

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide  
Psalms 46:1-11 (key verse 10)

History, Culture, & Context

The Book of Psalms is a part of Biblical wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). These books are: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Book of Wisdom, Book of Sirach (which is a part of the Apocrypha).



For this week's reading in Psalms, we read about God always being there to help and provide refuge to us in our time of need. God is the ultimate authority in all areas of our life and is our source of peace. We can have confidence in God's power and victory over our troubles in life. God will rescue and provide security to those who love Him and place their faith and trust in Him.

In verses 1-3, we see a reference to creation and God's activity in nature and being the source of our refuge. Creation is a result of God creating and bringing order out of chaos and continues to do so in nature. Verse 2 says, "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea..." No matter what may happen, God is always in control and is our help and refuge.

In verses 4-7, God is our help and sustainer. The "city of God" in verse 4 refers to Jerusalem, which does not have the water source and river banks as the other great cities in this region in antiquity. Nevertheless, the "river whose streams make glad the city of God" is the presence of the living God. There is also reference to New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:1-5; 22:1-5.

In verses 8-11, God is our hope and these verses focus on the future in which "wars cease to the ends of the earth." Verse 10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among nations, I will be exalted in the earth." According to the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible commentary, "This verse (10) might record a direct speech from God given to a temple priest or prophet. However, because of its brevity, this verse is more likely a citation of a well-known prophetic saying (see Hab. 2:20). The force of this command is probably directed to the worshipping community; the people are encouraged in the context to rest in God's power to save them from warfare (37:7)."

Questions to Consider

1. In verse 4, the Psalmist writes: "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells." What do you think this means?
2. In what ways can you seek refuge in God? What does this look like?
3. What is the significance of Jerusalem not having a river or water source in this chapter? What does it mean for us?