvation (deliverance) of the Israelites by punishing and destroying the king of Egypt Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. When we look at Deuteronomy 32:1-43, we see the second and the last song of Moses. This song was written by Moses before he could not enter Canaan, the Promised Land, and died in the wilderness. God commanded Moses to write this song and teach it to the sons of Israel and put it on their lips (31:19). Why did God command Moses to write this last song and to teach it to the Israelites? What was the purpose? We can think of two things:

- (1) The first purpose was for God to make the Moses' last song to be a witness for God against the sons of Israel.

Look at Deuteronomy 31:19b – “... so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel.” In other words, God gave this last song of Moses to the Israelites before they entered into Canaan, the Promised Land, to be he witness for God against the Israelites because they would sin in the land of Canaan (vv. 19-20). So God commanded Moses to write this song and to teach this song to the Israelites. In a way, God commanded Moses to write this last song and to teach the Israelites so that they might not break the covenant of God and sin against Him. For example, in the hymn “Yield not to Temptation” the verse one goes like this: “Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin, Each victory will help you some other to win;” Aren't we singing this song so that we may not sin against God and to win over temptations? Also, the purpose of this last song of Moses was when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan and when they break

God's covenant and committing sins, they could recognize their sins, repent and turn back to God. For example, the hymn "Pass Me not, O Gentle Savior" verse 1 and the chorus go like this: "Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry; While on others Thou art smiling, Do not pass me by. Savior, Savior, hear my humble cry; While on others Thou art calling, Do not pass me by." Aren't we singing this hymn so that we may repent our sins and turn to God?

(2) The second purpose is for God to make Moses' last song to be a witness before the sons of Israel.

Look at Deuteronomy 31:21a – "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); ..." God already knew that in the land of Canaan where the Israelites would go in, they would play the harlot with the strange gods of the land and would forsake Him and break His covenant with He made with them (v. 16). Then God's anger would be kindled against the Israelites in that day and would let many evils and troubles would come upon them (v. 17). At that time, God caused the Israelites to sing this last song of Moses, which Moses taught them, so that this song would testify before the Israelites as a witness (v. 21). And God wanted the Israelites not to forget this song so that their descendants would not sin against God like their fathers did.

Since God said that this song of Moses "shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants" (v. 21) I named the Moses' second song as "The song that must not be forgotten." Under this heading and based on Deuteronomy 32:1-43, I want to think about the five contents of the song that the Israelites shouldn't forget before entering the land of Canaan, their descendants who entered in to the land of Canaan, as well as we who will enter into the true promise land of Canaan that is Heaven.

First, the content of the song we must not forget is that our God is great, but as God's people we are doing evil to God.

When we look at Deuteronomy 32:1-6, Moses teaches (v. 2) the Israelites who God is (v. 4) and who the Israelites are (vv. 5-6). Look at verse 3: "'For I proclaim the name of the LORD; Ascribe greatness to our God!'" Moses proclaimed the Israelites to praise the greatness of God (v. 3). The great God whom the people of Israel should praise is "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He" (v. 4). In other words, the Israelites must praise the greatness of God because the great God is the Rock, the perfect, the just, the faithful, the just and the righteous and upright. That is why we praise the chorus of the hymn "How Great Thou Art": "Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art!" In contrast to this great God, what about God's people, the Israelites? Look at Deuteronomy 32:5-6: "They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you." Although the God of Israel is the great God and the Rock to the Israelites, and He manifested that He is perfect, His ways are just, He is righteous and upright, the Israelites who praised God had acted corruptly toward God. Moreover, Moses said that when they entered into the land of Canaan, they would continue to act corruptly toward God because they were foolish and unwise people. Although the great God was the Father of the Israelites and the Creator God who created and established them, the Israelites, the foolish and unwise people, paid back God's grace and love with evil. To them, Moses told to proclaim the name of the Lord and ascribe greatness to God (v. 3). And Moses told the Israelites, "Remember the days of old, Consider the years of all generations. Ask your father ..." (v. 7a). What does it mean? It means that the Israelites should look back on their past and remember what did for them in the past so that they may praise God's greatness. And Moses tells

them to ask their father. Moses told the Israelites to ask their first-generation parents who escape from Egypt with Moses and to praise the greatness of God, knowing not only the ten plagues God had sent in Egypt, but also the wonderful works of God until they reached the land of Canaan. Do you understand how Moses is telling the Israelites who were acting corruptly toward God to praise God's greatness?

We must keep in mind that it is entirely God's grace for us to praise the hymn "How Great Thou Art." Although we are foolish and unwise people who keep on sinning against God like the Israelites, God is telling us to praise God's greatness. What is this if not it is God's grace? We who are capricious are privileged to praise God's greatness because of the unwavering love and grace of God. By this grace we must praise God's greatness.

Second, the content of the song we must not forget is that the loving God has chosen us, and that the Shepherd Lord is leading, protecting, and training us in this wilderness-like world.

The reason why we are enjoying the privilege to sing the hymn "How Great Thou Art" and praise His greatness is because God chose us in Christ before the creation (Eph. 1:4). Look at Deuteronomy 32:8-9: "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel. "For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance." What does it mean? It means that the Most High God chose Jacob among many people and nations in this world and made the Israelites His people. Interestingly, according to Pastor John MacArthur, there were 70 nations in Genesis 10 (Gen. 10) and Jacob also had 70 descendants (46:27) (MacArthur). This means that, as Deuteronomy 32:8 says, when the Most High God gave all the nations an inheritance (when they divided the races), He set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the sons of Israel, that is 70. That is why God gave the land as an inheritance to the 70 nations at that time and set the boundaries, leaving enough land for the Israelites to live. Since the Most High God had chosen Jacob, or Israel, out of the 70 nations and made the Israelites as His people, the Israelites should have praised God's greatness.

Do you know why God chose us in Christ before creation, that we would be holy and blameless before God? (Eph. 1:4) What is the purpose that God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself? (v. 5) The Bible Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14 say the purpose as follow: "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (v. 6), "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory" (v. 12), "who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (v. 14). The purpose why God chose us in Christ before creation was to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Therefore, the song we must not forget to sing is the praise of God's glory. Also, the content of the song we must not forget to sing is that the Shepherd Lord is leading, protecting, and strengthening us in this wilderness-like world. Look at Deuteronomy 32:10-12: "He found him in a desert land, And in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, That hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. 'The LORD alone guided him, And there was no foreign god with him.'" The reason why Moses told the Israelites to praise God's greatness was because God led them, protected them, cared for them and guarded them in the wilderness for 40 years as the pupil of His eye. Psalms 121 comes to mind: "He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. ... The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever" (vv. 3-4, 7-8). Because God who keeps Israel does not slumber or sleep but keeps the Israelites as the apple of His eyes (17:8), Moses told the Israelites to praise God. Furthermore, the reason why Moses told the Israelites to praise God was because God trained His beloved Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years just as an eagle trained a young eagle.

Do you know how does the eagle train its young eagle? Dr. Park Yun-sun said three things: (1) The eagle disturbs the nest where the baby eagles live. God led the Israelites out of Egypt and led them through 40 years of suffering in the wilderness in order to lead them to Canaan, the Promised Land. It was because God wanted the Israelites to depend on God alone. The same is true of the Lord's church. The reason why God is disturbing its nest is to make us to depend only on the Lord. (2) The eagle hovering over its young eagle. In other words, the eagle makes its young eagle to fall from the nest and hovers over it in order to protect it. God is also close to the afflicted church and is preparing to help the church to escape the danger. (3) The eagle spreads its wings, receives the falling young eagle, and carries it on its wings. The Lord saves His church in dramatic time (in God's time) when His church is in crisis and adversity. So Moses told the Israelites to praise God's greatness.

Third, the content of the song we must not forget is the fact that we forget God's grace and that God's wrath will come upon us because of our apostasy, and yet we never realize it.

Moses sang that God would lead the Israelites to Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey, where they would grow fat, think and sleek (Deut. 32:13-15). But the problem is that when the Israelites became fat, think, and sleek, they forsook God who made them, and scorned the Rock of salvation (v. 15). Furthermore, the Israelites made God jealous with "strange gods; With abominations" (v. 16), they sacrificed to demons, who weren't God, god whom they had not known, new gods who came lately (v. 17). They neglected the Rock who begot them, and forgot the God who gave them birth (v. 18). As a result, they made God jealousy with what was not God and they provoked God to anger with their idols (vv. 16, 18, 21). Therefore, God would judge them, saying that their enemies would invade Israel and cause them calamity (vv. 23-25). Nevertheless, the Israelites were lacking in counsel and there was no understanding in them (v. 28). They weren't wise so they didn't understand this, that they would discern their future (v. 29). Moses taught this song to the Israelites and made them to sing it. Would you sing this song to God if you were like the Israelites?

This is the part of the lyrics of the song that doesn't make sense. It is understandable that we should sing the first and the second part of the Moses' song that is God's greatness and God's choice, guidance, protection, and training. But it is hard to understand that we, like the Israelites, should sing the third part of the Moses' song that is our ignorance about forgetting God's grace, sinning against God, God's wrath and calamity. In particular, we cannot imagine we are singing to God about our apostasy of faith that is we are leaving God and idolizing matters in this world as we live in this richest nation in the world, America, and are grown fat, thick, and sleek. As I thought about this, I recalled the parts of the Korean hymns that are about "Repentance." For example, this is how the hymn "One Thing I of the Lord Desire" verse 1 and the chorus go: "One thing I of the Lord desire, For all my path hath miry been, Be it by water or by fire, O make me clean, O make me clean. So wash me, Thou, without, within, Or purge with fire, if that must be, No matter how, if only sin Die out in me, Die out in me." When we praise this hymn to God, aren't we praising God in humility and confessing that what we have done to God is only sinning against Him? Of course, we do so by God's grace because we want to repent our sins and return to God for forgiveness. But how would we respond if we were to sing not only the song that acknowledges our sins, but also the wrath of God and the calamity we will receive, as Deuteronomy 32:15-33 says? So this second and final song of Moses is not popular to us. In other words, even though we like the Moses' first song, which was the song of victory (salvation), it's hard for us to like the Moses' second song when we think about this part of the second song. There may even be some of us who may hate this part of the Moses' song. When I was meditating on this part of the song, I asked this question: 'Why did God command Moses to teach this song to the Israelites and to make them to sing this song?' What do you think the answer is? I think the purpose was not only to help the Israelites to realize their sins against God in the wilderness, but also to avoid committing the same sins against God in the land of Canaan where the milk and honey flowed. Nevertheless God knew that when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, they would commit the sins of idol worship and of apostasy. Nevertheless, God wanted this song to be sung by the

Israelites because God wanted them to recognize their sins even after entering the land of Canaan and commit sins against God so that they might repent and return to God and obey the Word of God. Think about it. When we sing the “Repentance” hymns to God, will we not realize and acknowledge what our sins are? And will we not praise God with a heart that desires to return to God with a repentant heart? We are to sing songs to God that are about confessing our sins and repentance. We must never forget to sing songs of confessing our sins and repentance.

Fourth, the content of the song we must not forget is the fact that God removes all our powers and leaves us free from all idols and sins, and after that God judges our enemies. .

God said that in His anger, He would send calamity upon the Israelites who would enter the land of Canaan and would serve idols and commit sins against God. In other words, God told the sinful Israelites that their enemies would invade them so that they would be helpless through their calamity (v. 35). After doing so, God would have compassion on the Israelites who were suffering (v. 36) and would let them realize that the foreign idols they served were in vain and useless (vv. 37-38). Therefore, God would let them know that there is no god beside God of Israel (v. 39) and He would judge the enemies of Israel whom He hated (vv. 40-42). Moses taught the Israelites to sing this fact.

This is how the hymn “Hover O’er me, Holy Spirit” verse 3 and the hymn “Jesus, My Lord to Thee I Cry” verse 3 go: (v. 3) “I am weakness, full of weakness, At Thy sacred feet I bow; Blest, divine, eternal Spirit, Fill with pow’r, and fill me now,” “No preparation can I make, My best resolves I only break, Yet save me for Thine own name’s sake, And take me as I am.” When we offer these praises to God, aren’t we praising God as we acknowledge our weaknesses and depend on God more? Especially when we encounter difficulties and adversity in our lives, I think it is often the case that we give these praises to God when we try to overcome them through our own strength but get exhausted. I often feel this helplessness personally. Especially when I realize my own weakness in my battles with my own sins, I praise the hymn “Jesus, My Lord to Thee I Cry” verse 3 – “No preparation can I make, My best resolves I only break, Yet save me for Thine own name’s sake, And take me as I am.” And when I experience my victory over my sins with the grace and strength that God gives me, I am glad and grateful to praise God. In Deuteronomy 32, God promised to make the Israelites, who would commit sins when they would enter the land of Canaan, not only to rely on God, but to deliver them from all idols and sins, and to judge their enemies and He actually fulfilled that promise. Then the Bible says that the Israelites or their enemies will realize this truth. What truth would they realize? Look at Deuteronomy 32:39 – “See now that I, I am He, And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life I have wounded and it is I who heal, And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.” Moses said that the Israelites and their enemies would all realize that God is the only God and that the only true God could put to death and gave life, had wounded and healed it. Moses told the Israelites to sing this. The Bible tells us to praise God who makes us to rely on Him alone, God who sets us free from all sin, and God who judges our enemies.

We must praise God. We must not forget to praise the faithful God who makes us helpless and makes us to rely on God alone. We must praise God of salvation who not only make us to depend on Him but also to deliver us from all sin and frees us from all idols and sins. And we must not forget to praise the holy and just God who will judge our enemies.

Fifth and last, the content of the song we must not forget is the fact that we must rejoice because God has judged our enemies and has atoned us and the church.

Look at Deuteronomy 32:43 – “Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people.” In this verse,

Moses taught the Israelites the last song they must not forget to sing when they enter into the land of Canaan before he died. It is a promise that the God will atone for His land and His people because He will avenge the blood of His servants and would render vengeance on His adversaries. Here, the point we should address is that God judges the enemies of the Israelites not only to let them know that Israel God is the true God and the only God, but also that God will put to death and will give life (v. 39). Furthermore, God is the God who let the Israelites know that He is the true Savior, who loves and saves the chosen Israelites by judging the enemies of the Israelites. The God of salvation made atonement for His land and His people with the blood of His servants, and this fact points to the Messiah, the servant of God, Jesus Christ who shed His blood and died on the cross for us, the Church in the New Testament, the New Covenant. Jesus, the Lamb of God, didn't atone for us by the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood He have obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12). Therefore, our sins have been washed away. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are forgiven of all our sins and released from the slavery of sin by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and by His precious blood that He shed on the cross. Therefore, we who have been atoned with the precious blood of the Lamb Jesus must not forget the Lord who redeemed us and must not forget to praise Him

Eagerly praying to praise the Lord for His greatness until I die,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb

[Revelation 15:2-4]

We meditated on two songs of Moses from the Bible. In meditating upon the two songs of Moses, we learned three things through Moses' first song, the song of victory (salvation) (Exod. 15:1-18): (1) We praise God as He is (vv. 1-2), (2) We praise what God has done for us (vv. 3-12), and (3) We praise what God will do in the future (vv. 13-18). And through the second song of Moses, the song that should not be forgotten (Deut. 32:1-43), we received five lessons: (1) We must praise God's greatness even though we are doing evil to God (vv. 1-6), (2) We must praise God for choosing us (vv. 8-9) and leading, protecting and training us in this wilderness-like world (vv. 10-12), (3) We must praise God the fact that we forget God's grace and that God's wrath will come upon us (vv.19-27) because of our apostasy (vv. 15-18), and yet we never realize it (vv.28-34), (4) We must praise God the fact that God removes all our powers and leaves us free from all idols and sins (vv. 35-38), and after that God judges our enemies (vv. 39-42) and (5) We must praise God the fact that we must rejoice because God has judged our enemies and has atoned us and the church (v. 43).

We want to meditate on "The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb," based on Revelation 15:2-4. Here "the song of Moses the servant of God" refers to the first song of Moses in Exodus 15:1–18 we have already meditated on. As we meditate on this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, I want to obey the instructions God gives to us. I hope and pray that when our Lord Jesus comes back all of us can ascend to Heaven and sing this "song of Moses, song of the Lamb" together before the throne of God.

The first thing we want to think about is, "Who and where will sing this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb?"

Look at Revelation 15:2 – "And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God." The Bible says that those who will sing this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, are "those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name." Who are these people? They are the last victors who have endured all persecution and tribulation and who have overcome the Satan's antichrist, the "beast", by faith in Jesus (MacArthur). These final victors are God's victorious people whom God will triumph over. God will cause His people to triumph over the antichrist and the idols which the antichrist idolized the man (v. 2) (Park Yun-sun). That is, God will not allow His people to possess the number of the beast, the number of antichrist, "six hundred sixty and six" (13:18), on their right hand or on their forehead (v. 16) and will make sure that His victors will sing "the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb." Good examples of the victors who will sing this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, are Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who comes out in Daniel chapter 3. They were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire (v. 20) because they didn't serve or worship the golden image that the king Nebuchadnezzar had set up (vv. 14, 18). Listen to what they said to King Nebuchadnezzar: "... O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." How precious their faith is? They said that they would not serve or worship the golden image idol even though they would be thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. They believed

that God would deliver them. And they told the king that they would not serve or worship the golden image even if God would not deliver them. See their faith and determination not to commit the sin of idolatry by violating God's commands, even in the midst of persecution and tribulation. These people of faith will be able to sing "the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb." In Revelation 13:15, the Bible says: "And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed." What does this prophecy mean? It means that if we don't worship the idols of the antichrist who idolized the antichrist and man in the future we will be killed. At that time, we should neither bow down nor worship the antichrist and his idols like Daniel's three friends. In other words, we must keep our faith to the end and gain the final victory in the midst of persecution and tribulation. Then we will be able to sing "The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb."

As I meditated on this, I remembered the hymn "On a Hill Far Away" verse 4 and the chorus: (v. 4) "To the old rugged cross I will ever be true, Its shame and reproach gladly bear Then He'll call me some day to my home far away, Where His glory forever I'll share", (chorus) "So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down I will cling to the old rugged cross, And exchange it come day for a crown." Every time when our church three ministries (Korean, English and Hispanic) members have joint worship, we sing this hymn together after the communion. When we sing the verse 4 and the chorus, what is our determination or commitment? Are we determined and devoted always have a rugged cross and be faithful till our death? Do we sing this hymn with the determination and devotion that we will be loyal to the Lord until we receive the final victory and receive the crown of glory? We are God's people who love the Lord's rugged cross. We are the Lord's disciples who live by faith with bearing the cross and willing to be martyred. We are the people of the Holy Spirit who hold the rugged cross to the final victory. The Lord will make us victorious and will cause us to sing "the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb."

Then what does the Bible say about where the victors will sing this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb in the future? In Revelation 15:2, the Bible says that the place we will sing that song is "something like a sea of glass mixed with fire." The victors will stand on "the sea of glass, holding harps of God" and will sing the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb. Where is "the sea of glass"? Look at Revelation 4:6 – "and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind." Based on this word, Pastor John MacArthur said that "the sea of glass" in Revelation 15:2 is the transparent crystal platform or pavement before the heavenly throne of God (MacArthur). What is important here is that the future victorious people of God will sing "The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb" before the God's throne in heaven. Can you imagine that all the saints whom the Lord has saved and has enabled them to be victorious will go to Heaven and will sing the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb before the throne of God? As I meditated on this, I remembered the Korean gospel song "Short stop before eternity": "At the throne of our God we gather And join to praise His holy name Because of His great love, God gave His only son Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our sins On the cross, God poured out His love so freely A stream that flows forevermore to every tribe and tongue All nations join the song Endless praise to salvation's one true Lord To the Lord of all, who's seated on the throne And to the Lamb of God This saving grace belongs To the Lord of all, who's seated on the throne And to the Lamb of God We cry aloud forevermore." With this hope we came up on the holy temple of the Lord and are praising and worshiping God on this holy Sunday, relying on the merits of Jesus who was triumphed on the cross.

The second and last thing we want to think about is, "What is the content of this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb that we will sing before the throne of God in the future. We can summarize it into three.

- (1) The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, praises the almighty power of God.

Look at Revelation 15:3a – “And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty;” In Moses' first song in Exodus 15, which we have already meditated on, God, “a warrior” (v. 3), fought for the Israelites against the Egyptians (14:25) hurled the Pharaoh’s chariots and his army into the sea (15:1, 4) so that the sea covered them (v. 10) and Pharaoh’s entire army had gone into the sea and not even one of them remained (14:28). Thus the Lord saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians (v. 30). So Moses and the people of Israel who experienced God's salvation said, “The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation ...” (15:2) and sang “Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy” (v. 6). Moses and the Israelites, who saw the glory of the power of God who judged the Egyptians with the right hand of God's power and saved the Israelites, sang God's almighty power with fear of God and by faith (14:31). And Moses exhorted the Israelites in his second song, Deuteronomy 32:3: “For I proclaim the name of the LORD; Ascribe greatness to our God!” Therefore, the Israelites, saved by the right hand of God's power, sang of God's greatness. This almighty power of God was not only the power to save Israel, God's people, but also the power to judge the Egyptians, Israel's enemies. Perhaps we are familiar with the power of God's salvation, but are not familiar with the power of God's judgment. But even in the second song of Moses, which we have already meditated on, Deuteronomy 32:40-41, we can see that God's power is the power to judge our enemies: “Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven, And say, as I live forever, If I sharpen My flashing sword, And My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, And I will repay those who hate Me.” What does it mean? It means that God would consider the Israel's enemy who persecuted the God's people as His own enemy (“My adversaries”) and would render vengeance on them with the sword of judgment. The best place to see the power of God's judgment is the cross on Calvary. Heavenly Father poured out all the wrath on Jesus, the only begotten Son who bore all our sins and died on the cross. Why did God do that? He did it to save us. When we consider the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, not only we should praise the power of God's salvation but also the power of God’s judgment. This power of God's salvation and the power of judgment is being prophesied in Revelation 15:2-4 as God judging the Satan's antichrist, the “beast” (Rev. 15:2), enabling the saints to be “victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name” and saving His people. This is the great and marvelous works of God (v. 3). Just as Moses and the Israelites sang the Moses' song, the song of victory, by witnessing the power of God’s salvation and the power of God’s judgment in front of the Red Sea, the Bible prophesies that we the church who witnesses the almighty power of God will sing the song of the Lamb to God. On the day when Jesus comes back, we will ascend to Heaven and will praise the power of the Almighty God who saved us forever.

(2) The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, praises the kingship of God.

Look at Revelation 15: 3b – “... Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!” “O Lord God, the Almighty” is “King of the nations” (v. 3). In other words, the Lord Almighty is the King of all nations who reigns over all the world. This is what Apostle John said in Revelation 11:15-17: “Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.’” What does it mean? It means that the Lord God Almighty is the King who will reign forever and ever, and He is Almighty and He Himself will rule over the kingdom of the Christ, the kingdom of the world, with His great power. In the second half of Revelation 15:3, the Bible says that the way of the Lord God, the Almighty is righteous and true. This is similar to Deuteronomy 32:4, the second song of Moses, which we have already meditated on: “The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.” What does it mean? It means that

the Lord God, King of all nations, not only destroy sins that is His justice of punishment (meaning of the word “righteousness”), but also fulfills every word He promises (meaning of the word “upright”) (Park). This is what Jeremiah 10:10 says: “But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation.” As I meditate on these words, I remember the gospel song “The Lord Reigns”: “The Lord reigns The Lord reigns The Lord reigns Let the earth rejoice Let the earth rejoice Let the earth rejoice Let the people be glad That our God reigns. A fire goes before Him And burns up all His enemies The hills melt like wax At the presence of the Lord At the presence of the Lord. The heavens declare His righteousness The people see His glory For You O Lord are exalted Over all the earth Over all the earth. Our God reigns Our God reigns.” The Lord God of all nations is just and angry with sinners who practice injustice and judges them. He is also true who fulfills His promise to the saints who are called righteous by bringing completion to their salvation. Because of that completion of our salvation, we will come before the throne of the glory of the God of heaven. And we will sing the kingship of God and sing this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, “Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!” (Rev. 15:3b)

(3) The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, praises the holiness of God.

Look at Revelation 15:4 – “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.” The Bible says that in view of the great and marvelous work of God Almighty and the righteous and true path of the King of all nations, all people will fear and glorify the Holy God. What is the reason? The reason is because they will know that Satan's antichrist or his idols are false gods and that only the Lord is the holy God. Apostle John heard this. Look at Revelation 16:5 – “And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things.” The Holy One, who are and who were, His righteous judgment comes, so that all people will fear Him and glorify Him. In other words, all people will fear and glorify the holy God because the Lord God Almighty, the King of all nations, will judge Satan, his antichrist, and idols to fulfill His salvation for the saints, the people of God. How will they glorify God? All the nations will come and worship before the Lord and will glorify God Almighty, the King of all nations. Let us sing the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty”: (v.1) “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God almighty! Early in the morning Our song shall rise to thee; Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Might-y! God in three Persons, blessed trinity!” (v. 2) “Holy, Holy, Holy! All the saints adore Thee, Casting down their golden crowns around the glass-y sea; Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee, Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be” (v. 3) “.Holy, Holy, Holy! Tho' the darkness hide Thee, Tho' the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see; Only, Thou art Holy! there is none beside Thee, Perfect in pow'r in love, and purity” (v. 4) “Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea; Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty! God-in Three Per-sons, blessed Trinity! Amen.”

Wanting to go to the throne of God with the last victory and sing the power, kingship, and holiness of God,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Balaam (1): Sing our end!

[Numbers 23:7-10]

Have you thought about your death? What song do you want your family members and guests to sing at your funeral? It is the time given to us that doesn't come again when it's gone. So life is not a practice. It is our life that we can't turn it back because we did wrong when we were young. Every day is the last, the end, everything for us. Therefore, it is important to make a good end of time. We need to be good at finishing. The beginning is important for a person, but the end is more important. Breaking up is more important than meeting, and dying is more important than birth (Internet).

When we look at Numbers 23:7-10 we can see the first song of Balaam, a prophet. Among the content of the song, this is how he sang in verse 10b: "...And let my end be like his!" Based on this word, I want to meditate on the first song of Balaam under the title "The song of Balaam (1): Sing Our Ends!" and want to receive the lesson that God gives us.

Before we do that, what we should think about first is who Balaam is. According to Numbers 22:5, the Bible says Balaam is "the son of Beor, at Pethor." His name appears 50 times only in Numbers chapters 22 through 24. In addition to this, his name also appears in the Old Testament Numbers 31:8, 16, Deuteronomy 23:4-5, Joshua 13:22, 24: 9-10, Nehemiah chapter 13 and Micah 6:5. His name also appears in the New Testament in 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11, and Revelation 2:14 (Wood). Looking at all these Bible verses can be a bit confusing. This is because Balaam looks like a true prophet of God in some Bible passages, and he looks like a false prophet in other Bible passages. For example, when we look at Numbers 22:18, Balak the son of Zippor, a king of Moab (v. 4) saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites (v. 2), and the numerous Israelites (v. 3) camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho (v.1) and Moab was in great fear because of the Israelites (v. 3). So the king of Moab Balak tried to invite Balaam so that Balaam could curse the Israelites for him (v. 6). But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak whom Balak sent to Balaam: "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God" (v. 18; 24:13). When we look at this reply of Balaam, he seems like a true prophet who obeyed God's word. And indeed, Balaam obeys God's word, "... but only the word which I speak to you shall you do" (22:20) and he didn't curse the Israelites as Balak wanted, but he blessed the Israelites at God's command. But if we look at other Bible passages, we cannot but think that this Balaam prophet is a false prophet. For example, in Numbers 22:7, when the king of Moab Balak tried to invite Balaam by sending the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian to Balaam to curse the Israelites, they departed with "the fees for divination in their hands." What is "the fees for divination" here? Isn't it to pay the diviner? Shouldn't we wonder why those elders took the fees for divination to Balaam? Actually the Bible Joshua 13:22 tells us that in the course of the Israelites entering Canaan and killing the Amorites and Midianites, the Balaam also was killed and the Bible says "Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination." Even look at these two passages, Numbers 22:7 and Joshua 13:22, I think it is better suited to say that Balaam was "the diviner"(Josh. 12:22) than a prophet of God. And if we look at the New Testament Bible, we can see that Balaam was not only the diviner but also the one who loved money. Look at 2 Peter 2:15 - "... Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Look also at Jude 11 in the New Testament: "Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah." From these

words we can see that Balaam was the diviner who loved and worked for the wages of unrighteousness. In the midst of that, if we look at Revelation 2:14, we can be sure that Balaam is not a true prophet of God: “But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.” I think the name “Balaam” is right for him. His name means “the destruction of the people” (Internet). Look at these facts, don’t you think it is strange and aren’t you wondering how the holy God even used the false prophet and the diviner Balaam to bless the Israelites three times? What is the reason? The reason is recorded in Numbers 22:12b – “... for they are blessed.” What does it mean? It means that because the Israelites were blessed by God, God didn’t allow Balaam, the false prophet and the diviner, to curse the Israelites even though Balak wanted Balaam to do so. Rather, because God loved the Israelites, He didn’t listen to Balaam, but “turned the curse into a blessing” (Deut. 23:5) and “delivered you (the Israelites) from his (Balaam’s) hand” (Josh. 24:10). Why did God bless and deliver the Israelites like this? How did the Israelites become the blessed ones by God? Look at Genesis 12:1-3: “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’” According to the covenant God made to Abraham, God made the Abraham’s descendants, the Israelites, to be the blessed people by God. Therefore, God didn’t allow Balaam or anyone to curse the blessed people of God, but rather God changed the curse to bless the Israelites.

After all, the first song of Balaam in Numbers 23:7-10 is, in short, a song about the covenant God blessing the Israelites. I want to think about the content of this song in four ways:

First, the content of the song of Balaam teaches that God changes the curse and blesses His people, the Israelites.

Look at Numbers 23:8 – “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?” Now, many people are not only blaming the churches but even cursing them. How should we react to their accusations and curses? When I think of this question, I remember a time when David was cursed by a man named Shimei as he fled from his son Absalom. When King David came to Bahurim, Shimei came out cursing continually as he came (2 Sam. 16:5, 7-8). “Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, ‘Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over now and cut off his head’” (v. 9). But David said, “What have I to do with you, O sons of Zeruiah? If he curses, and if the LORD has told him, ‘Curse David,’ then who shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’ ... Behold, my son who came out from me seeks my life; how much more now this Benjaminite? Let him alone and let him curse, for the LORD has told him. Perhaps the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing this day” (vv. 10-12). How precious is this attitude? When we Christians are even cursed by the people of this world, we should humbly listen to their curses, as David did with faith and hope that “the LORD will look on my affliction and return good to me instead of his cursing” (v. 12). This is because our God is the God who turns the worldly people’s curse into a blessing for us.

In Numbers 23:7, Balaam took up his discourse and said, “From Aram Balak has brought me, Moab’s king from the mountains of the East, ‘Come curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!’” The reason was because Moab was in great fear of the numerous people of Israel (22:3). So the Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel (v. 3). That was why Balak sent messengers to bring Balaam so that Balaam could curse the Israelites so that Balak might be able to defeat the Israelites and drive them out of the land (v. 6). But what is interesting here is that the king of Moab and the Moabites didn’t have to fear Israel. The reason is because God has already established a policy to prevent Israel from harming Moab (Park). Look at Deuteronomy 2:9 – “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.’” But because Balak didn’t know this, he brought the diviner Balaam in

great fear so that Balaam could curse the Israelites in order to drive them out of the land. What did God do to this Balak's plan? What did God do to the Balak's plan to call Balaam and curse the Israelites? Look at Deuteronomy 23:5 – “Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you.” God didn't listen to Balaam, but turned the curse into a blessing for Israel. What was the reason? The reason was because God loved Israel.

This is it. God is a God who loves us so He turns the curse into the blessing for us. In other words, no matter how fiercely the people of this world blame and curse the church, God changes them to bless the church. As I meditate on this fact, I remember what Joseph said his brothers: “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Gen. 50:20). Joseph, whom God loved and was with, even though he was about to be killed by his brothers, God changed it to good and exalted Joseph in Egypt and saved the lives of Jacob and of his descendants. Look also the book of Esther. Didn't God deliver His people, the Jews, from their adversary general Haman and change their sorrows into gladness, and their mourning into a holiday? (Est. 9:22) Like this, God is God who turns our sorrows and mourning into joy and gladness. Our God poured out all the wrath that we ought to receive upon Jesus, the only-begotten Son on the cross, and forgave us all our sins. Therefore, the Bible says that we, who are forgiven of our sins and are credited righteousness by God, are the blessed people (Rom. 4:6). Therefore, we have no choice but to sing hymn “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” to God: (v. 1) “Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, Mount of God's unchanging love.”

Second, the content of the song of Balaam teaches that God has distinguished the God's people Israel from this world.

Look at Numbers 23:9 – “As I see him from the top of the rocks, And I look at him from the hills; Behold, a people who dwells apart, And will not be reckoned among the nations.” When Balaam looked upon the Israelites encamped on the plain of Moab from the top of the rocks where Balak king of Moab took him (22:1), Balaam said, “a people who dwells apart.” Here, the phrase “a people who dwells apart” means that the Israelites who were blessed (v. 12) lived apart from other nations but were safe and secured in the future (Cole). That's why Balaam said they “will not be reckoned among the nations” (23:9). What is the reason? The reason is that the Israelites are the God's distinct people. The children of Israel are the special nation of God who believe and trust only God who loves them and chose them. Look at Deuteronomy 26:18-19: “The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken.” What does it mean? It means that the Israelites are God's precious people. Also, the Bible says that they are “a people holy to the Lord”, that is God's holy people (14:2). In the second song of Moses, Moses and the Israelites sang “For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance” (32:9). What does it mean? It means that because God loved the Israelites He chose them and made them His people, found them in the desert, encircled them, cared for them and guarded them as the pupil of His eye (v. 10).

Likewise, God is now protecting and guarding us whom He bought with precious blood of Jesus Christ, whom He forgave our sins and called us righteous, without sleeping or slumbering (Ps. 121). Also, He who loves us and has saved the chosen people of God and made us His holy children is interceding for us who are separated. Look at John 17:9 – “I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours.” The Bible says that Jesus' intercession is certainly not for this world but for those whom God have given to Jesus out of the world (v. 6). Who are the people set apart from the world? Who are those people given to Jesus out of this world? It is the church that was bought with the blood of Jesus. It is the church

blessed by God and the saints whom God has made God's holy people apart from the world. Therefore, we can sing the hymn "Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken" verse 3: "Savior, if of Zion's city I though grace a member am, Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in that name. Fading is the worldlings pleasure, All his vaunted pomp and show; Solid joys and lasting treasure Only Zion's children know. Amen."

Third, the content of the song of Balaam teaches that God made His people Israel like dust in the earth.

Look at Numbers 23:10a: "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number the fourth part of Israel? ..." The word "count the dust of Jacob" is an Eastern hyperbole that indicates that Jacob's descendants represent an enormous population (MacArthur). Of those large populations, Balaam saw only one quarter of Israel's population. The reason was because when the Israelites were encamped on the plains of Moab, they were encamped in four parts, centered on the tabernacle (Num. 2), so Balaam only saw the Israelites who were in one of those four camps (Park). Nevertheless, when Balaam said who could count numerous people of Israel, who was like the dust of Jacob, it means that if he couldn't count the one-fourth of Israel's population, then he certainly couldn't count the total number of the Israelites' population. This is the fulfillment of the word of promise given to the first Adam by the covenant God. Look at Genesis 13:16 – "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered." What does it mean? It means that if a man can count the dust of the earth, the Israelites who are God's descendants can also be counted. But as we know dust can't be counted. In other words, God promised to make the Israelites so numerous that they couldn't be counted as they couldn't count the dust. In fulfilling this word of God, in Exodus 1:12, the more the Israelites afflicted, the more they multiplied and more they spread out. So in Exodus 1:7 the Bible says, "But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them." How amazing is the work of the covenant God? God, who fulfilled His promise, multiplied and spread out the children of Israel in the midst of affliction, despite the death of Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation (v. 6). In Numbers 23, Balaam saw in part how this word of God's promise was fulfilled. And he sang "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number the fourth part of Israel?" (Num. 23:10a). As I meditated on this Balaam song, I remembered the gospel song "As The Water Cover The Sea": "God would not break, Until all the nations of the world will be saved. Now, Embracing the heart of the Lord, and Let's get up to follow the Lord! God calls us all the time. Because all the people of the world to be able to see the glory of the Lord. So Lord!.. Let me serve the Lord, while Healing the world, For the use of the Lord's hands and feet. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea! As the waters cover the sea, As the waters cover the sea! On that day, All the nations will see that The glory of the Lord filled the world! And we will be heard! what A shout of victory filled the whole world!" Can you imagine that on the day when the Lord comes back to the earth, all God's people who are spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south (Gen. 28:14) gather together and sing the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb before the throne of God as we all see and acknowledge the glory of God?

Fourth and last, the content of the song of Balaam is that Balaam wanted the death (the end) of the upright like the blessed people of God, the Israelites.

Look at Numbers 23:10b – "... Let me die the death of the upright, And let my end be like his!" The Israelites who were encamped in the plains of Moab (22:1) dwelled apart (23:9). And when Balak, king of Moab, saw them, they covered the surface of the land (22:5). Balaam saw only the fourth part of Israel who couldn't be counted like the dust (23:10) and knew that they were blessed people of God (22:12). So he wanted to be one of those blessed people of God like the Israelites. In addition, Balaam wanted his descendants to be blessed by God like the Israelites and to enjoy safety and peace (Cole). That was why he sang, "Let me die the death of the upright, And let my end be like his!" (23:10) But in Number 25, Balaam advised the Moab leaders to overthrow Israel by

idolatry and fornication. As a result, the Israelites played the harlot with the Moabite women, and they further worshiped the idol of Baal in the place of Baal of Peor (25:1-2) (Cole). That is why Apostle John said in Revelation 2:14, "... Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality." Although Balaam the son of Beor saw the blessed Israelites and wanted to die, to end like them (Num. 23:9-10), he caused the Israelites to play the harlot with the Moabite women and to trespass against the Lord by committing the sin of idolatry (31:16). As a result, he was killed with the five kings of Midian (v. 8). Although Balaam wanted his end to be like the death of the upright (23:10), he caused the Israelites to forsake the right way and to go astray because he loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:25).

What kind of death do you want to face? How do you want to end your life? Don't we all want to end like the end of the upright? Then we, who are justified by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ by the love and grace of God, must not walk in the path of Balaam, the son of Beor (v. 15). We must not rush for profit into Balaam's error (Jud. 11). Like Balaam, we say with our lips, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God" (Num. 22:18; 24:13) our hearts love the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15). If we love the Lord only with our lips and if our hearts love the wages of unrighteousness, then we will not only destroy ourselves like Balaam, but our families and even our churches. Therefore, we must walk the right path of Calvary which Jesus walked and not the crooked path of Balaam. Although we must deny ourselves and bear our own cross in walking the right path of the cross of Jesus Christ and pass through the rugged and even the gloomy valley of death, we must walk faithfully along the way as we think about our Lord Jesus Christ who loves us and died on the cross to forgive our sins and to give us eternal life. Therefore, I hope and pray that we may be able to praise the hymn "More Love to Thee, O Christ" verse 3 to God: "Then shall my latest breath Whisper Thy praise; This be the parting cry My heart shall raise. This still its prayer shall be: More love, O Christ, to Thee, More love to Thee, More love to Thee! A-men."

Longing to praise God until I die,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Balaam (2): Sing the irrevocable blessing of God!

[Numbers 23: 18-24]

What do you think blessing is? The Korean culture is really a culture of blessing, and Korean life is life of wishing and doing whatever you can to receive blessing. The characteristics of Korean culture are sometimes expressed in terms of life and longevity and happiness. That's why they put the word "Bok"(which means "Blessing") on the handle of the house door, the doorknob, the silver spoon, the pattern, the pillow, the cushion, the rice bowl and so on. Even if they are looking for a vacancy, they will find "Bok-dok-bang" (which means "Real estate agency" but the word "Bok" refers to "Blessing") where they want to be blessed. Also the Koreans five blessings: (1) Blessing of long life, (2) Blessing of fortune, (3) Blessing of peace, (4) Blessing of virtue and (5) Blessing of natural death (Internet). In examining the blessings of the Old Testament Law, Poetry, and Prophecy, it is true that in many cases, the blessings are manifested on the surface of earthly prosperity, wealth, honor, longevity, and descendants, so that the physical, material, and temporal aspects appear to be highlighted. But when we look at the New Testament, we can see that the blessings of the New Testament are inward, mental, spiritual, future-oriented and they are eschatological. Especially we can know that suffering for Christ's righteousness and for the future resurrection and eternal life are blessings (Internet). In conclusion, there are two major blessings in the New and Old Testament. It is, firstly, the afterlife and spiritual blessings that are emerging in the foreground, and secondly, the realistic and visible blessings that can naturally follow in the dimension of God's grace in pursuit of spiritual devotion (Internet). If there is difference, the blessings of the Old Testament are very conditional as blessings that come from obeying and keeping God's Word, while the New Testament blessings emphasize spiritual blessings in addition to material blessings because of Jesus Christ. Here, we can also see often referring to the blessings of those who suffer for righteousness. For example, look at Matthew 5:10-12: "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Are we really longing for the blessings of those who suffer for righteousness?

In Numbers 23:18-24, we see the second song of Balaam. Among the content of the song, this is what verse 20 says, "Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it." Based on this word, I want to think about three things about the second song of Balaam, under the title "The song of Balaam (2): Sing the irrevocable blessing of God!" and receive the grace that God gives us.

First, the second song of Balaam sings the truth of God.

Look at Numbers 23:19 – "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" This verse is one of my personal favorite Bible verse. The reason is because this word of God makes me to look and to trust in my faithful God who faithfully fulfills His promises to me. Especially when I am weak and discouraged looking at myself and my environment, the Spirit restore my soul and encourages my heart whenever I meditate on this words and apply to myself like this: 'Since my God doesn't lie and change His mind, He will surely fulfill the promise that He gave me.' And when I meditate on Numbers 23:19, the Bible passage that the Holy Spirit often reminds me of is 2 Timothy 2:13 – "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." Although I know that I must hold

onto the God's promise word that He gave me and must live faithfully, I often doubt about God in unbelief and live unfaithfully. At that time, when the indwelling Holy Spirit reminds me Numbers 23:19 and 2 Timothy 2:13, I get encouraged and strengthened by the fact that since God is faithful even though I am unfaithful He cannot deny Himself so He will certainly fulfill His promise to me. The Spirit makes me bold with strength in my soul by enabling me to look upon the faithful God instead of me who is unfaithful (Ps. 138:3). When I meditate on Numbers 23:19, the Holy Spirit also reminds me Isaiah 55:11 – "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." What an encouraging word of God this is. I don't know how powerful this is. How much power and hope does God give us through this word of promises to us that His word doesn't return to God in vain, but will certainly fulfill His will. As I meditate on these words, I gained the faith and assurance that 'My God will faithfully fulfill the word of promise to me.' And the Lord gives me this faith and conviction, not only to comfort and strengthen me, but also to help me to be patient and to endure. The reason is because God gives me hope of fulfillment of God's word of promise.

In Numbers 23:19, Balaam took up his discourse and said to Balak, king of Moab, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" The reason why Balaam said this to Balak was because Balaam wanted Balak to know that God who promised to bless the Israelites, whom Balak wanted to curse even though they were the blessed people by God (22:12), was fulfilling that promise to the Israelites. So no matter how Balak tried to curse the Israelites who had been blessed by God, Balaam actually had to bless them (v. 11). And in fact, when we see the first song of Balaam that we have already meditated on (23: 7-10), Balaam knew that the Israelites were the blessed people when he saw only the fourth part of Israel whom God loved and chose and distinguished and multiplied like the dust. That was why Balaam had to bless the Israelites (v. 11). When Balak saw that Balaam blessing the Israelites, this was what he said to Balaam: "Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have actually blessed them!" (v. 11) This was how Balaam replied: "Must I not be careful to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?" (v. 12) Balaam had no choice but to deliver the word that God had put in his mouth. And that was what he confessed to Balak. So Balak took Balaam to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah (v. 14). The reason was because Balak wanted Balaam to see not all the Israelites but to see only the extreme end of them and curse them for him from there (v. 13). So Balak built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar (v. 14). And Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering while I myself meet the LORD over there" (v. 15). "Then the LORD met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, 'Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak'" (v. 16). Then Balaam wrote a song and said to Balak, the first part of the song is Number 23:19, which was singing the truth of God. Why did God let the king of Moab, Balak, who wanted to curse the blessed Israelites through unfaithful Balaam, to listen to this song of Balaam that praised the truth (faithfulness) of God? I think the reason is because God gave notice to Balak, who wanted to defeat the God's blessed people, the Israelites, by cursing them through Balaam, that Balak not only could defeat the Israelites whom God loved and chose but also Balaam couldn't curse them because they were blessed people of God. Also, I think God wanted both the false king Balak and the false prophet Balaam to know that they would be defeated by God and would receive God's punishment. The reason why I think this way is because truthful God is not only faithful in saving His people but also in judging the enemies of His people who opposed the Israelites.

As we are told in Hebrews 10:23, we must hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering because our God who promised is faithful. We must believe in the faithful Lord. And we must hold fast to the hope that the faithful Lord will faithfully fulfill the promise He has given us. Let us sing hymn "Great is Thy Faithfulness": (v. 1) "Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, They fail not As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be," (v. 2) "Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, Sun, moon and stars in their courses above, Join with all nature in manifold witness To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love," (v. 3) "Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide; Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!"

(chorus) “Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!”

Second, the second song of Balaam sings the God's unchangeability.

Look at Numbers 23:20 – “Behold, I have received a command to bless; When He has blessed, then I cannot revoke it.” The Bible teaches that God is unchangeable. God is forever same in His divinity and in His perfection, always in the same in His purpose and His promise (Internet). For example, look at James 1:17 – “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” What does it mean? It means that Heavenly Father does not change. Unlike “the shadow cast” (2 Kgs. 20:11; Isa. 38: 8), God is unchangeable like the light that shining the light at the exact middle of the shadow cast continually so that there is no movement of the clock hand and no shifting shadow (Internet). So in Malachi 3:6, the last book of the Old Testament, the Bible says “For I, the Lord, do not change” And even in the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews said “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). This unchanging God came to Balaam and gave him a word in his mouth (Num. 23:16). And Balaam sang the song to Balak “I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it.”

What lesson can we learn from this? It was God’s will to bless the Israelites and gave them the word of blessing, and no one can reverse the will of God. The unchangeableness of the divine purposes is a necessary consequence of the unchangeableness of the divine nature (Keil). Thus, the writer of Hebrews also said in Hebrews 6:17 – “In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath.” What does it mean? God who made the promise to Abraham (v. 13) “I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you” (v. 14), interposed with an oath in order to fully manifest that it was God’s unchangeable will. And God swore by Himself because He could swear by no one greater (v. 13). Won’t true and faithful God fulfill his oath? The promise of the faithful and unchanging God is to give us His only-begotten Son, Jesus which is far better promise than God promised to bless Abraham. And God fulfilled that promise about 2,000 years ago. In fulfillment, God shed His only-begotten Son Jesus on the cross to cleanse and forgive all our sins. And God has regenerated us to receive Jesus Christ as my Savior and gave us precious faith to believe in Jesus Christ. Therefore, God has given us eternal life and eternal hope. Now the word of God's promise to the church that isn’t fulfilled is the second coming of Jesus. Jesus will come for sure. This is an unchangeable truth. The promise of Jesus' second coming that God swore to Himself will surely come true. Jesus will come back to this earth and will take us our true home, Heaven. Therefore, we can praise “Let us Sing of His Love” to God in faith: (v. 1) “Let us sing of His love once again Of the love that can never decay, Of the blood of the Lamb that was slain, Till we praise Him again in that day,” (v. 2) “There is cleansing and healing for all Who will wash in the life-giving flood; There is perfect deliv-rance and joy To be had in this world through the blood,” (v. 3) “Then we'll march in His name till we come, At His bidding to cease from the fight; And our Savior shall welcome us home To the mansions of glory and light,” (v. 4) “So with banners unfurl'd to the breeze, Then our mot-to shall "Holiness" be, Till the crown from His hand we shall seize, And the King in His glory we see,” (chorus) “I believe Jesus saves And His blood makes me whiter than snow I believe Jesus saves And His blood makes me whiter than snow.”

Third and last, the second song of Balaam sings the blessing of Israel.

From Numbers 23:21 and on, Balaam sang the blessing of Israel in three ways:

(1) The blessing of Israel is that they are forgiven.

Look at Numbers 23:21a – “He has not observed misfortune in Jacob; Nor has He seen trouble in Israel”

The reason why God didn't see misfortune and trouble of the Israelites, whom God loves and chose, was because when they repented their sins God forgave their sins. Those who have been forgiven by God are blessed by God. Look at Romans 4:6-8: "just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 'BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.'" Since the Lord doesn't take into account of our sins, we are truly blessed in the sight of God (v. 8). We are truly blessed by God because our lawless deeds and our sins has been forgiven and covered (v. 7). Since our sins are washed away and are forgiven because Jesus died on the cross and shed His precious blood, we are truly blessed by God. This reminds me the hymn "Everything is Changed": (v. 1) "Ev-'rything is changed since my sins were forgiven, Ev-'rything is changed since I knew the Lord; Now my feet are walking the path-way to heaven; All the guilty past now is under the blood," (v. 2) "Ev-'ry-thing is changed, to God's name be the glory! Light instead of darkness fills my soul; Ev-'ry-thing is changed, 'tis the blessed old story; Trusting Christ I'm now ev-'ry whit made whole," (v. 3) "Ev-'ry-thing is changed since the Spirit possessed me, Since He filled my heart with the Savior's love, Since He took away all the fears that distressed me, Helped me set my heart on the things above," (chorus) "Ev-'rything is changed, praise the Lord! Now I am redeemed thro' the blood: Free from condemnation, God is my Salvation, Ev-'rything is changed, praise the Lord!"

(2) The blessing of Israel is the blessing of having God as King.

Look at Numbers 23:21b – "... The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them." At that time, the Israelites had no king like the Gentile nations. The reason was because God, who loved them, chose them, set them apart, and made them His special people, was their King. And God, the King of Israel, is the God of warrior (Exod. 15:3) who fights for the Israelites and wins the war. God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt and his army with power and won the battle against not only the king of Egypt but also all the gods of Egypt (Num. 23:22). This reminds us "The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb," which we have already meditated on in Revelation 15:3. If you look at it, the Bible tells us that when Jesus comes again, we will transform suddenly, wear glorious spiritual bodies and go to the throne of God, and praise the kingship of God. The Lord God Almighty is the King who will reign forever and ever, and He is the King of kings who is Almighty and Himself who rules the kingdom of Christ with great power. The Lord God of all nations is just and angry with sinners who do injustice and judges them. But He is God of truth who fulfills salvation as promised to the saints who are called and justified. Because of that completion salvation, we will come before the throne of the glory of the God in Heaven. And we will sing the kingship of God and sing this song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, "Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!" (Rev. 15:3)

(3) The blessing of Israel is that they are protected by Almighty God.

Look at Numbers 23:23 – "For there is no omen against Jacob, Nor is there any divination against Israel; At the proper time it shall be said to Jacob And to Israel, what God has done!" Here, what is the diviner Balaam singing? Isn't he singing that the God of Israel protects the Israelites from any divination or fortunetelling by a diviner like him? Balaam is singing that the king of God will reign over the Israelites and the mighty God will fight for them, and the Israelites will triumph and be protected by God. Therefore Balaam sang in Number 23:24 as follow: "Behold, a people rises like a lioness, And as a lion it lifts itself; It will not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain." What does it mean? It means that Israel will rise like a lion, destroying their enemies completely (cf.: Num. 24:9) (Walvoord).

Therefore, we can praise the hymn “Be not Dismayed Whate’er Betide”: (v. 1) “Be not dismay’d whate’er betide, God will take care of you; Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you,” (v. 2) “Throu’ days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you; When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you,” (v. 3) “All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you; Trust Him and you will be satisfied, God will take care of you,” (v. 4) “No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you; Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you,” (chorus) “God will take care of you, Through ev’ry day, O’er all the way; He will take care of you, God will take care of you. Amen.”

Our God is true and faithful God. He is God who faithfully fulfills His promises to us. Also, our God is unchanging God. He is God who doesn’t turn back the blessings that He has told us to bless nor can He do so. That true and unchangeable God blessed us, and gave us true blessing in Jesus Christ. God forgives all our sins and becomes our King, not only to reign over us but also to protect us. Therefore, we must sing this irrevocable blessing of God.

Had to rely on my faithful God who never changes,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Balaam (3): Sing the beautiful tents!

[Numbers 24:1-9]

It is interesting to see the order of the march in their wilderness and the order of the tabernacle in their settlement as the Israelites leave Egypt and head toward Canaan, the Promised Land (Internet). When they marched in the wilderness, they were divided into four large divisions: (1) The priests who carried the ark marched in front, followed by the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun as the first division. (2) Next, the Gershonites and Merarites carried the tabernacle, followed by Reuben, Simeon and Gad as the second division. (3) Next, the Kohathites carried the furniture and all the utensils of the sanctuary, followed by the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, as the third division. (4) Finally, as the fourth division was the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naphtali, who marched. What is interesting here is that when the Israelites marched, the priests who carried the ark marched to the front, and the Levites who carried the tabernacle and the holy things marched between the tribes of Israel. This was to keep the Israelites to live the God-centered and the tabernacle-centered life all the time to maintain godly living and faith in God. And so was the Israelites' march toward Canaan and their camp setting in the wilderness. In other words, they camped three tribes each in four directions: east, west, north, and south, centering on the tabernacle. This is what God instructed the Israelites, and the reason why the 12 tribes encamped centered on the tabernacle from east to west to north and south was because God wanted all the tribes to unite and cooperate by living the God-centered life. The first song of Balaam, which we have already meditated on (Num. 23:7-10), was camping on the plains of Moab, three tribes each in four directions from east to west, north and south (22:1). Balak, king of Moab, took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, and from there Balaam saw part of the Israelites (v. 41). He blessed Israel after seeing only one-fourth of them (23:10). And the Balaam's second song (vv. 18-24) says that the king of Moab Balak took Balaam to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah (v. 14). It is the song that Balaam blessed the Israelites when he saw only part of the Israelites (v. 13).

In Numbers 24:1-9, after the second blessing song of Balaam, the king of Moab Barak led Balaam to another place (23:27), to the top of Peor, the highest place in the country to overlook the wasteland (v. 28). And there, Balak tried to make Balaam to curse the Israelites for himself (v. 27). But Balaam, in the first and second song, saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he didn't resort to sorcery as at other times, but turned his face toward the desert (24:1). "When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him" (v. 2). So Balaam again blessed the Israelites in his third song (v. 10). Interestingly, the Bible says in Numbers 24:1 Balaam didn't resort to sorcery as at other times. This reminds us that Balaam wasn't a true prophet, but a false prophet, a diviner. Although it seems like Balaam was a true prophet by obeying God's word when he said "Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?" (23:26, cf.: 22:38, 23:3, 12), but we can know that he was a false prophet when we see in Numbers 24:1 that "he did not resort to sorcery as at other time." Although Balaam wanted to curse Israel at the request of Balak, God turned the curse into a blessing for the Israelites because the Lord loved them (Deut. 23:5). In other words, God wasn't willing to listen to Balaam so He had to bless the Israelites (Josh. 24:10). Looking at this, Balaam, a false prophet and diviner, didn't bless the Israelites twice because he wanted to obey God's word. Actually he wanted to curse them because he loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15). But God even used such diviner to bless the Israelites by putting a message in his mouth (Num. 23:16). In particular, in the third song of Balaam, "the Spirit of God came upon him" (24:2), which means that God the Holy Spirit controlled and ruled over Balaam and made him to bless the Israel again for the third time. That's why in Numbers 24:4, Balaam said "the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision

from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened.” It means that Balaam couldn’t curse the Israelites according to his desire, but he spoke by being controlled by the Holy Spirit (Park).

If we say this Balaam’s third blessing song in a word, we can say that he sang the beautiful tents of Israel. Look at Numbers 24:5 – “How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel!” I want to meditate on the third song of Balaam in Numbers 24:1-9 under the heading “Sing the beautiful tents!” and think about in three ways what it means to sing the beautiful tents of Israel.

First, singing the beautiful tents of Israel means singing the happiness of Israel.

Look at Numbers 24: 6-7a: “Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters. Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water.” From the top of Beor overlooking the wasteland (23:28), Balaam look out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe and the Spirit of God came upon him (24:2) and sang the happiness of Israel as he sang the beautiful tents of Israel. He sang the Israel’s happiness by singing that Israel was “like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters” (v. 6). Isn’t it interesting and strange that Balaam looked at the Israelites in the wilderness from the top of Beor and sang their beautiful tents were “like gardens beside a river” and “like cedars beside the waters”? How could there be “a river” and “the waters” in the wilderness? But Balaam, who was captured by the Holy Spirit and was singing the beautiful tents of Israel, was singing while watching the river and the waters in the wilderness that couldn’t be seen by his physical eyes.

When I thought about this part of the Balaam’s song, I remembered the Korean gospel song ‘The fountain will overflow in the desert’: (v. 1) ‘The fountain will overflow in the desert. The flower will blossom in the desert and will perfume its aroma. When the kingdom will be reigned by the Lord, then the dessert will become flower garden. The lions will play with the lamb and the children grow together. The Lords’ kingdom of true love and joy will come soon. (v. 2) The forest will grow in the desert. The beautiful birds will sing in the desert. When the Lord’s kingdom comes, the desert will be a paradise. The Lord’s kingdom of true love and joy is coming soon in where the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den and will not get hurt.’ Isn’t it amazing? How can a spring overflow in the desert? How can the desert become a flower garden and a paradise? Isn’t it possible because God who gives water in the desert is with us? Look at Isaiah 48:21 – “They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts He made the water flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock and the water gushed forth.” Balaam, who was captured by the Holy Spirit and sang the beautiful tents of Israel, compared the its tents with gardens beside the river and cedars beside the waters because the water was very important Near East region at that time and he associated the water with happiness (Park). In other words, Balaam saw that God who broke open springs and torrents in the desert was with the Israelites so he sang that they are truly happy people. Why are the Israelites whom God was with truly happy people? Look at Deuteronomy 33:29 – “Blessed are you, O Israel; Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, Who is the shield of your help And the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, And you will tread upon their high places.” The reason why the Israelites are truly happy people is because they are God’s saved people. In God’s deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt through Moses and His leading them to the Promised Land, Canaan through the desert for forty years, God protected and guarded them, as well as He defeated all their enemies as the sword of their glory and gave them victory. In addition, God not only delivered manna from heaven in the wilderness for the Israelites, but also He allowed them to drink water from the rock.

As I meditated on this, I remembered Jesus the Rock. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:4 – “and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” The Bible says that when Jesus Christ, the Rock, was crucified and dying on the cross, one of the Roman soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear (Jn. 19:34). Therefore, whoever believes in the Jesus’ death on the cross is washed away all

the sins by the precious blood of Jesus, received the forgiveness of sins, and justified by those who believe in his resurrection (Rom. 4:25). So the Bible says we are blessed. We are happy people. Look at Romans 4:6-8: "David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.'" The Bible says that we who are forgiven by the blood of Jesus on the cross are blessed. Just as water break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert (Isa. 35:6), God has caused the Lord's congregation in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) who believe in Jesus streams of living water will flow from within them (Jn. 7:38). That is, God has given the life of Jesus, eternal life, to all the saints in the wilderness congregation who received Jesus as their Savior. We, who are forgiven of all sins and receive the grace of God's salvation through the blood of Jesus on the cross, are truly blessed and happy people in God's eyes. And the church, the gathering of such blessed and happy people, is the beautiful tents in God's eyes. Therefore, we must sing the beautiful tents of the church. We must sing the happiness of the church.

Second, singing the beautiful tents of Israel means singing the Israel's exaltation.

Look at Numbers 24:7b-9a: "... And his king shall be higher than Agag, And his kingdom shall be exalted. 'God brings him out of Egypt, He is for him like the horns of the wild ox He will devour the nations who are his adversaries, And will crush their bones in pieces, And shatter them with his arrows. He crouches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him? ...'" From the top of Peor which overlooks the wasteland (23:28), Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe, Balaam was captured by the Holy Spirit (24:2) and sang the beautiful tents of Israel (v. 5), that is the Israel's exaltation (v. 7). In other words, Balaam lifted his eyes and saw Israel dwelling in that tribe by tribe, and sang that God blessed them to make them prosper and flourish their power. That is why he sang in verse 7b, "And his king shall be higher than Agag, And his kingdom shall be exalted." The reason why Balaam sang that the nation of Israel would become stronger than Agag, which was a strong nation at the time, was because God was with Israel. Therefore, God not only brought the Israelites out of Egypt (v. 8), but was also with them to fight against their enemies and to make Israel a great and strong nation. So as Balaam sang the beautiful tents of Israel he described Israel as "the wild ox" and "a lion" (vv. 8-9). These animals symbolize strength (Park).

Isn't it amazing? How could the weak nation of Israel become such a strong nation? The reason is that the great and mighty God was with them, strengthening and exalting them, causing the nations to fear the nation of Israel. To what extent did God make Israel a fearful among the nations, we can see glimpse of it by looking at what a woman named Rahab, who lived in the city of Jericho, said to two men who were sent as spies to the land of Canaan before God destroyed Jericho for the Israelites: "... "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Josh. 2:9-11). The reason why Rahab and the Canaanites' hearts were melted and no courage remained in was because they heard what God, who is in heaven above and on earth beneath, did for the Israelites and that He strengthened them and made the nation of Israel strong by being with them.

I remember the Korean gospel song "Great and mighty is the Lord our God": "Great and mighty is the Lord our God Great and mighty is He, Great and mighty is the Lord our God Great and mighty is He, Lift up your banner, let the anthems ring, praises to our king. Great and mighty is the Lord our God Great and mighty is He." When our great and mighty God is with us the church, I believe that even our weak church in people's eyes will be exalted and strengthened so that we may praise our Lord, King of kings, holding up and waving the banner of victory. No

matter how great an enemy like Goliath we have, we will move forward with faith and conviction like David, "... the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands"(1 Sam. 17:47). Then the Lord our great and mighty God will enable us to be victorious. Until we enter heaven, the land of true promise, I believe that the great and mighty Lord God will be with us, the congregation in the wilderness, and to make us flourish and to strengthen us. Therefore, until we receive the crown of victory, we must sing the beautiful tents of the church, the exaltation of the church.

Third and last, singing the beautiful tents of Israel means singing the blessings of Israel.

Look at Numbers 24:9b – "... Blessed is everyone who blesses you, And cursed is everyone who curses you." What does it mean? It means that as the Israelites are blessed people of God (22:12), whoever they bless they will be blessed and whoever they curse they will be cursed. Although the king of Moab Balak called Balaam, a diviner, to curse the Israelites (23:7) so that he could defeat them and drive them out of the land (v. 6), God turned the curse into a blessing for the Israelites (v. 8; Deut. 23:5). What was the reason? The reason was because God loved the Israelites (Deut. 23:5). Because God loved the Israelites, He wasn't willing to listen to Balaam but He turned the curse into the blessing for the Israelites (v. 5). The reason was that God was faithfully fulfilling His promise to Abraham. Look at Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.'" God prospered the Abraham's descendants as He promised Abraham and made him a great nation and made his name great. And God made Abraham the source of blessing and blessed those who blessed him and cursed those who cursed him.

Our God is the true God. The true God fulfilled the word of promise to Abraham and, through his descendants, sent Jesus on earth to be the source of true blessings. And God gave us all spiritual blessings by causing Jesus to be cursed for us, to be crucified to death, and to be resurrected (Eph. 1:3). And God blessed everyone who blessed us, and cursed everyone who cursed us. Therefore, like Balaam, we too must be captured by the Holy Spirit, and sing the blessings of our church. Let us sing the hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing": (v. 1) "Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by flaming tongues above Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, Mount of God's unchanging love," (v. 2) "Here I raise my Ebenezer Hither by Thy help I'm come And I hope, by Thy good pleasure, Safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wand'ring from the fold of God He, to rescue me from danger, Interposed His precious blood," (v. 3) "O to grace how great a debtor Daily I'm constrained to be Let that grace now, like a fetter, Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love Here's my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above. A-men."

Seeing in faith the happiness, exaltation and blessedness of the church of Christ,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Balaam (4): Sing a star we look at!

[Numbers 24: 10-19]

What are you looking at? Are you looking at Jesus who promised to come again? As I spent last week after the Easter Sunday, the Scripture 1 Corinthians 15:19 came into my mind: “If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.” I thought about if we our hope in Christ is just the life of this world, we are the most to be pitied in the world. This is because our hope isn’t a life in this world but the life of the coming world. But how pity we are if there is no life of the coming world and the life of this world is everything? Why can we praise and worship God in the face of the death of our dear brothers and sisters in Christ? Why can we thank and worship God with gratitude in grief and tears? Isn’t it because we have hope in Christ? When the last trumpet sounds and when Jesus comes back, we will be suddenly transformed and will wear the glorious spiritual body and we will live with Him forever in Heaven. That’s why we can praise and worship God even at our beloved brothers and sisters’ funeral. I yearned for this resurrection hope and hope to live with the Lord forever in the eternal kingdom during the last week.

In the midst of this, I meditated on Balaam's fourth song in Numbers 24:10-19, and in particular came to think of the “A star” in verse 17. I thought about what or who the star God is saying to us through Balaam. Then I remembered “His star” in Matthew 2:2 of the Bible. “His star” refers to the coming of the magi from the east and arrived in Bethlehem when baby Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea about 2,000 years ago. The Bible says that when they saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him who was born King of the Jews (vv. 1-2). At that time, when Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him (v. 3). Like the star that would crush and tear down “all the sons of Sheth” in the Balaam’s song, the Moabites, in Numbers 24:17, King Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled (Mt. 2:3).

Look at Numbers 24:17 – “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.” Based on this word, I want to meditate on Numbers 14:10-19, the fourth song of Balaam, under the heading “The song of Balaam (4): Sing a star we look at!” and receive the lesson that God teaches us.

Look at Numbers 24: 10-11: “Then Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, but behold, you have persisted in blessing them these three times! Therefore, flee to your place now. I said I would honor you greatly, but behold, the LORD has held you back from honor.” The king of Moab Balak was angry. The reason was because Balaam blessed the Israelites three times (v. 10) even though Balak asked Balaam to curse them, his enemies (24:10) who camped in the plains of Moab (22:1) so that he might be able to defeat them (v. 6). Therefore, Balak told Balaam to flee to his place (24:11). Interestingly, however, King Balak said to Balaam that he would honor Balaam greatly, but the Lord had held him back from honor (v. 11). As I think of Balak's words, I came to think of one valuable lesson. The valuable lesson is that we must guard ourselves against being exalted and highly honored by the worldly people, the enemies of God's people. We should only desire our Lord God to exalt us and honor us. We are instructed that we should desire our Lord to exalt us and honor us and not the worldly people. When Balaam heard this, he said to Balak: “Did I not tell your messengers whom you had sent to me, saying, 'Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything contrary to the command of the LORD, either good or bad, of my own accord What the

LORD speaks, that I will speak?” (vv. 12-13) What does it mean? Balaam told King Balak again that when he sent the messengers to him, no matter how much Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could only speak what the Lord told him to speak. In other words, Balaam reminded King Balak that he couldn't speak his own words in violation of God's command. Then Balaam told Balak in verse 14: “And now, behold, I am going to my people; come, and I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the days to come.” What does it mean? Balaam told Balak what the Israelites in the plains of Moab would do to the Moabites, the king Balak's people, in the future. Then Balaam sang the fourth song from verses 14-19.

Look at Numbers 24:15-16: “He took up his discourse and said, “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, And the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, The oracle of him who hears the words of God, And knows the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, yet having his eyes uncovered.” This is what we have already seen in the Balaam's third song, Numbers 24:4. Balaam, whose name means “the destruction of the people,” wanted to curse the Israelites according to his desire, but the Holy Spirit didn't let Balaam to do as his desired, but rather made him to speak what the Lord wanted him to speak (Park). In other words, Balaam, the false prophet and the diviner, wanted to curse the Israelites at the request of King of Moab Balak, but God the Holy Spirit insisted on his lips not to speak as he pleased, but rather to speak blessings three times as God said (vv. 10, 13). Eventually, the Holy Spirit God opened the eyes of Balaam (v. 15), his spiritual eyes, and let him hear the word of God and to have the knowledge of the Most High God and enabled him to see the vision of God (v. 16). The Most High and Almighty God caused Balaam to see God's truth and humbled him (v. 16) to sing this fourth song (Walvoord). Then, what was God's truth that the Lord opened Balaam's eyes to see? Look at verse 17: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; A star shall come forth from Jacob, A scepter shall rise from Israel, And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, And tear down all the sons of Sheth.” The truth of God that He opened the eyes of Balaam's spirit to see was “a star” or “a scepter” that would come forth from Israel in the future, and “He” would destroy the Israel's enemy, the Moabites, “all the sons of Sheth.” Here, the words the “star” and the “scepter” refer to the same thing that is the “king.” The Bible verse about “stars” is found in Isaiah 14: 12-13 in the Old Testament. There Prophet Isaiah described the image of the star as the destruction of the Babylonian king. And the “scepter” is the symbol of royal power (Ps. 45:6) (Matthew) is referred to in Genesis 49:9-10: “Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” This is the verse where Jacob blessed Judah among his children, saying that “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (v. 10). Here, “The scepter” in another word is “the ruler's staff” (v. 10). This refers to the future tribe of Judah David who would be a king over Israel. After all, the “star” and the “scepter” of Israel, which God foretold through Balaam, referred closely to King David (MacDonald). And the Israel's enemy whom the star and the scepter of Israel King David would destroyed is Moab, “all the sons of Sheth” (v. 17) (Walvoord). That is, the God's truth that God had opened the Balaam's spiritual eyes to see was that in the future the star and the scepter of Israel King David would destroy the enemy of Israel Moab and Balaam sang this to Balak. Isn't it interesting to see how God worked in which Balaam, who Balak invited to curse the Israelites in order to defeat them but instead he blessed them and sang the final song to Balak that the future king of Israel would destroy Moab? In the third song of Balaam we have already meditated on (Num. 24:1-9), Balaam, captured by the Holy Spirit and sang the beautiful tents of Israel, sang that Israel would be exalted and be higher than King Agag (v. 7). In other words, what God opened the Balaam's spiritual eyes to see was that in the future God would make the nation Israel stronger and greater and would be with the Israelites so that they would be victorious against their enemies and Balaam sang this. This song is more specifically mentioned in the fourth song of Balaam in Numbers 24:10-19, where Balaam sang the prophetic song that God would establish the king of Israel in the future, and gave him his enemy Edom and Seir (v. 18). And starting from verse 19 and on, God made Balaam to sing the other prophetic songs about that prophecy that God would destroy the enemies of Israel such as “Amalek” (v. 20), “the Kenite” (v. 21) and “Asshur” (vv. 22-24). But the question is, “Does the fulfillment of these Balaam's prophetic songs end with only King David?

This fourth song, which Balaam sang in front of the king of Moab Balak, is, in a word, the star that God opened the Balaam's spiritual eyes to see. Although the "star" (or the "scepter") referred to King David from the tribe of Judah, close to the history of Israel, but ultimately it refers to Jesus Christ, the root and descendant of David. The Bible Revelation 22:16 refers to Jesus Christ as "the Bright Morning Star": "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." When King David of the tribe of Judah reigned over the nation of Israel, the Israel defeated Moab, so the Moabites became servants to David, bringing tribute (2 Sam. 8:2). But Balaam sang not only this prophetic song for David to destroy Moab, but also for the root and the descendant of David Jesus Christ to be victorious over the enemy of the true Israel, that is the church, Satan and death by His death on the cross. Furthermore, the star that Balaam looked and sang refers to Jesus, the bright morning star, who will come again. And when He comes again, He will judge Satan, his idols, and all the enemies of His Church, and will bring consummation of His salvation. What must we do? We must look to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the bright morning star. And we must believe that the Lord Jesus will come again and destroy Satan, all idols, and the enemies of the Church. May we perform valiantly with the assurance of this victory (Num. 24:18).

- (v. 1) "There's a royal banner given for display To the soldiers of the King;
As an ensign fair we lift it up today, While as ransomed ones we sing.
Marching on, marching on, For Christ count everything but loss!
And to crown Him King, Toil and sing 'Neath the banner of the cross!
After praising the hymn "There's a Royal Banner."
- (v. 2) "Thought the foe may rage and gather as the flood, Let the standard be displayed;
And beneath its folds, as soldiers of the Lord, For the truth be not dismayed!
Marching on, marching on, For Christ count everything but loss!
And to crown Him King, Toil and sing 'Neath the banner of the cross!"
- (v. 3) "Over land and sea, wherever man may dwell, Make the glorious tidings known;
Of the crimson banner now the story tell, While the Lord shall claim His own!
Marching on, marching on, For Christ count every-thing but loss!
And to crown Him King, Toil and sing 'Neath the banner of the cross!"
- (v. 4) "When the glory dawns 'tis drawing very near It is hast-'ning day by day;
Then before our King the foe shall disappear, And the cross the world shall sway!
Marching on, marching on, For Christ count everything but loss!
And to crown Him King, Toil and sing 'Neath the banner of the cross!"

(Hymn "There's a Royal Banner")

After singing the hymn "There's a Royal Banner,"

Pastor James Kim

The song of Deborah and Barak: 'Let those who love the Lord be like rising of the sun in its might'

[Judges 5:1-31]

There is a memory in my heart that I cannot forget. There is one morning scene that is unforgettable. I cannot forget the moment I woke up early in Paju in Korea several years ago when I stood alone in a rice field and watched the rising sun crying in tears in singing the gospel song "Heart and Soul." In my memory, at the time, only one woman in the paddy field wore her head towel and was working very hard. I was far away from her and I looked at the mountain and the sky and faced the rising sun and sang this gospel song: "I never want anything in my life to take your place. I never want to live by any other grace. My longing and my heart's desire is to see your face O Lord and become a friend of God. I love you day and night I love you all of life, I love you Lord heart and soul I long to be a friend of God." Don't you desperately want to be a faithful friend of God? Don't you want to love the Lord with all your heart and soul? I confess with my heart and with my lips, "I love you day and night I love you all of life."

While praying for me as a pastor during the past Sunday's service, our church Elder Yoon held onto Daniel 12:3 and prayed: "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." It is my wish and prayer to be a pastor who brings many people back to the Lord by shining the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world. I want to shine the light of Jesus. I want to shine the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ in this dark world. I want to shine the light of the salvation of the Lord in this world. I hope and pray that all of us may be like the brightness of the expanse of heaven and like the stars who shine the light of Jesus Christ forever and ever.

When we look at Judges 5:1-31, we see the song of Deborah, one of the great judges of Israel who shed the light of God's salvation and of "Barak the son of Abinoam" (4:6). This song was sang by Deborah and Barak after they won the battle with God's help against Jabin king of Canaan, who oppressed the sons of Israel severely for 20 years (v. 3), and the commander of his army Sierra (v. 2) who called together all his chariots, 900 iron chariots and all the people who were with him (v. 13). The conclusion of this song is 5:31 - "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD; But let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might." And the land was undisturbed for forty years." In other words, the conclusion of the song of Deborah and Barak asked God for those who love the Lord to be like the rising of the sun. Deborah and Barak plead with God to let the Israelites become like the sun, gradually spreading the light all over the world. Based on this word, under the heading "The song of Deborah and Barak: 'Let those who love the Lord be like rising of the sun in its might'" I want to think about two things.

First of all, I want to think about who are those who love the Lord. We can think about it in three ways:

First, those who love the Lord are those with willing volunteers.

Look at Judges 5:2, 9 – "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves-- praise the LORD! ... My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people.

Praise the LORD!” After victory with God's help in the war against Canaan, Judge Deborah and Barak sang the song and urged the all the Israelites to ‘praise the Lord’ twice (vv. 2, 9). Why did Deborah and Barak exhort all the Israelites to praise God? What was the reason? The reason was because the leaders who lead the Israelites and all the Israelites who follow them were willing to volunteer in the war against the Canaanite commander Sierra and his army. In other words, Deborah and Barak exhorted the Israelites to praise God twice because of those Israel leaders and their followers who fought the battle the God’s war voluntarily. The reason was because God made them to willingly offer themselves to fight the God's war. We can know this because it was impossible, in human perspective, that the Israelites to willingly offer themselves to fight the war against the Canaanites. Imagine that Sierra, the general of king of Canaan Jabin, and his army had 900 chariots of iron (4:3, 13). In contrast, the Israelites had only 40,000 volunteers but they were without a shield or spear (5:8). How could they wage a war against the Canaanites with that number of people who were even without weapons? Nevertheless, the Bible says twice that 40,000 Israelites had willingly offer themselves to fight the battle. What is more interesting is that in Judges 4:6, 14, there were 10,000 Israelites who went with Barak to fight the Canaanite army but in Judges 5:8 the Bible says there were 40,000 Israelites. The number doesn’t match. According to Dr. Park, the so-called “40,000” numbers do not refer to regular soldiers statistically, but to the masses of Israel who were mobilized for the river Kishon war (Park). If this claim is correct, I think the Israelites not only had no weapons for the war but also they had 30,000 civilians, not trained soldiers. In common sense, how can these Israelites fight against the Canaanites and win? In common sense, this is a nonsense war. However, the Israeli leaders and their followers willingly offered themselves and went to war. If this wasn’t what God did to the Israelites, then what was it? To what extent did God make the Israel leaders and their followers to willingly offer themselves to fight the war? The Bible Judges 5:18 says that they risked their very lives. Are we willingly offering ourselves to the Lord even to the point of risking our very lives?

The Christians who willingly offer themselves to fulfill the Lord’s given mission to them are beautiful. This reminds me the gospel song “Mission” verse 1: “I will follow Jesus who has walked This road of suffering water and blood That was shed for us That’s the path I’ve chosen to go Through the mountains or the raging seas To the end of the world I go in peace Giving all of me to the lost and hurt I will gladly answer God’s call. Here I am, Lord send me to the world Father use me as You will Take my heart, my life, my everything Send me and I will go.” Won’t you be willing to offer your lives to the Lord who died on the cross and gave you the gracious gift of eternal life, salvation? Those who love the Lord and who are like the sun when it rises in strength are those who willingly offer themselves to God.

Second, those who love the Lord are those who depend on God's saving power.

Look at Judges 5:4-5: “O LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water. The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel.” Here Deborah and Barak praised God for the leaders of Israel and the people who followed them, who were willing to devote themselves to the war against Sierra, the general of the Canaanite king Jabin, and to praise all the people of Israel. Then in Judges 5:4-5, they praised God's saving act of being with the Israelites and made them to pass through the wilderness in the days of Moses (v. 4) (Park). In particular, Deborah and Barak sang the power of salvation revealed by God in Exodus as they said such words as “the earth shook” (v. 4) and “The mountain quaked” (v. 5). The lesson this gives us is that, like Deborah and Barak, we should look back to the past when we experienced God's salvation and give praise to God because we are grateful for the grace of salvation God has given us in the present. In other words, like Deborah who experienced the grace of God’s salvation through the Israel's leaders and their followers who willingly offered themselves and volunteered to fight and to win the battle against Sierra, the Canaanite king Jabin’s general and thus praised God by also praising the Almighty God’s power of salvation in Exodus, we too should sing the song that glorify God while we are experiencing the grace of salvation in the present and remembering the grace of salvation in the past. The

reason is because our unchanging God, who is the same yesterday and today and forever, is the covenant God and the true and faithful God who has saved us not only in the past but also in the present and in the future. Thus, in Judges 5:4-5, Deborah and Barak first sang the power of God and of salvation, remembering God's salvation grace in the days of Moses, and then in Judges 5:6-8, they sang the song of remembrance, recalling why the Israelites were invaded by Jabin, the Canaanite king, and were oppressed. The reason was because of the sin of idolatry that the Israelites were committing. Look at Judges 5:8 – “When they chose new gods, war came to the city gates, and not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.” Here the phrase “they chose new gods” means the Israelites “once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord” after Ehud died (4:1) and it refers to the sin of worshiping the idols that even their ancestors didn’t know (5:8). As a result, the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin, a king of Canaan” (4:2), and he cruelly oppressed the Israelites for 20 years (v. 3). So the Israelites cried out to the Lord (v. 3), and God raised up Judges Deborah among the Israelites (v. 4). Deborah “sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor” (v. 6). And through Deborah God promised Barak to lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into Barak’s hands (v. 7). Then on the day when God put Canaanite general Sierra into Barak's hands, God went ahead of Barak (v. 14) and defeated Sierra and all his chariots and all his army in front of Barak (v. 15). How was this possible? How could the Israelites have defeated Sierra and his army, the mighty nation of Canaan? Look at Judges 5:20 – “From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.” What does it mean? It means that even things in the heavens fought to defeat Sierra. That is, as there was climatic fluctuation and the sky was clouded and the clouds covered the stars, it was as if the stars were on the battlefield, and the storm that flooded the Gison River caused Sierra's army to drift and completely ruined (Park). Eventually, Creator God who moved the nature, in His providence, was with the Israelites to defeat the numerous Canaanites general Sierra and his army through their dedicated leaders and people by making the river Kishon to sweep them away so that all the Canaanite soldiers and their chariots were destroyed (v. 21). Interestingly, the Canaanites at that time never went to the swampy land with their chariots during the rainy season (Walvoord). This means that when Sierra, his army and their 900 chariots or iron went to the Kishon River, it wasn’t rainy season. Therefore, on the dry land, they seemed to lead many chariots to war against Israel, but with the intervention of the God of Israel, the rain came down from heaven and the Kishon River overflowed, causing the chariots and the army to be swept away and be destroyed. In the end, the God of salvation was with the dedicated and volunteered people of God who loved the Lord and revealed His power of salvation, causing the Israelites to destroy their enemies. What lesson does this teach us? I think there is at least two lessons:

(1) We must know that war belongs to God.

Although Canaanite King Jabin and his general Sierra were thoroughly prepared for war with Israel and had a strong army and weapons, God was with Israel and fought for them, so they had to lose the war. Just as God fought for Israel in the days of Exodus, so that Pharaoh king of Egypt and all his armies and chariots were immersed in the Red Sea, all the troops and chariots of the Canaanite general Sierra were destroyed by God when He made the river Kishon to sweep them away.

(2) We must rely on God's saving power.

We must believe in the faithful covenant God who has given us the grace of salvation in the past can save us in the present. And we must not only sing the grace of God's salvation that we have received in that faith, but also we must be able to praise God by faith that the same God of salvation will deliver us. In the meantime, we must realize why we have this suffering and persecution at the present time as the cause of our sins, and make that suffering and persecution as an opportunity to repent our sins. Therefore, we must

not only be delivered from our crisis, but also from our sins as well. Then we will be able to praise our great God of salvation while truly enjoying freedom from sin and suffering.

Third, those who love the Lord are those who resolved and practice.

Look at Judges 5:15-16: “And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed at his heels; Among the divisions of Reuben There were great resolves of heart. Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben There were great searchings of heart.” After Deborah and Barak experienced God destroying all the Canaanite general Siem and his army and making the Canaanite king Jabin to subdue before the sons of Israel (4:23), they sang the song of victory and praised those Israelites who participated in the Kishon River war and condemned those who didn’t (5:14-18) (Park). The tribes that were praised were Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh, Zebulun, Issachar, and Naphtali. Deborah and Barak especially 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali that Barak was from and the sons of Zebulun (4:6) because they despised their lives even to death (5:18). However, among the tribes of Israel, Reuben, Gilead (the land of the tribe of Gad), and Dan and Asher were condemned for not participating in the war with Canaan (v. 17). The reason was because they didn’t participate in the war and remained in idle (Park). In particular, among the tribes who were condemned, this is what the Bible says about the tribe of Reuben, “... Among the divisions of Reuben There were great resolves of heart. Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben There were great searchings of heart” (vv. 15b-16). What does it mean? Deborah and Barak lamented that the Reubenites, who had many livestock and were shepherding the sheep, lived on many streams and ranches in peace, were great resolves of heart for the battle against the Canaanites but didn’t put it into practice (Park). Interestingly, in Numbers 32:1, the Bible tells us that these Reubenites “had an exceedingly large number of livestock.” So when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, where it was suitable for their livestock (v. 1) they came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar and the leaders of the congregation of Israel (v. 2) and said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession; do not take us across the Jordan” (v. 5). When Moses heard this, he rebuked them, “Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here? “Now why are you discouraging the sons of Israel from crossing over into the land which the LORD has given them?” (vv. 6-7). At this rebuke of Moses, the Reubenites and the Gadites armed after Moses’ command and joined the war in which God drove out their enemies before Him. But in Judges 5, the tribes of Reuben and of Gad didn’t participate in the war against the Canaanite general Siem and his army. In particular, the Reubenites did not act, even though they were great resolves of heart. When I thought about why they greatly resolved and didn’t put into action, I think a reason was because they were settled for their peaceful and comfortable life. In other words, I think the Reubenites were great resolved of heart but didn’t actually participate in the war against the Canaanites in Moses’s time because they already settled down in the east of Jordan and were living comfortable as they were shepherding their sheep. Thus, as Deborah and Barak were singing, they condemned the Reuben tribes and other tribes who didn’t participate in the war.

Those who truly love the Lord are not just resolved in their hearts. Rather, they clearly move their determination to action. Look at Daniel. In Daniel 1:8, “Daniel made up his mind.” In other words, not only that Daniel decided not to defile himself with the king’s choice of food or with the wine which he drank (v. 8) but also he practiced according to his decision. Then God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials (v. 9) so the commander of the officials tested Daniel and his three friends for a vegetarian meal and drink water for 10 days as Daniel asked (vv. 12-14). As a result, “At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food” (v. 15). “So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables” (v. 16). God's grace and mercy accompany God's glory to those who are determined and put into action. What must we do? We, like Daniel, must resolve and put it into action. Those who love the Lord make decisions and then put them into action.

Finally, I want to think about is what does it means by God makes those who love Him, those with willing volunteers, those who depend on God's saving power and those who resolved and practice "like the rising of the sun in its might". I want to think in two ways:

First, the word that God makes those who love Him like the rising of the sun in its might means that God will make them the light of victory to shine mightily in this dark sinful world.

When I think about the Deborah and Balak's song in Judges 5:1-31, I remember what David said as he went about fighting Philistine General Goliath. Perhaps the reason is because David's fight with the Philistine general Goliath is similar to Deborah and Barak's fight against Canaan general Sierra with their volunteers of Israel. Look at 1 Samuel 17:45-47: "Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. "This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands." Do you believe that the battle is the Lord's? God already gave the word of promise to Barak through Judge Deborah in Judges 4:7. And that word of that promise was that God would give the Canaanite general Sierra, his army and his chariots of irons into Barak's hand. What does it mean? God promised Barak to be victorious. And the faithful God fulfilled that promised word. God defeated Sierra, his army, and all his chariots before Barak with the edge of the sword (v. 15). The same God is giving this word of promise to us even through King Saul's mouth: "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail" (1 Sam. 26:25).

God has given us the word of promise that we will surely prevail. Therefore, we can offer the praise "Victory, it will be mine" to God in faith: "Victory, it will be mine (X2) Through the blood of Jesus, Savior Victory, it will be mine. It will be mine Victory's all I need Through the blood of Jesus Savior Always victory." I hope and pray that we are victorious in our spiritual battle. May we be victorious in our fight against ourselves, sin, the world, and Satan and death. Just as Jesus died on the cross and rose again, and overcame death and Satan, I pray that we be victorious over death and Satan as well. I bless you in the name of Jesus that all of us live and shine the light of the triumph of Jesus Christ in this sinful and dark world.

Second and last, the word that God makes those who love Him like the rising of the sun rise in its might means that they God will make them to shine forth the light of salvation in this dark world.

Our God is the God give the power of salvation to us. The God of salvation has given us a mission. What is that mission? Look at Jesus' great command in Matthew 28:18-20: "... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Our mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The reason is because the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). We must shine the light of God's salvation by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul didn't consider his life of any account as dear to himself, so that he might finish his course and the ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Shouldn't we have this kind of mission and shine the light of His gospel and of His salvation in this the dark world? This reminds me the gospel song "Vision": "At the throne of our God we gather And join to praise His holy name Because of His great love, God gave His only son Jesus

Christ has redeemed us from our sins On the cross, God poured out His love so freely A stream that flows forevermore to every tribe and tongue All nations join the song Endless praise to salvation's one true Lord. To the Lord of all, who's seated on the throne And to the Lamb of God This saving grace belongs To the Lord of all, who's seated on the throne And to the Lamb of God We cry aloud forevermore."

The Lord makes those who love the Lord to be like the rising of the sun in its might. The Lord makes those who offer their lives to the Lord to be like the rising of the sun in its might. The Lord makes those who depend wholly on the power of His salvation to be the rising of the sun in its might. The Lord makes the sun rise powerfully for those who are great resolves of heart to do and act before Him. I hope and pray that the Lord makes us to be rising of the sun in its might so that we may shine the light of victory, the light of gospel and love, and the light of salvation in this dark and sinful world.

- (v. 1) Heralds of the light, be swift, haste your going; Shatter the fetters of night.
Peoples still without the truth wait unknowing. Beam forth the Gospel of Light.
Heralds of Light, speed away! Let shine the bright Gospel ray.
End the night of sin, Let the brightness in! Heralds of light, speed the day.
- (v. 2) Do the work of God, with pow'r of His giving; He your Companion will prove.
Tell the love of God for all people living. Beam forth the Gospel of Love.
Heralds of Light, speed away! Let shine the bright Gospel ray.
End the night of sin, Let the brightness in! Heralds of light, speed the day.
- (v. 3) Bear the truth of God, the fire of His altar; Faint not in age or in youth.
Crossing seas and mountains, rest not, nor falter. Beam forth the Gospel of Truth.
Heralds of Light, speed away! Let shine the bright Gospel ray.
End the night of sin, Let the brightness in! Heralds of light, speed the day.
- (v. 4) North and South and East and West, go, obeying, God your sup-port in the strife.
For the dead and blind in sin, go forth praying. Beam forth the Gospel of Life.
Heralds of Light, speed away! Let shine the bright Gospel ray.
End the night of sin, Let the brightness in! Heralds of light, speed the day.

(Hymn "Heralds of the Light, Be Swift")

Praying to shine forth the light of victory and the light of salvation in this dark world,

Pastor James Kim

The song of David: Sing the bow that didn't turn back!

[2 Samuel 1:17-27]

There is a Korean movie called “War of the Arrows” that even Netflix shows. It was released in Korea in August 2011, and the bow is the main weapon. And the hero of the movie named ‘Namyi’ comes out as the best bow arrow shooter in Joseon. He lives as a descendant of a traitor and hopes for the happiness of his sister, Zain, who is the only blood-related family member. But on his sister's wedding day, the happiest moment, she and her bridegroom are taken captive by the attack of the Qing Dynasty elite (Niru). At that time, the hero of the movie Namyi relies on the bow left by his father to kill the Qing elites one by one with his ghostly bow skill. He wages the greatest war of bow ever to protect his most precious sister (Internet). In the end, the hero of the movie Namyi kills Jushinta, the boss of the Qing Dynasty, and protects his most important sister. The movie ends with the happy ending.

The reason I mention this movie is because we see “the song of the bow” in 2 Samuel 1:17-27. Look at verse 18: “and he told them to teach the sons of Judah the song of the bow; behold, it is written in the book of Jashar.” Isn't it interesting that the name of the song is “the song of bow”? This bow song in 2 Samuel 1:17-27 is written by David and it isn't a joyful song, but a “lament” (v. 17). The reason why it is lament is because the David's best friend Jonathan and his father, King Saul, were killed in the battle against the Philistines. So David grieved over the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, and wrote this lament song to teach the people of Judah (vv. 17-18). And it is called “the song of the bow” (v. 18). Why the song is titled “The song of bow”? Look at verse 22: “From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, The bow of Jonathan did not turn back, And the sword of Saul did not return empty.” David sang that “The bow of Jonathan did not turn back.” What does it mean? It means that the Jonathan's bow had spilled the blood or fat of his enemies. In other words, Jonathan had triumphed each time he wages a war (Park). Based on this, under the heading “The song of David: Sing the bow that didn't turn back!” I want to think about how we can live a victorious life like Jonathan in two ways.

First, in order for us to live the victorious life like Jonathan, we must be “the mighty”.

When we look at the David's song in 2 Samuel 1:17-27, the word “the mighty” comes out five times (vv. 19, 21, 22, 25, 27). In other words, David refers to Saul and Jonathan, who were killed in the war against the Philistines, as “they mighty” five times in this passage. David said that Saul and Jonathan were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions (v. 23). In other words, the two mighty were skilled at war and courageous (Park). Here, one of the meanings that both Saul and Jonathan were skilled at war is that they were able to use their weapons well. For example, King Saul seems to have used his sword well in war, and Jonathan used his bow well as a weapon (v. 22). When we think about “bow”, I think it has special meaning to David. This is because when David had previously fled from his friend Jonathan's father, King Saul, Jonathan used his bow when he was helping David to flee from his father King Saul (1 Sam.20:35-42). Do you remember the story? When David was remaining by the stone Ezel (v. 19), Jonathan went out into the field for the appointment with David, and a little lad was with him (v. 35). And Jonathan said to his lad, “Run, find now the arrows which I am about to shoot.’ As the lad was running, he shot an arrow past him” (v. 36). Then, when the lad reached the place of the arrow with Jonathan had shot, Jonathan after the lad and said, “Is not the arrow beyond you?” (v. 37), “Hurry, be quick, do not stay!” (v. 38) The reason why

Jonathan said like that was to tell David to “go, for the Lord has sent you away” (v. 22). So when lad was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times to Jonathan, and they kissed each other and wept together (but David wept more) and David rose and departed (vv. 41-42). David would have thought of this when he thought about the Jonathan’s bow. And when we look at 1 Samuel 18:4, the Bible says that because Jonathan loved David as himself (v. 1), not only did he strip himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, but he also gave his armor, including his sword and how bow and his belt (v. 4). So when David heard the news of Jonathan's death and sang the song of the bow as a lament, I am sure that these precious memories of Jonathan's bow mad him to contemplate Jonathan's love. In this way, Jonathan loved David so much that he gave his beloved bow to David, but when David thought of Jonathan's bow, he knew that he used it very well as a weapon. Look at 1 Chronicles 8:40 – “The sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor, archers, and had many sons and grandsons, 150 of them. All these were of the sons of Benjamin.” Here, the sons of Ulam are the sons of Benjamin. And the Bible says that the sons of Benjamin are “mighty men of valor, archers.” And Saul and Jonathan were the sons of Benjamin. And it seems that Jonathan was also a mighty man of valor and archer. Therefore, Jonathan fought against the enemies of Israel with his bow and shed their blood (2 Sam 1:22). He won every battle.

We must fight spiritual battle while we live on this earth. We must fight against ourselves, sin, the world, and Satan. In order to do that, we all must be soldiers of the cross and fight the war bravely and boldly. Let’s sing “Stand Up for Jesus” to the Lord: (v. 1) “Stand up, Stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross; Lift high His royal banner, It must not suffer loss: From vict'ry un-to vict'ry His army He shall lead, Till ev'ry foe is vanquished, And Christ is Lord indeed.” (v. 2) “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The trumpet call obey; Forth to the mighty conflict In this His glorious day: Ye that are men now serve Him Against unnumbered foes; Let courage rise with danger, And strength to strength oppose.” (v. 3) “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone; The arm of flesh will fail you, Ye dare not trust your own: Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with pray'r; Where duty calls, or danger, Be never wanting there.” (v. 4) “Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The strife will not be long; This day the noise of battle, The next the victor's song: To Him that wins the battle A crown of life shall be; He with the King of glory Shall reign eternally. A-men.”

Second and last, in order for us to live victoriously like Jonathan, we must fight together with our lives.

Look at 2 Samuel 1:23 – “Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, And in their death they were not parted; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions.” When David sang this song of bow, he used the word “the mighty” five times referring to Saul and Jonathan (vv. 19, 21, 22, 25, 27), that means the both the father Saul and the son Jonathan fought bravely in war with their lives. Look at verses 19 and 25: “Your beauty, O Israel, is slain on your high places! How have the mighty fallen! ... O mountains of Gilboa, Let not dew or rain be on you, nor fields of offerings; For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.” Although King Saul and Jonathan were defeated in the battle against the Philistines and killed on Mount Gilboa, the two mighty men didn’t fear death and fought the Philistines over their lives. So Saul and Jonathan fought not only with their lives, but they also died together (v. 23). At that, David sang this lament, saying, “Saul and Jonathan, beloved and pleasant in their life, And in their death they were not parted. ...” (v. 23). Two mighty men fallen together in the midst of the battle (v. 25).

The Lord's church is a church of victory and at the same time a militant church. The church is now at war. Now the church is fighting the Satan, and the Satan’s antichrist and the Satan’s idols which idolized humans. And only the last victors who endured all persecution and tribulation to the end will come before the throne of God and will sing “The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:2-4). Therefore, we should not be guilty of idolatry, as Daniel’s three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn’t bow down to the golden idol of King Nebuchadnezzar, even though they were about to be thrown in the fiery furnaces. We must be determined to believe

and not to commit sins of idolatry by violating God's commands, even though we may have to give up our lives. Our church, like Daniel's three friends, should keep our faith with our lives. And we, like Apostle Paul, should not consider our lives of any account as dear to ourselves, so that we may finish our course and the ministry which we received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). This reminds me the hymn "There's a Royal Banner" verse 1 and the chorus: "There's a royal banner given for display To the soldiers of the King; As an ensign fair we lift it up today, While as ransomed ones we sing. Marching on, marching on, For Christ count everything but loss! And to crown Him King, Toil and sing Neath the banner of the cross!"

The song of David is not a happy ending, like the movie "War of the Arrows." Rather, the David's song of bow ends with a sad ending. David's friend Jonathan is killed in a war with the Philistines. Knowing this, David sang in 1 Samuel 1:26: "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful Than the love of women." David grieved deeply. The reason was because he lost his very beautiful friend Jonathan. In particular, he mourned because of the Jonathan's love, which was more wonderful than the love of women. We, too, will mourn over the death of our dear spouse as our family members and friends die. In particular, we may face a triumphant death as we bleed and fight in spiritual warfare, like Jonathan's bow that didn't turn back. At that time, let us not forget. Let us remember Jesus, our true Friend, who loves us more than His life. Let us not forget the Lord's grace of salvation, bearing all our sins and die on the cross in order to forgive our sins and then resurrected from the dead in order to make us righteous. Let us also hold up the old rugged cross until the day of our final victory through our Lord Jesus Christ who triumphed over death and Satan by the death of the cross. Victory!

Eager to sing the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, before the throne of God,

Pastor James Kim

The song of women: A song that exalted David more than King Saul

[1 Samuel 18:1-9]

What do you think of “jealousy”? When I think about “jealousy”, I remember the Korean drama “Jealousy” that was broadcast on MBC in June-July 1992. The drama includes actor Soo Jong Choi and actress Jin Sil Choi and it was about young people's fresh and heartfelt love stories. It is said to have been recognized as the epitome of the melodrama that the era demands by containing the pain, waiting, and beauty to realize mature love (Internet). I still remember dimly a part of the lyrics of the drama's title song “Jealousy”: ‘Who are you looking at even though I'm standing here right here ... I don't want much. I just you're your eyes of love. Even if I try to convey my heart, your eyes are saying different things’ (Internet). At that time, I was 24 years old and when I listened to that drama theme song, it stimulated my young heart. Haha. But now when I listen to that song, it is kind of insipid. However, one thing for sure is that "jealousy" can't be thought of simply. Why is that? This is because jealousy can kill a person. It is because jealousy is a terrible weapon of Satan.

What is jealousy? It is “a feeling of unhappiness and anger because someone has something or someone that you want” (Internet). When I read this definition again and again, I have nothing to say because I remembered having a feeling of unhappiness and anger about a formal church member in the Lord for no reason. Although that member didn't do anything wrong to me, I just didn't like that person. Even though I didn't want to hate that person, I couldn't help not hating that person. Of course I see myself still jealous. I see myself trying to be envious when others are praised and recognized more than me. Of course this is my inner person. After all, the jealousy in me is prideful. If I am humble before God, I am sure I won't have earthly, natural and demonic jealousy (cf. Jam. 3:15). The reason is because I would empty myself like Jesus did (Phil. 2:5-8). If I am imitating the heart of Jesus, I will be humble and consider other members better than myself (v. 3) instead of being jealousy of others. Of course, the Bible is not just talking about earthly, natural and demonic jealousy. The Bible also talks about jealousy of God. For example, look at Numbers 25:11 – “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy.” Phinehas' jealousy was “from above” (Jam. 3:17), which was biblical and right in the sight of God. What we should pursue is God's jealousy that Phinehas had. But we should not be as jealous as Saul in 1 Samuel 18:9. The reason is because Saul's jealousy is earthly, natural, and demonic (Jam. 3:15).

In 1 Samuel 18:9 we see King Saul jealous. The Bible says that he saw David, who was a man after God's heart (Acts 13:22), with jealous eyes. Although 1 Samuel 18:9 NASB Bible says “Saul looked at David with suspicion ...”, NIV Bible says “... Saul kept a jealous eye on David.” In Hebrew, it means ‘Saul watched David with jealousy eye’ (dictionary). Why did Saul watch David with jealous eyes? The answer is in “from that day on” (v. 9a). Here “the day” refers to the day when David killed the Philistine Goliath and the women came out of all the cities of Israel and sang “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands” (vv. 6-7). Those women sang that the number of people King Saul killed could be counted to thousands, and the number of people David killed could be counted to tens of thousands (Park). In other words, the women exalted David higher than King Saul. Therefore, from that time on, King Saul began to see David with jealous eyes. Look at 1 Samuel 18:8 – “Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?” From that day on, King Saul began to look at David with jealous eyes.

Think about it. Imagine that King Saul who used be the hero of the drama but David, one of the additional production personnel, became the hero by killing Goliath and everybody loves David. Everybody looked up to David and they loved him. Not only that King Saul's son Jonathan loved David as himself (vv. 1, 3), but also Michal, a Saul's daughter (vv. 20, 28) and all Israel and Judah loved David as well (v. 16). So what was Saul's heart like? Saul, knowing that the Lord was departed from him and was with David (vv. 12, 14, 28), and the evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul (v. 10), he continued to look at David with jealous eyes. The terrible thing was that Saul, looking at David with jealous eyes, eventually tried to kill him. Saul threw a spear that was in his hand to David while David was playing the harp with his hand (vv. 10-11). Even though Saul failed to kill David, he continued to try to kill David from then on. Jealousy can make you guilty of murder. After all, Saul saw and knew that God was with David, so "Saul was even more afraid of David and was David's enemy continually" (v. 29). King Saul tried to kill David all his life. But as we know, David became a king of Israel because God was with him, and Saul died in a war. Saul, who was jealous to kill David, was rather killed. This is the ending of sinful jealousy.

I thought of three lessons that we all should receive when we consider the songs of the women who exalted David higher than King Saul:

The first lesson we must receive is that we must exalt Jesus, the King of kings, who is truly "David", more than any other kings or people in this world.

What is the reason? The reason is because only the Lord Jesus is worthy to be exalted. Last Thursday, during the early Morning Prayer meeting, I meditated on the book of Esther as a drama, and thought about the person named "Haman." One of the enlightenments given in that meditation is that it is dangerous for people to exalt us. The reason is because when people exalt us, we are at great risk to become arrogant like Haman. When King Ahasuerus promoted Haman and advanced him and established his authority (Esth. 3:1), he became proud and knew only himself (5:12; 6:6). What happened to Haman as a result? As Proverbs 16:18 says "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling," Haman was ruined. He was hung on the gallows standing at his own house 50 cubits high which he prepared for Mordecai and was killed (Esth. 7:9-10).

We should yearn for the grace that God exalts us rather than the people exalt us. In order to do this, we must keep in mind that God has exalted Jesus who was obedient to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:8). Look at Philippians 2:9-11: "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God has exalted His begotten Son, Jesus, who obeyed and died for salvation of us who were like arrogant like Haman. Therefore, we must live a life that humbly exalts Jesus. How can we live a life that exalts Jesus? We can live a life that exalts Jesus by boasting and praising Him and giving Him glory.

Second, the lesson we must receive is that when we are exalted by people we must be lowered and humbled.

King Saul wanted to be exalted by the Israelites. But when the women exalted David above him, he became angry and this saying displeased him (1 Sam. 18:8). So Saul kept a jealous eye on David (v. 9). If Saul obeyed God as Jesus did, obeying God's will until death, God would have exalted King Saul in God's time. But as we know, when he had war with the Amalekites, he disobeyed God's command and didn't utterly destroy all the Amalekites and spared the best of all that was good (1 Sam. 15:9). And he told Samuel that the reason for leaving the good animal was to use it to sacrifice to God (v. 15). Why should God exalt Saul who disobeyed God's command? Rather, Saul had to humble himself. And he should have humbly confessed his sin of disobedience to God and repented. Then, if he humbly obeyed God's word, God would have exalted him in His time. But even

though he had sinned, King Saul asked Samuel to go back with him and then exalt him before the elders of his people and before Israel (v. 30). How ridiculous this King Saul's word is? How could he ask Samuel to exalt him before the Israelites and the elders? On the other hand, when David returned from defeating Goliath, the women ran and sang "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" David was silent (18:7). The Bible says nothing about David's response. It seems that David passed through the trial of praise, as the Bible says in Proverbs 27:21b, "... And each is tested by the praise accorded him." When he was well praised, he could have felt good and proud, proud of his accomplishments, but David didn't. He was not proud because he knew that God had put Goliath over to him (17:46) when he went to Goliath in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel (v. 45) and fought. David wasn't proud because he knew that the battle belonged to God and that God caused him to defeat Goliath. Rather, he was humble. In particular, when King Saul tried to kill him while looking at him with jealous eyes, David obeyed God's word and didn't attack King Saul who was anointed by God. Although he had the opportunity to kill King Saul twice, he didn't kill him. The reason was because David feared God.

A Christian who fears God hates pride because he fears Him. Rather, he loves humility. And he wants to be exalted by God rather than by people. Rather, he knows that "which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:15). Therefore, the wise Christian who fears God humbles himself. Even if people lift him up, he humbles himself. The reason is because he knows that God will exalt him. I remember what I wrote before: 'God will humble us if we exalt ourselves. But if we humble ourselves, God will exalt us.' We must humble ourselves.

Third and last, the lesson we must receive is that we must overcome the sinful jealousy that Saul had.

How can we overcome sinful jealousy? I found the answer in Psalms 73. The psalmist Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked and was envious of the arrogant and his steps had almost slipped (Ps. 73:2-3). In other words, Asaph was envious and jealous of the wicked. How did Asaph overcome this jealousy? In Psalm 73:17, when he entered the sanctuary of God, then he realized the end of the wicked, and he overcame sinful jealousy. In other words, when Asaph set his eyes on God, he realized how holy and just God would judge the wicked (vv. 17-20) and realized that there was no one but the Lord whom he desired on earth. By doing so, he could overcome sinful jealousy.

We must look to the Lord only with the eyes of God's jealousy, not with the eyes of sinful and murderous jealousy. We must love the Lord with His jealousy. Therefore, we should not have objects of love that we love more than the Lord. I hope and pray that we all love only the Lord more and more.

Desire to love the jealous God more and more,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Habakkuk (1): 'O Lord. Revive Your work in the midst of the years'

[Habakkuk 3:2]

What is "revival"? Our church used to have once a year 'The Word meetings' around our church anniversary which is in July. But now, we have 'The Word meetings' twice a year. Each Word meeting, I invite two guest speakers for two days meeting and they give us the messages of God. I think our church formal pastor used to call it "Revival meeting" but I changed it to "The Word meetings" because I think there is wrong meaning of revival that we have in our mind. That wrong meaning is that we think revival is a church that has grown so large that it has built a large church, a large number of believers, and a large amount of offerings and so on. I think the perception of our Christian revival seems to be related to "growth first," "performance first," and "economic first." This is a secularized world, deceived by world logic (Internet). That's why I call our church meetings "The Word meetings," not "revival meetings." I believe that if we Christians really want the true revival, we should return to the word of God. And I believe that we should listen to the word of God and should truly repent our sins. The reason is because there is no revival without repentance.

In Habakkuk 3:2, Prophet Habakkuk prays to God like this: "LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy." Habakkuk 3:1 says, "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth" and Habakkuk 3:19b says "... For the director of music. On my stringed instruments." Verse 1 says that it is a "prayer" but verse 19 says it is "music." Then, is Habakkuk 3:2 prayer or music (song)? Another question is what does the word "Shigionoth" mean in verse 1? This word is found only twice in the Bible. It is found at the beginning of Habakkuk 3:1 and Psalm 7 (superscript). The meaning is not clear, but Dr. Park Yoon-sun says, 'It seems to be a kind of enthusiastic character here simply as the name of tunes' (Park). And, according to Pastor John MacArthur, the word is meant for music-worship, and Habakkuk Chapter 3 was sung as music (MacArthur). In short, the prayer of Prophet Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3:2 is a prayer expressed in his passionate song. So I want to meditate on the Habakkuk's prayer that he prayed to God in a song, especially verse 2 and want to receive the Lord's instruction. I hope that we can pray and sing for revival of His church.

Looking at Habakkuk 3:2 again, the Bible says, "LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known;" Here, what was "the report" about God that Habakkuk heard? The report is that God would judge Judah (1:5-11) and Babylon (2:2-20). Why did God say that God would judge the people of Judah, the God's people? The reason is because they were wicked, committing "iniquity", "destruction" and "violence" and there was strife and contention among them (1:3). In other words, because the people of Judah were doing evil and unrighteousness, they had to be judged by God. To what extent did the people of Judah do evil to God was that "the wicked sound the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted" (v. 4b). As a result, "the law was ignored And justice is never upheld" (v. 4a). Aren't we like the people of Judah? Aren't we doing all the wickedness and iniquity like the people of Judah and our zeal to keep the God's law (the commandments) has cooled down? What is the result? The result is that we Christians don't play the role of light and salt in this world. More specifically, now we Christians don't contribute in making our society just by doing justice instead we are doing injustice and unrighteousness. Just as the wicked people surrounded the righteous in Habakkuk's day, there are more Christians living in disobedience to God's

commandments in this society than righteous people living in faith. Hence, a holy and just God told the people of Judah in Habakkuk 1:5 – “Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days-- You would not believe if you were told.” What is “something” that God would do that the people of Judah were astonished? That is, God would raise up “the Chaldeans (the Babylonians), That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs” to punish the people of Judah. However, Prophet Habakkuk, who heard the words of this judgment, knew that it was vigilance that God would punish the people of Judah (v. 12). He also knew that the God of Israel was holy and would not destroy Israel completely with the hands of the Babylonians, who were more wicked than Israel (v. 12). Rather, he knew that God, who lived before the ages, would love the chosen Israelites and take care of them forever (Park). Therefore Habakkuk had no choice but to fear God. Habakkuk was astonished to hear the Lord’s report not because God would punish the Israelites in the future through the Babylonians, but he expressed the awe in God’s presence, or His mysterious way in praise and worship (Lloyd Jones). That mystical way of God was, as Habakkuk chapter 2 says, that after God would punish Judah, He would punish Babylon in order to save the people of Judah. In other words, Habakkuk couldn’t help to fear God because he heard that God would punish the Babylonians who were the proud ones (2:3, 4) who were sinning against themselves (v. 10), and like those who were drunken (vv. 5, 15) who couldn’t control themselves in plundering the nations, shedding the blood of men and doing violence to the land (v. 8). In this awe, Habakkuk sang and played to God, “... O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, ...” (3:2). What is the work of the Lord here? It is the salvation of Israel, God’s people, by punishing Babylon. Habakkuk asked God in song to revive this work of the Lord in the midst of the years.

Why do we come to God’s presence and give thanks and praise to God? Why do we come to God’s presence with praise and worship in awe of God? Isn’t it because of the mystical way that God saves us? How did God save us, who supposed to be perished forever, by letting His begotten Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross? How can we come to God’s presence without giving respect to God in awe and give praise and worship God with pride as we consider this wonderful work of God’s salvation? What Habakkuk could do was to sing and pray “O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years” (3:2). What does it mean? Pastor Lloyd Jones said: ‘He (Habakkuk) didn’t ask for salvation and comfort, he didn’t ask the Israelites to live, nor asked Him not to have war against the Chaldeans. He also didn’t ask God not for the Israelites to suffer, not to be plundered, or to prevent the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. It was because he realized that these things should be done and that they deserve go through them. He didn’t pray for God to change His plan. The only concern of the prophet was that God’s work and purpose would be done in the kingdom of God and the whole world. He just wanted everything done right. In fact, he came to confession as follows: ‘No matter what suffering I or my people will go through, if the Lord’s work will be revived and be done purely, then I will not concern about it.’ His only concern was that the Lord to revive His work in the midst of the years’ (Jones). What “revival” did Habakkuk’s really want? Wasn’t it that God’s people Israel repent their sins and turn to God even by all the suffering that would come from God’s punishment that is Babylon’s invasion, and to live as God’s holy people? Although in Hebrew the word “revival” has meaning “to preserve” or “make to live” it also has meaning “to cleanse, correct, and remove all evil” (Jones). God raised up the Babylonians to punish the transgressive and unrepentant Israelites to remove all their evils and to cleanse them and make them pure people of God. Having heard this report, Habakkuk sang in amazement to God: “O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years” (3:2).

Then in the second half of Habakkuk 3:2, Prophet Habakkuk prayed to God in song: “... In wrath remember mercy.” Habakkuk knew that if God punished the Israelites for their sins, then they would be destroyed. In other words, he knew that if holy and just God would pour out all the wrath to the sinful Israelites, then no one could survive and be destroyed by Babylon’s invasion. That was why Habakkuk’s humbly begged God, “In wrath remember mercy” (3:2). The meaning of this supplication is that even though if God would repay the Jewish people according to their sins, they would be destroyed and nothing would be left. But Habakkuk asked God for mercy in the midst of pouring out His wrath and punishing the Israelites so that they might be saved’ (Park). This prayer is like the psalmist’s prayer of Psalms 85:2-3, “You forgave the iniquity of Your people; You covered all their sin.

You withdrew all Your fury; You turned away from Your burning anger.” Habakkuk prayed to God like this, ‘May You soften Your wrath with Your mercy. We can only ask the Lord to act according to His nature and to be merciful for us even in wrath’ (Jones). Shouldn't we pray like this too?

Personally, when I sing the gospel song of “Revival,” the words of praise often come to heart. Especially when I sing this part of the song “O, Lord, Look at the lands of desolated. O God of Heaven, who has pity on us,” I sing this song as my prayer to God in seeking His mercy upon our church as I see the church of desolated. In the midst of this, I sing to God with heart of asking Him for forgiveness for our church's sins and for the church to become one and to rebuild foundations that were destroyed. The Lord will renew the churches by the Words of truth. The river water of God's grace will flow in the church, and the winds of the Holy Spirit will blow. The Lord will give us a new day that is full of His glory. I earnestly hope and pray that the kingdom of God will come to this earth.

May the Lord revive His work in the years to come,

Pastor James Kim

The song of Habakkuk (2): 'I will rejoice in the Lord'

[Habakkuk 3:16-19]

Last week I received a second book from my beloved pastor, Pastor K. W. Kim. The book titled 'God is asking you,' in which the author went to write the book centered on the twenty-two questions God asked the people in the Bible. For example, the author went from the first chapter of the book to write around the God's first question to the first man Adam "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). I would like to share the part of what he wrote about this question to Adam: 'Since God is a God of justice, for sure He asks for the responsibility of sin. God asks, Why did you disobey My command? Why were you proud? Why did you disobey My will? Why did you sin? If we sin, we must know that God seeks, reproves, and disciplines us. God who sought Adam and reproved him also sought not only Achan's sin but also caught disobeying and running away Jonah by the storm and rebuked David who was hiding his sin through Prophet Nathan. In this way, God convicts us of our unbelief, disobedience, unrighteousness, and all sins and causes us to repent.' What do you think of this? What do you think about the word "Since God is a God of justice, for sure He asks for the responsibility of sin"? Do we really believe that our God seeks, reproves, and disciplines us who have sinned against Him and eventually makes us to repent our sins?

We have already received the message from the first song of Habakkuk as we meditated on Habakkuk 3:2 under the heading "The song of Habakkuk (1): 'O Lord. Revive Your work in the midst of the years.' The message was that we, like Habakkuk, pray to God in song, "O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy" (v. 2). After receiving this word of God, we earnestly sang the gospel song "Revival" with prayerful hearts to God: "O, Lord. Look at the lands of desolated. O, God of Heaven, who has pity on us. O, Lord, Forgive our sins, And heal these lands. Now, We become one, So we start to rebuild foundations that were destroyed. The fire that will burn down our fake idols, Bring us Holy Spirit's fire. Let the fire of revival burn. Let renew these lands by the Words of truth. Let river water of grace flow. Now winds of Holy Spirit blow. Oh ~ Give us a new day that is full of Your grace. Oh ~ Let the Lord's Kingdom come down."

I want to meditate on the second song of Habakkuk based on Habakkuk 3:16-19, under the heading "The song of Habakkuk (2): 'I will rejoice in the Lord.'" In particular, I want to ask two questions and to learn the lessons that God gives to us.

First, under what circumstances did Habakkuk commit himself to rejoice in the Lord?

Look at Habakkuk 3:16 – "I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us." Habakkuk's commitment to rejoicing in the Lord was when he was waiting quietly for "the day of distress". Here, what was "the day of distress"? In short, it was the day when God raised up the Babylonians to judge (discipline) the people of Judah (1:6ff.). As we have already learned by meditating on Habakkuk 3:2, the first song of Habakkuk, God said that He would judge the people of Judah by raising Babylon (v. 6) because they were wicked, committing "iniquity", "destruction" and "violence" and there was strife and contention among them (1:3) and their zeal to keep the God's law cooled down (v. 4). What will happen to the

nation of Judah if this word of the prophecy is fulfilled for the people of Judah? Look at Habakkuk 3:17: “Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls.” In the end, Habakkuk knew that the war with Babylon would destroy all crops and livestock in the land of Israel. Nevertheless, he was silently waiting for God to fulfill His prophecies, even in that situation and he committed to God that “I will rejoice in the Lord.” Isn't this amazing? How could Habakkuk wait for the day silently, knowing that the nation of Babylon would invade and destroy the nation of Judah? How could he commit himself to God, saying, “I will rejoice in the Lord” even in the face of war when all crops and livestock in the land of Israel were gone?

We can dedicate ourselves to God joyfully in the rich ‘blessing’ God gives us. But can we, like Job in the Old Testament book of Job, dedicate ourselves to God in saying ‘I will rejoice in the Lord’ even when we lose all our wealth and all our children through the ‘disaster God allows us to go through (Job 2:10)? We are so tamed by God's blessing. We are overly accustomed to rejoice because of God's blessing. As a result, we don't rejoice in the Lord even in the midst of adversities or crises that God permits in our journey of life. I think there are at least two causes:

- (1) The first reason is that we don't want to let go of our will and don't want only the will of the Lord will be done.

Apostle Paul rejoiced and rejoiced in the Lord even when he was in prison (Phil. 1:18). Why did he rejoice and rejoice in such a situation? It was because Christ was proclaimed (v. 18). In other words, Paul was pleased and rejoiced even in prison because the Lord's will that he really wanted to fulfill, was being accomplished which was Christ was proclaimed. No matter how difficult or painful we may be, we are people of faith who are pleased and rejoiced if the good, pleasing, and perfect will of the Lord is being fulfilled even through our difficult and painful circumstances.

- (2) The second reason that is the greater reason why we don't rejoice in the Lord even in the midst of adversities or crises that God permits in our life's journey is because we are used to rejoice in God's act, rather than rejoice in who God is.

What does it mean? For example, we are used to receive answers of our prayers from God but we aren't use to receive unexpected results of our prayers to God. So we go through very difficult and painful times when God's answer of our prayers is unfamiliar to our expectations (even though we want to deny that it is God's answer of our prayers). Sometimes we are immersed in sorrow and tears.

But even in such a situation, there are people of faith who thank God and rejoice in the Lord. Who are they? They are those who are fulfilling the chief end of man that is they are glorifying God and enjoying Him forever (cf. Short Catechism #1). In other words, no matter what the situation they are in, those who believe in God, who want to know God, who trust God, and who only want to fulfill God's will as they focus on who God is rather than what He does, will rejoice in the Lord because they live for God's glory and enjoy God even in persecution and suffering. d

Only Jesus is our joy and our delight. That is why we rejoice and rejoice in His resurrection, ascension, and second coming. Not only that, we rejoice and rejoice in His sufferings and His death on the cross. No matter what the situation is, we should commit ourselves to God saying, “Lord, I will rejoice because of You.” We must rejoice always because of our Lord who is our Joy (1 Thess. 5:16).

Second and last, why did Habakkuk rejoice by God under such circumstances?

There are two reasons:

(1) The reason why Habakkuk rejoiced by God was because God was “my salvation”.

Look at Habakkuk 3:18 – “Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.” Habakkuk, who had waited silently for the day of trouble when God raised up the Babylonians and disciplined the people of Judah, was able to rejoice by God even in that situation because he believed that God was “my salvation”. As the God of salvation, who rode on His chariots like the triumphal army before the sea of the Red Sea in the days of Exodus (3:8) to judge the king and the army of Egypt, judged Babylon, the instrument used to discipline the people of Judah (2:2-20) and saved His people, the Israelites, Habakkuk believed that the same God would save the people of Judah by punishing the Babylonians. That was why he rejoiced in the Lord of his salvation.

Our Lord of salvation will save His church by punishing the Babylon like Satan. Therefore, we, the saved people of God, will go before God's throne and praise the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb. Let us sing “Short stop before eternity” to God: “At the throne of our God we gather And join to praise His holy name Because of His great love, God gave His only son Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our sins. On the cross, God poured out His love so freely A stream that flows forevermore to every tribe and tongue All nations join the song Endless praise to salvation’s one true Lord. To the Lord of all, who’s seated on the throne And to the Lamb of God This saving grace belongs To the Lord of all, who’s seated on the throne And to the Lamb of God We cry aloud forevermore.”

(2) The reason why Habakkuk rejoiced by God was because God is “my strength”.

Look at Habakkuk 3:19a – “The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places.” Habakkuk, who had waited silently for the day of trouble when God raised up the Babylonians and disciplined the people of Judah, was able to rejoice by God even in that situation because he believed that God was “my strength.” Since Habakkuk believed that Almighty God was his strength and He would deliver the weak and feeble Judeans from Babylon, who were their strong enemy, who hated them and who were too mighty for the people of Judah (Ps. 18:17), he was able to commit “I will rejoice in the Lord.”

The psalmist's confession comes to my mind: “I love you, O LORD, my strength” (v. 1). I also recall the words of the Lord, who is “my strength,” to Apostle Paul: “... My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness ...” (2 Cor. 12:9). So Paul confessed: “... Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (vv. 9-10). Therefore, we can praise God with this gospel song “O Lord, my strengthen”: “I love you, O Lord, my strength The Lord is my Rock, my fortress My deliverer, my Lord my God My God is my rock, in whom I take refuge and my shield My God, my God, He is the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. My God, my God, He is my Lord, He is my Savior (2x).”

Pastor Martin Lloyd-Jones said in his book “Fear to Faith”: “The Christians can rejoice in tribulation and be victorious in the worst situation. ... In this respect, we Christians must be different from the world. When the hellish environment unfolds and the circumstances that we think are the worst get worse, we must deal with more than just calmly enduring. We must recognize the divine joy and clearly show that joyous heart. ... We must

rejoice in the Lord and rejoice in the God of our salvation. I hope and pray that whatever difficult situations we may be in we may rejoice in the Lord because He is our salvation and our strength.

Devoting to rejoice in the Lord, who is my salvation and my strength,

Pastor James Kim

The song of the angels: Glory to God in the highest

[Luke 2:8-20]

Our church motto for the year 2012 was “Praise the Lord O my soul!” And the motto Bible verse was Psalms 150:6 – “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” After we have received the word of God under the sermon titled “Praise the Lord O my soul,” focusing on Psalms 150:6 on Sunday, January 1, 2012, we have meditated on the songs in the Bible through the that year. We have started with the songs of Moses, the songs of Balaam, the song of Deborah and Barak, the song of David, the song of women, the songs of Habakkuk, the song of Moses song, the song of the Lamb, and the songs of going up to the temples from Psalms 120 and on. As we were doing so, on Christmas Sunday, we meditated on the song of the angels in Luke 2:14, which tells the story of Jesus' birth. This meditation has taught us the song of the angels in honor of the birth of Jesus on Christmas Sunday 2012 and I hope and pray that we continue to honor Him through praise and worship on coming Christmas day as well future Christmas days until the Lord's second coming. I thought three things about this song of the angels:

The first thing I thought about was the good news of great joy that some shepherds heard.

Look at Luke 2:10 – “But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.” Do you know what the good news of great joy these shepherds have heard? The message is written in verse 11: “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” In other words, the good news of great joy that the shepherds heard from the angels was the birth of baby Jesus. Why is the birth of baby Jesus the good news of great joy? The reason is because the baby Jesus is our Savior and Christ the Lord (v. 11). If we look at Matthew 1:21, which tells the story of the birth of baby Jesus as well, we see an angel of the Lord telling Joseph: ““She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” What we can see here is that Jesus is the One who will save His people from their sins. The reason why new news of the birth of the baby Jesus that the shepherds heard from the angels was the good news of great joy was because Jesus is the Savior who came save them from their sins. Also, the birth of the baby Jesus is the news of great joy for them because Jesus is the Christ Lord they had been waiting for. In Matthew chapter 2 we can see that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem (v. 1) and referred baby Jesus as “King of the Jews” (v. 2). Also, we see King gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people and inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born (v. 4). They said to him “In Bethlehem of Judea” and quoted Micah 5:2 – “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.” In other words, the birth of the baby Jesus was the news of great joy for the shepherds because the Lord Jesus Christ is the true King and their Shepherd. Isn't it interesting that the angels appeared to the shepherds and announced the good news of the great joy of the birth of the baby Jesus, the Savior and the Lord Christ, who not only saved them from their sins, but made them people of God to rule over them and to lead them to Heaven? For shepherd, hearing the news of the birth of the true Shepherd Jesus through the angels was the good news of great joy for them.

The Lord is telling this good news of great joy to us as well. Especially to us who celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus today, He is again telling us this good news of great joy: “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11). We must hear this good news of great joy. We must open our hearts and ears to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is our Savior who came to earth to save us from our sins. He is also our Christ Lord. He reconciled us to God and made us His children and His people. He is our King who rules over us. I hope and pray that we all hear the good news of great joy of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and celebrate His birth.

The second thing I thought about was the praise that the many angels sang to God.

Look at Luke 2:13-14: “And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” Can you imagine the multitude of angels praising God together? In verse 13, the Bible says, “the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.” Here, “the heavenly host” refers to the collective appearance of angels. This word “the heavenly host” appears in verse 15 and it is translated as “the angels” (Park). The Bible describes that “a multitude” of these angels appeared suddenly and we don’t know how many. Especially, when we look at Revelation 5:11, what Apostle John saw and heard in vision seems to be unimaginable number of angels with our limited mind: “Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands.” These unaccountable numbers of the angels gathered together and praised God in Luke 2:14: “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” What is the core of this song? We can think of two things: (1) Unaccountable numbers of the angels praised God for the Savior Jesus Christ being obedient to His Father till He died on the cross in order to complete His redemptive work and thus glorying God, (2) They praised God for the peace that would be given to those who are pleased with God as a result of the redemptive work of the Savior Jesus Christ. After all, the multitude of the angels praised God for the work of redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who is the glory of God and the peace of God.

Isn’t this the praise we will sing before the throne of God when we are ascended to Heaven? What song is “the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb” in Revelation 15:3? It is the song of victory in which God fought against death and Satan through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the song of salvation in which God saved us from eternal death. On the day of His Second Coming, all of God’s chosen people will be transformed into a glorious body like an angel and come to God’s throne and praise the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb, the song of victory, and the song of salvation. I hope and pray that with this hope in Christ, we all can praise God as much as we can as long as we live in this world and until our last breath.

The third and last thing that I thought about was the shepherd's response.

In other words, what did the shepherds do after hearing the good news of great joy and the praise of the angels. I thought about it in three ways:

- (1) The shepherds wanted to confirm the birth of the baby Jesus, whom the Lord revealed to them.

Look at Luke 2:15-16: “When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us. So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.” After the multitude of the angels had gone into heaven, the shepherds decide to go to Bethlehem to confirm the birth of baby Jesus, the good news of great joy that Lord told

them. Then they went in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as He lay in the manger. If we were these shepherds, would we have gone quickly by believing the angel's words and make a decision together to go and confirm the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ? Or we would not seek the baby Jesus because we don't believe the good news of great joy that the angel told us? This age we live in is no longer a Christmas celebration of baby Jesus. All the world celebrates just a happy holiday with no baby Jesus. The world does not seek Jesus. The people of this world have no interest in Jesus. That's why they don't go quickly to find Jesus. Rather they go quickly to the world. But the shepherds in Luke chapter 2 heard the good news of great joy and quickly went to Bethlehem in search of Jesus. If any of you have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, I hope and pray that you will hear the good news of great joy through today's message. The Savior Jesus Christ was crucified in order to forgive all your sins. And He rose from the dead in three days to justify you. Anyone who believes in Jesus will be saved and have eternal life. I hope and pray that you believe in Jesus.

(2) The shepherds told others what the angel told them about the baby Jesus.

Look at Luke 2:17 – “When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child.” The shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem, searched for the baby Jesus, saw him, and spread the word concerning what the angels told them about baby Jesus. What did they tell others? It is “the good news of great joy” that is the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ. After hearing this good news of great joy through the angels, the shepherds quickly went to Bethlehem to confirm the birth of baby Jesus and then shared with others the news of the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ. As I meditated on the response of these shepherds, I remembered the woman at the well in John chapter 4. The reason is because the Samaritan woman, like the shepherds, told others about Jesus. After meeting Jesus, the Messiah, she left the waterpot and went into the city and said to the men, “this is not the Christ, is it? (Jn. 4:28-29) As a result, they went out of the city and came to Jesus (v. 30). And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him (v. 39). In Acts 4:19-20, we can see that Apostles Peter and John say before the officials, elders, and scribes: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Isn't this, “we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard”, the confession of the shepherds in Luke 2? The shepherds also had to tell about Jesus after seeing and hearing the birth of the Savior Jesus, the good news of the great joy, through the angels. We too should preach the good news of Savior Jesus Christ to this world. May we be able to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(3) The shepherds glorified and praised God for all that they heard and saw, as the angels had told them.

Look at Luke 2:20 – “The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.” When the shepherds heard the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ, the good news of great joy, as the angel of the Lord told them, they went and saw the baby Jesus, and then they glorified and praised God. As numerous angels praised God (v. 13), the shepherds also praised and glorified God. I hope and pray that on this Christmas Sunday, we who celebrate the birth of baby Jesus can glorify and praise God like the shepherd and numerous angels.

I have a song of praise that I remembered as I meditated on the song of the angels in Luke 2:14. The title of the song is “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” by Georg Friedrich Handel who is called ‘a Mother of Music.’ When we translated the Latin part of the lyrics of the song into English, then it is the same as the part of the song of the angels in Luke 2:14 – “Glory to God in the Highest.” This is how the lyrics goes:

“Angels we have heard on high Sweetly singing o'er the plains And the mountains in reply
Echoing their joyous strains Angels we have heard on high Sweetly, sweetly through the night
And the mountains in reply Echoing their brief delight Gloria, in excelsis Deo Gloria,
in excelsis Deo Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heavenly song? Gloria, in excelsis Deo
Gloria, in excelsis Deo”
Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing, Come, adore on bended knee,
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. Gloria, in excelsis Deo Gloria, in excelsis Deo
Yeah Gloria, in excelsis Deo Angels we have heard Angels we have heard on high
Angels we have heard, oh Angels we have heard on high Angels we have heard on high
Angels we have heard on high In excelsis Deo. Amen.”

Hoping to sing the song of victory, the song of salvation before the throne of God with numerous angels and all the brethren in the Lord,

Pastor James Kim

The song of James: Praising in the wilderness

“Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.” (Psalms 63:3)

I sincerely welcome all of you to this praise night. I am very happy that our church Korean Ministry (KM) praise team has prepared a praise night so that we can have the time to praise God with our heart. When I think of my dear brothers and sisters in Christ who prepared this praise night, I want to say that this praise night is “Praising in the wilderness.” Of course, when we look at them with our own physical eyes, they are not living in the wilderness. Actually they live in the middle of the city. But when I think about their hearts, wanting to praise God out of love for Jesus Christ who is the oasis in the wilderness, I want to say that their praise in praising in the wilderness. Praising in the wilderness is like King David in Psalm 63:3, who made the wilderness the sanctuary (v. 2) and praised God for His lovingkindness in the midst of persecution and suffering, our church KM praise team has prepared the songs to praise God because of His lovingkindness. I personally spent time reflecting on my own life thinking about this praise night. And I divided my life into six praises:

I was born a Christian. I was born in a Christian family. My father is a pastor so I am sure I went to church even when I was in my mother’s womb. I still remember my childhood in a place called Sang-hyun church in Sang-gye-dong, South Korea. When I look back at that time when I used to go to that church that my father served as a senior pastor, I still remember I used to sing a Korean gospel song ‘With money, we can’t go to Heaven.’ Although they are three verses of lyrics, I can only remember the verse 1 and the chorus: (v. 1) With money, we can’t go to Heaven. With power, we can’t go to Heaven. (chorus) If we are born again, we can go to Heaven. If we have faith, we can go to Heaven.’ If I think about it now, why I still remember this song among the many songs I sang when I was little, maybe it is because the word “money” that comes out in the very beginning of the verse 1. Haha.

And when I was 12 years old in Korea, I graduated from elementary school and immigrated to the United States with my parents and lived in Los Angeles Korea town. At that time, I didn't even know the alphabet. But when I went back to elementary school again, I had to take a test and I had to memorize 20 vocabularies. When I came to the United States, I had a hard time adapting to American life because of cultural and language differences. Maybe that was why I enjoyed hanging out with only my Korean friends. Then I went into high school and I wandered around with my friends. At that time, I didn't miss Sunday's service because I was a pastor's kid. And the books that I encountered at that time were the books written by Kim Hyung-seok and Kim Dong-gil, former professors of the well-known universities in Korea. As I read their books, I became a little philosopher and asked myself such questions like 'What is the purpose of life?', 'How can I enjoy happiness?' numerous times and sought to find the answers in this world. At that time, it was the dark age of my life so if I look back now, I can't remember the praise that I sang at that time.

Then, when I entered a college, I attended the college retreat at this church as a freshman. At that time, I attended the retreat reluctantly because I was a pastor's son. But on the second or last evening of the retreat meeting, an incredible thing happened to me when I heard the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 men with two fish and five loaves of bread in John 6. When the guest speaker challenged us to come forward if we wanted to offer our lives to the Lord like a boy who offered his two fish and five loaves of bread to Jesus, I was walking forward toward the

pulpit. And I remember kneeling down and crying and wailing. I'm not sure why so many tears came out. I think it was because I met Jesus and encountered the presence of my Lord Jesus whom I knew with only my head. As I remembered all the sins I had intentionally committed, I just wanted to ask God for forgiveness (Tears of Repentance). And I was very thankful. I just thanked Him for calling me who was and still is like just two fish and five loaves of bread (Tears of Thanksgiving). And the Holy Spirit worked in my heart to offer my life to the Lord (Tears of Commitment). At that time, I was determined to be a pastor and prepared to go to seminary. Until that time, my purpose of study was money, but after that night of the college retreat, my purpose became Jesus and the glory of God. From that time on, my favorite song of praise is "I Offer My Life":

“Lord, I offer my life to You Everything I've been through Use it for Your glory
Lord I offer my days to You Lifting my praise to You As a pleasing sacrifice
Lord I offer You my life
Things in the past Things yet unseen Wishes and dreams that are yet to come true
All of my hopes And all of my plans My heart and my hands are lifted to You
Lord, I offer my life to You Everything I've been through Use it for Your glory
Lord I offer my days to You Lifting my praise to You As a pleasing sacrifice
Lord I offer You my life.”

From that time on until now and until I die, this is the praise of my heart that has been written deeply on the tablet of my heart. Around that time, I learned to play the guitar by myself. The reason was because I used to come to Los Angeles every weekend and met my friends but after I met Jesus and offered my life to Him, I could no longer hang out with my friends, drinking, smoking, partying, and hang out. Although in the past, I had ignored my conscience and continued to wander in guilt, but I no longer wanted to do so. So every weekend before I put a sleeping bag on the church meal table in order to sleep, I went outside of the church and looked at the night sky and thought about where my friends would be at the moment. I was lonely so I began to learn how to play guitar by just looking at the back of the Korean gospel song book where there was the guitar cords. So I started learning how to play D code, G code, A code, etc. And the first song that I was able to play guitar was "God is so Good" because it was the song with the simplest guitar chords. Haha. "God is so good, God is so good. God is so good, He so good to me."

And since I believed in Jesus, God gave me a desire to serve in the Christian club in my college life. So I had an opportunity to serve as a personal manager and served my brothers and sisters in Christ. Personal manager is not a special thing, but when they contacted me through my beeper, I picked them and gave them ride and so on since they didn't have car. Haha. If they wanted to go to market, I picked them up from their dormitories or apartments and gave them ride to the market. And if they wanted to go to a church to pray, I gave them ride to the church as well. It is just fun memories. Haha. At that time, it was very difficult to take care of the couple of sisters in Christ because I felt love toward them so I had to suppress and repress my feeling. Haha. At that time, the words that I learned deeply in my heart while studying psychology were the words "suppression," "repression" and "rejection." Haha. At that time, I learned English praise as I was rejected by couple of sisters. It was the song by Benny Hester "Nobody knows me like You." I still remember I sang that song louder as I was driving toward the beach near the college after I was rejected by a sister in Christ whom I confessed my feeling towards her. Hahaha. At that time, the chorus of the song was especially comforting to me:

"Nobody knows me like You Put Your arms around me You bring me through
And there's many times I don't know what to do Though some know me well
Still nobody knows me like You
All of my secrets to You I tell You saw each time that I slipped and fell
And all of my faults yes, You know them well
But You've never turned me away, no, no, no"

After I graduated from college and after I graduated from a seminary, I met my wife now. When I met her I was about to get License to preach in my church denomination. I still remember the hymn that we sang together during our wedding ceremonial worship. It was “Thou, My Everlasting Portion”:

- (v. 1) Thou, my everlasting portion, More than friend or life to me;
All a long my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.
- (v. 2) Not for ease or worldly pleasure, Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer, Only let me walk with Thee.
- (v. 3) Lead me thro' the vale of shadows, Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal May I enter, Lord, with Thee.
- (chorus)
Close to Thee, close to Thee, Close to Thee, close to Thee;
All a long my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with Thee.
A-men.

At that time, I and my wife couldn't help but shed tears of thanksgiving.

And the song that my wife and I can't forget is the song that the Holy Spirit enabled me to sing to God after our first baby Charis died and after spreading her ashes into the water. The song is “My Savior's love for me”:

- (v. 1) I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me, A sinner, condemned, unclean.
- (v. 2) For me it was in the garden He prayed: “Not My will, but Thine.”
He had no tears for His own griefs, But sweat drops of blood for mine.
- (v. 3) In pity angels beheld Him, and came from the world of light
To comfort Him in the sorrows He bore for my soul that night.
- (v. 4) He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calvary, And suffered and died alone.
- (v. 5) When with the ransomed in glory His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages To sing of His love for me.
- (chorus)
O how marvelous! O how wonderful! And my song shall ever be:
O how marvelous! O how wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me!

I believe in the power of praise. For example, the power of praise is when Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God in prison, suddenly there came a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened (Acts 16:25-26). Likewise, I hope and pray that when our church praise team sing song of praise to God, may God open our hearts widely so that all our chains of this world may be removed so that we may be free in the Lord. Furthermore, when the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped (v. 27). But eventually, the jailer and all his family believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and were saved and rejoiced greatly (vv. 31-34). Likewise, I hope and pray that there is amazing and marvelous work of salvation tonight through the praises of the wilderness tonight.

Wanting to praise God until my last breathe in this earth,

Pastor James Kim

“Praise the Lord”

[Psalms 134]

I thought about God's sufficient grace based on 2 Corinthians 12:9 – “And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness " Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” This was what the Lord told Paul when Paul asked the Lord three times to that his thorn of flesh might leave him (vv. 7-8). Paul, who received this word of the Lord, was greatly pleased because he realized that God's power was perfected in his weakness by the grace of God. Think about it. When he asked God three times to remove the thorn in his flesh, he didn't receive the answer of his prayers, but God said, "My grace is sufficient for you." How could Paul be able to rejoice greatly even when he had the thorns in his flesh? It was because of God's sufficient grace. The reason why I thought about God's sufficient grace again was because my father-in-law, who had not received surgery last Thursday, was greatly pleased with God's sufficient grace in his life and made that confession in front of his pastor and elder who came to visit him and they were thankful to God together. Although I didn't know fully, but I couldn't help but confess that our God is a good God because how could you give thanks to God and be greatly pleased in that kind of circumstance. In the meantime, I remembered the gospel song “God is so good”: “God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He so good to me.” God's sufficient grace that enabled Paul and Silas to praise God even when they could be executed the next day in prison can make us to praise God whatever circumstance that we may be in.

In Psalms 134, the psalmist repeatedly says, "Praise the Lord" twice in verses 1 and 2. What does the word “praise” mean here? The Bible has many words for “praise”. There are three of the most common terms. These three words illuminate the meaning of praise in different perspectives and contexts (Internet).

(1) The first word is "hillel".

The word “hillel” is the most common word in the Old Testament, which means praise and its' basic meaning is ‘to boast’ and ‘praise’. This word is used both in praise of man (Gen. 12:15; 2 Sam.14:25; Prov. 12:8) and in praise of God. On the other hand, the New Testament Greek verb “aineo” is used only in praise of God.

Praise ministry is the work of boasting and exalting God. It is to realize how wonderful God is, how wonderful He has been, and to express our amazement or wonder. So praise begins with an interest in God's character and works and is expressed with amazement about it. Praise is accompanied by admiration, excitement, emotion, pride, and joy as our personality encounters God's character and deeds.

(2) The second word is “hodah”.

It is often translated “thanksgiving,” but its basic meaning is “confession.” The Greek New Testament word “homologeō” also means ‘confession.’ The meaning of the word “hodah” is totally different from “thank you,” which is a reaction in our society to someone who gave us something good or did something good to us. Rather, the word “hodah” and its' noun “toda” are often associated with tribulation, as in Psalms 50:14, 15 and 2 Chronicles 20:21. In other words, “hodah” is praising God, remembering that in a

difficult situation, a good and faithful God rules the world, protects and cares for His children. Praising God in tribulation means seeing God's authority, power, and wonderful plan beyond tribulation and trusting God even if the situation is incomprehensible. Praise ministry is the ministry of enabling those who are praising God to trust God while they are looking at the authority and power of God.

(3) The third word is “berek”, which is used in Psalms 134.

In the Korean Bible, the word is translated into three words according to subject and object. When God "break" a man, it is translated as God is blessing him. When the man "break" another man, it is translated as he is blessing another man. And finally, when man "break" God, it is translated as he is praising God. Here, 'praising' means acknowledging or testifying that God is God rather than to bless God. While "hodah", mentioned earlier, focuses on two things that is God's nature and God's deeds, "break" is a testimony of God's actions, especially God's grace and blessing. Also, while "hodah" confesses and remembers God's character during tribulation, "break" is a confession of gratitude for overcoming difficulties with God's help.

In Psalms 134, that is a song going up to the temple, the psalmist exhorts "all you servants of the Lord" to give God praise, a confession of gratitude for overcoming difficulties with God's help (v. 1). Here, 'the servants of the Lord' refer to the Levites (priests) who served the God's people in the sanctuary. These Levites (priests) refer to the faithful servants of the Lord who were even serving at night in His sanctuary. The psalmist exhorts all these faithful servants of the Lord to "praise the Lord" (vv. 1, 2). The psalmist is urging these faithful servants of the Lord who had been faithfully serving in His sanctuary with His faithful help to praise the Lord. The psalmist exhorted them to praise the Lord as they lift up their hands in the sanctuary (v. 2). This means to lift up your heart, that is, to praise God with all your heart (Park). What does God do to these people? The Lord will bless them. Look at verse 3: "May the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion." The psalmist not only exhorted all of the Lord's servants who faithfully serve in the Lord's sanctuary at night but he also blessed them. In particular, the reason why he prayed that "the LORD, the Maker of heaven and the earth" to blessed them was because he wanted to let them know that God had unlimited power to bless His faithful servants (Park). This God, who is capable of blessing this blessing, blesses all His faithful servants.

God blesses all of His faithful servants who praise Him. I hope and pray that whatever circumstance we may be in, we will be able to give thanks to God and praise Him for His sufficient grace to us.

Desire to praise the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, all the days of my life,

Pastor James Kim

Praise the Lord!

[Psalms 135]

We already meditated on Psalms 134 under the heading, “Praise the Lord.” We received the God’s word that God’s faithful servants who live a victorious life with God’s faithful help are told to praise God with confession of thanksgiving. Then, as I meditated on Nehemiah 8, I saw Ezra and the Israelites praising God in the revival of God’s Word. Why did they praise God? It was because the great God rebuilt the great wall of Jerusalem in 52 days with His great power. What lesson do these words give us? The lesson is we must praise God. Our God is worthy to be praised. We must praise God as we consider the salvation work that God has done in our lives, in the past, in the present and also in the future.

In Psalms 135: 1-3, the psalmist said ‘Praise the Lord’ four times. Why did he exhort us to praise the Lord four times? The reason is given in verse 3: “Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.” The psalmist encourages us to praise the Lord because He is good. In other words, we are instructed to praise the Lord because of who He is (more than what He does). And the psalmist confessed that it is pleasant to praise this good God (v. 3). Are we enjoying praising God because God is good and because we taste His goodness? Although we don’t understand all of God’s work in our lives, we must believe that God is good and He will accomplish His good will in the midst of all the things that we go through, and we must sing praises to God by relying only God and His goodness.

In Psalms 135:4, the psalmist tells us more specifically why we should praise God. He gives us four reasons (Park). I hope that we realize God’s goodness and taste the joy of singing God through these four reasons.

First, we must praise God because He has chosen us to be His own possession.

Look at Psalms 135:4 – “For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession.” The psalmist tells us that God chose Israel for His own possession “for Himself.” How could He choose the hard-hearted and sinful people like the Israelites “for Himself” for His own possession? In order to answer this question, we should not look to the Israelites, the chosen ones. Only when we look to God who chosen them can we know the meaning of “for Himself”. Why did God choose such people like the Israelites “for Himself”? The reason was because God loved them. Look at Deuteronomy 7:6-8: “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you” God chose us because God loves us. God chose us as to be His own possession because He loves us. Here, the word “His own possession” means “a treasured possession” (Deut. 26:18). Therefore we must praise God. We, who have been chosen by God as His own treasured possession in His love, must praise God.

Second, we must praise God because we are enjoying the natural grace that God gives.

Look at Psalms 135:6 – “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” The great God who created the heaven and the earth (v. 5) is God who moves everything in nature. God is in control of all the great and small things of the natural world as He pleases (v. 6). God is in motion to preside over His own treasured people whom He chooses to live on earth. For example, in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, God caused “a severe famine” in the county in where the prodigal son was living after he squandered his estate with loose living so that he might return to his father (Lk. 15:13-20). Another example is in the book of Exodus, God brought plagues such as hail, darkness and other plagues to Pharaoh and the Egyptians and delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh. In this way, God moved the nature and He still does in our lives. Of course, God makes or allows us to live in abundance through abundant crops, but He also makes or allows us to dwell in need through drought in our lives. Like God didn’t send rain when Ahab was sinning and made it rain again when He listened to Elijah’s prayer, sometimes God moves the nature to bring down the rain that we need and other times He stops the rain. What is important here is that we must acknowledge by faith that there is sovereign work of God in all of these. And we must praise God because we are thankful for enjoying natural grace that God gives us in His sovereign will.

Third, we must praise God because God has given us special grace of salvation.

Look at Psalms 135:12 – “And He gave their land as a heritage, A heritage to Israel His people.” God’s grace can be divided into two. One is general grace (also called natural grace) and another is special grace. General grace is God’s free grace that brings rain and cultivation to all mankind, even to the wicked. However, special grace is God’s grace that is poured out only on God’s chosen people. What is this special grace of God? It is salvation. We must praise God as those who are saved by God’s special grace. In Psalms 135:8-14, the psalmist writes of God’s great works of salvation of the Israelites, whom God loved and chose and delivered them from Egypt during the Exodus. The psalmist began first with God’s tenth plague among the ten plagues (v. 9) that is He smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast (v. 8). Then in verses 10-11, he talked about when the Israelites entered Canaan, the Promised Land, God defeated the Canaanites with His power. And in verse 12, the psalmist talked about God giving the Canaan, the Promised Land, as an inheritance to the Israelites. And in verses 13-14, the psalmist says that God’s work of salvation must be communicated for generations. The reason is because it is a sign of God’s love for Israel (Park). Therefore, if we love God, we must share God’s special grace of salvation with others. In addition, we must be able to be sure of God’s salvation not only in our lives now, but also in the difficulties we may face in the future, without forgetting and remembering and sharing God’s saving grace in our past lives. With that conviction and assurance, we must praise God in faith.

Fourth, we must praise God because our God is true God, unlike all idols.

Look at Psalms 135:15-17: “The idols of the nations are but silver and gold, The work of man’s hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.” Here the psalmist tells us why we should praise God as God’s chosen people who believe in the God of salvation and as His treasured possession. That is, the psalmist says that only our God of salvation is the true God (Park). The false idols don’t speak with their mouths, don’t see with their eyes, and don’t hear with their ears (vv. 16-17). All of these dead gods who cannot breathe are false. Hence, the psalmist says in verse 18: “Those who make them will be like them, Yes, everyone who trusts in them.” Because worshiping idols is a lie, it serves only as suffering for those who worship (Park). But God who loves us and chose us as His treasured possession saved us. Because of the covenant made in Jesus Christ, we have eternal inheritance, eternal life, as God’s covenant people. He is our God and we are His people. Therefore, we must praise the true Savior God.

The psalmist said ‘Praise the Lord’ four times not only in Psalms 135:1-3 but also in verses 19 and 20 as well. Look at Psalms 135:19-20: “O house of Israel, praise the LORD; O house of Aaron, praise the LORD; O

house of Levi, praise the LORD; you who fear him, praise the LORD.” In both the beginning and the ending of the Psalms 135, the psalmist exhorts us four times to ‘Praise the Lord’. He exhorts us to praise the Lord because He chose us as His own treasured possession, not only to give us natural grace but also to give us the special grace, the grace of salvation. He exhorts to praise the Lord because He is true God who gives us the grace of salvation. And he concludes this psalms by making this confession in verse 21: “Praise be to the LORD from Zion, to him who dwells in Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.” May we be able to taste and experience the joy of praising God for His goodness.

After praising the Lord's greatness,

Pastor James Kim

Conclusion

Our God is worthy of praise. This is because our God is the Lord Most High (47: 2, 9) who loves us the most (v. 4) and who reigns over as our King (v. 8). We are to sing the song of salvation, the song of victory to God, the most beloved Lord Most High and King who reigns over us [The song of Moses (1) (Exod. 15:1-18)]. We must praise God for who He is, what He has done for us, and what He will do in the future. We must also sing the song that must not be forgotten [The song of Moses (2) (Deut. 32:1-43)]. Although we are doing evil to God, we must praise God's greatness, and His glory as He chooses us, guides us, protects us, and trains us in this wilderness-like world. We must praise God's almighty power, God's kingship, and God's holiness [The song of Moses, the song of the Lamb (Rev. 14:2-4)]. Since the covenant God blessed us as God's people, we must praise God [The song of Balaam (1) (Num. 23:7-10)]. We must praise God because not only that God changed the curse into blessing for us by sending His begotten Son Jesus and let Him hang on the tree of curse, but also He separated us from the world, and made His people like dust on the earth. We must sing the truth of God and the God's unchangeability [The song of Balaam (2) (vv. 18-24)]. We must also sing our happiness and our exaltation [The song of Balaam (3) (24:1-9)]. We are to sing Jesus Christ, "a star," the descendant of David, and "the Bright Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16) [The song of Balaam (4) (Num. 24:10-19)]. And we must love the Lord. And we who love the Lord must be willing volunteers, depend on God's saving power and resolve and practice. Then God will cause us to shine forth the light of victory in this dark sinful world and also to shine up the light of salvation in this dark world. Therefore, we must shed the light of God's salvation by preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ [The song of Deborah and Barak (Judg. 5:1-31)]. We must live a victorious life. In order to do this, we must be the mighty of Jesus Christ and fight together the spiritual wars with our lives [The song of David (2 Sam 1:17-27)]. We must exalt Jesus, the King of kings, more than any king or people in the world. We must be lowered and humbled when we are exalted by people. And we must overcome the sinful jealousy [The song of women (1 Sam. 18:1-9)]. We are to sing and ask God, "O Lord. Revive Your work in the midst of the years" and "In wrath, remember mercy" [The song of Habakkuk (1) (Hab. 3:2)]. We must rejoice in the Lord. This is because God is our salvation and our strength [The song of Habakkuk (2) (vv. 16-19)]. We who heard the good news of great joy of the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ should praise the Lord's work of redemption by the glory of God and the peace of God that is Jesus Christ, like the numerous angels, because of His death on the cross and His resurrection [The song of the angels (Lk. 2:8-20)]. We are to praise the Lord because of His lovingkindness is better than our lives [The song of James (Ps. 63:3)]. We must give praise to God in acknowledgment of His being God. And we must boast and exalt God in our praise. We must look to God's authority and power and be faithful in praising ministry that enables others to put their trust in God ["Praise the Lord" (Ps. 134)]. We are to praise God, who has chosen us to be His own treasured possessions, and has given us not only the natural grace but also the special grace of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD." (Ps. 150:6)