

Dr. David Emanuel, Psalms of the Exodus, Session 5: Psalm 135 - The LORD's Supremacy Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome back, deep divers. Today we're going to be looking at Psalm 135, sometimes called the Lord's Supremacy, and we're bringing in some analysis by Dr. David Emanuel to help us understand it, particularly how it fits into this whole collection of what he calls Exodus Psalms. Yeah, and what makes Psalm 135 so interesting is the way it kind of brings together these three different elements.

You've got creation, you've got these key events from the Exodus story, and then a critique of idol worship, all being used to highlight God's unique power. It's almost like this psalm is making an argument, wouldn't you say? It does. What do you think the psalmist is trying to accomplish by combining all these different things? It does feel like a very carefully constructed argument, almost like a divine resume, showcasing God's actions and authority.

And you'll notice that it starts and ends with hallelujah, creating a powerful framework that emphasizes praise. That's a really interesting observation about the hallelujahs framing the psalm. It's not just like a casual expression here, is it? No, not at all.

It's much more like a command, urging the listener or the reader to actively praise and boast about God. And that connects to a deeper idea about God's name in the Bible. Right.

It's not just a label. It's about reputation and action. Psalm 135 is emphasizing what God does in the world, not just who he is.

So it starts by urging this praise and then immediately dives into the section about God's power over creation. But then it does something kind of unexpected. It mentions smiting the firstborn before the signs and wonders, which seems out of order compared to the typical Exodus narrative.

What do you make of that? That's a great point. It's definitely a deliberate choice to put that specific act of judgment first. The psalm highlights the ultimate display of God's power right from the start.

And it sets the stage for the rest of that divine resume that follows. It's like saying, remember this. Well, here's everything else this God can do.

Okay. Yeah. It's making a strong statement right out of the gate.

And then just like in Psalm 136, there's this focus on the Transjordan region, specifically Sihon and Og. How does that fit into this idea of God's power and authority? Well, that detail ties into this image of God as a conquering king. So by defeating those kings and giving the land to Israel, the psalm is highlighting God's authority over nations and territories.

It's not just that this God creates; he conquers and distributes lands as a divine inheritance. It adds another layer to that idea of the divine resume, demonstrating God's power in a different arena. So we go from creation to Exodus to conquering kings, building this case for God's power piece by piece.

And then we get to this really interesting praise intermission that feels like this hinge between God's power and this upcoming critique of idols. What's the significance of this section? That intermission is fascinating because it kind of revisits those core themes. God's everlasting presence, his enduring name, and his judgment of his people.

But the word judgment here is really intriguing because it can mean vindication for the righteous, but it can also mean punishment for the wicked. The psalmist leaves us to ponder which aspect of judgment is being emphasized here. That's a good point.

It adds a layer of complexity to how we understand God's actions. So let's talk about those idols. The psalm uses such vivid imagery to contrast them with God, describing them as having all these features but absolutely no function.

The complete opposite of the invisible yet all-powerful God that we've been exploring so far. And there's that interesting detail about the idols being made of silver and gold. Perhaps it's intentionally echoing the riches gained during the Exodus.

You know, turning the spoils of victory against these false gods. It's a powerful statement against idolatry, isn't it? It makes you think about how people could put their faith in something so clearly powerless when they've witnessed the true God's actions firsthand. Right.

And remember the social context here. This psalm seems to be intended for communal recitation, perhaps in the temple, with different groups like the Levites, the House of Aaron, and even those who fear God all participating. Right.

It becomes a collective declaration of faith and loyalty to the one true God. That's a powerful image. Yeah.

But then Dr. Emanuel drops this bombshell. Okay. He calls Psalm 135 a Frankenstein psalm because of how much it borrows from other biblical texts.

Right. Like, for example, we see significant overlap with Jeremiah. Okay.

And even more strikingly with Psalm 136. Wow. And it's mind-blowing to me.

That the psalm seems to borrow Exodus material from another psalm rather than the original source. What is that all about? Right. But that doesn't mean that it's unoriginal or less inspired.

Right. I was just thinking that. It's not like plagiarism as we understand it today.

Right. So how do we make sense of this borrowing? Yeah. What does it tell us about how the psalmist worked? Well, it suggests that the psalmists weren't just songwriters.

Yeah. They were also incredibly skilled interpreters of existing scripture. They weren't afraid to weave together different strands of biblical tradition.

Yeah. To create something new and meaningful for their audience. So they were engaging in... Yeah.

Let's delve deeper into that in the next part. Okay. Sounds good.

So before the break, we were talking about how Psalm 135 borrows from other texts. Right. And you were about to explain what that tells us about the psalmist.

Exactly. It shows us that they were doing something we might call biblical interpretation. Taking those existing scriptures... Okay.

...and creatively reinterpreting them for new situations and new audiences. That's fascinating. So it wasn't just about musical talent... Yeah.

...but also about theological depth. Yeah. Like they were scholars digging into the meaning of those older texts... Right.

...and then presenting them in this fresh and engaging way. Precisely. It adds this whole other dimension... Right.

...to what it meant to be a psalmist. Yeah. And it kind of raises a big question for us too.

Yeah. If they were so comfortable adapting this earlier material... Right. ...what does that tell us about the nature of inspiration and authorship in scripture? Exactly.

Wow. That is a deep question. It is.

It makes you think about how those texts were created and shared... Right. ...and reinterpreted over time. Absolutely.

It shows that scripture isn't just this static collection of words. Right. It's a living tradition.

Okay. So bringing it back to Psalm 135... Okay. ...what would you say are the key takeaways for us? Yeah.

The modern-day deep divers. I think this psalm offers a master class in how to creatively weave together those different strands... of biblical tradition to make a powerful point. Okay.

It's not simply retelling the Exodus story. Right. It's using that story... Okay.

...to highlight God's power and authority over all creation. You're right. It goes beyond just retelling the story.

Yeah. It's using those familiar elements... Right. ...to make this specific argument about who God is... Right.

...and why he's worthy of our worship. Exactly. It's highlighting his victory over earthly kings... Hmm.

...and contrasting him with those lifeless idols. This idea we talked about earlier, that divine resume... Yeah. ...the psalm is presenting all of this evidence... Right.

...for why this God is worthy of our allegiance. I think it's a great way to put it. Yeah.

It's showing us in a very concrete way why putting our faith in anything else is ultimately futile. And this idea of God's actions speaking louder than words... Yeah. ...that seems to run throughout the whole psalm.

It does. It's not just about abstract theological concepts. Right.

It's about what God has actually done in the world. Yes. And that's something we can really connect with even thousands of years later.

Yeah. The details of the Exodus might be ancient history... but that message about God's faithfulness and power... Yeah.

...is still relevant today. Absolutely. Yeah.

And then there's that final challenge in the psalm... Yeah. ...that call to praise... Right. ...and that warning against idolatry.

It's like the psalmist is saying, look, here's all the evidence, now make your choice. I see it more as an invitation than a challenge. Okay.

Although there's definitely a sense of urgency there. Yeah. It's like the psalmist is saying, come and see for yourself the greatness of this God.

Hmm. Experience the joy of praising him... Right. ...and the freedom that comes from turning away from those empty idols.

That's beautifully put. That really captures the heart of what this psalm... Yeah. ...is all about.

It's not just this intellectual exercise. Right. It's an invitation to a deeper relationship with God.

Yep. And I think that's what makes the psalm so powerful. Yeah.

They're not just ancient poetry. Hmm. They're this vibrant tapestry of faith and doubt and hope and despair... Right.

...woven together to speak to the depths of human experience. It reminds us that we're not the first ones to wrestle with these big questions about faith and doubt. People have been grappling with these things for millennia.

Yeah. And the psalms give us a language to express those struggles... and to find comfort and hope in the midst of them. And it makes you wonder, if the psalmists were so comfortable borrowing and adapting earlier material... Right.

...does that change how we read and interpret scripture ourselves? Hmm. Are we simply passive recipients of a fixed text? Right. Or can we actively engage in conversation with it, seeking to understand its meaning for our own lives and times? That's a powerful question, and one I think we'll need to unpack a bit further.

Yeah. Should we take a moment to consider what this means for us today? Absolutely. Yeah.

Because the implications of this are profound. Not just for how we understand the psalms... Right. ...but for how we approach the entirety of scripture.

So we've been talking about this idea of the psalmists as these interpreters of scripture, weaving together all these different strands of tradition. Right. How does that change the way we approach the Bible ourselves? Well, the fascinating question... For many of us, there's this assumption that originality is paramount... Right.

...especially when it comes to something as important as scripture. Yeah. But for the ancient world, this skillful weaving of existing traditions... Okay.

...to create something new and meaningful was very highly valued. So it makes you wonder if our modern ideas about authorship and originality are getting in the way of how we understand how these texts were actually composed. It very well could be.

And Psalm 135 is a prime example of this. Okay. If we only focus on what we might perceive as borrowed material... Yeah.

...we miss the artistry and the theological depth of what the psalmist has accomplished. They've taken these existing pieces, and they've crafted something entirely new. It's almost like sampling in music.

Yeah. Taking these familiar elements and creating something fresh and relevant for a new generation. That's a great analogy.

Yeah. It reminds us that we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Right.

Every time we approach scripture... Yeah. ...we can draw on the wisdom and the insights of those who came before us... Okay. ...and allow their voices to inform and enrich our own understanding.

So as we go back to our own reading and study of the Bible... Yeah. ...what would you say is the most important thing to keep in mind? I think the key is to read with open eyes. Okay.

And a willingness to engage with the text on its own terms. Look for those connections. Okay.

Those echoes of earlier texts. Yeah. Those creative reinterpretations... Yeah.

...that breathe new life into those familiar words. So don't be afraid to ask questions and dig deeper... Yeah. ...and make those connections.

Exactly. Wrestle with the text, allow it to challenge your assumptions... Right. ...and expand your understanding.

That's how we grow in faith and understanding. It's like that divine resume concept we talked about earlier. Yeah.

Psalm 135 isn't just presenting this list of facts. Right. It's inviting us to look at the evidence and make our own decisions about who this God is... Right.

...and what it means to follow him. That's beautifully put. It's an invitation to a relationship, not just an intellectual exercise.

Well, this has been an incredible deep dive into Psalm 135. It has. I feel like we've only just scratched the surface.

There's always more to discover, but... Yeah. ...hopefully this has given our listeners a deeper appreciation for the psalm's power and complexity. I think it has.

Thank you so much for guiding us through this fascinating exploration. It was my pleasure. It's always a joy to discuss the psalms with someone as curious and engaged as you.

Well, and to our listeners, we hope this has sparked your own curiosity... Yeah. ...to dive deeper into this world of the psalms. Absolutely.

There's so much richness and beauty waiting to be discovered. Yeah. Until next time, keep exploring.