



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Psalms 96:1-13

New International Version

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 8, 2017**, is from **Psalms 96:1-13**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the **International Bible Lesson Forum**.

**(Psalms 96:1) Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.**

The Psalms often encourage believers to sing a new song to the Lord. As circumstances change and our comprehension of God and His mighty works increase, as we learn new truths about God from the Bible and receive answers to our prayers, we have many good reasons to

compose and sing new songs to the Lord. Like the Psalms we read, our new songs of appreciation and a deepening love for God may or may not be set to music. God deserves songs of praise from all the earth and everyone.

**(Psalms 96:2) Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.**

Singing older hymns and Psalms from memory reminds us of Biblical truths that have touched our hearts as we have proclaimed these truths among the people of God in worship. We sing because we are happy; we sing because we are free (see “His Eye is on the Sparrow”). We sing songs that bring back fond memories and time spent with loved ones and God. We sing because Jesus has brought salvation to us, and He has freed us from slavery to sin, Satan, and fear of death. As we praise the Lord in song, we proclaim the meaning of His saving grace; therefore, believers receive encouragement and unbelievers hear the good news that may lead them to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**(Psalms 96:3) Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.**

The Bible reminds us to declare the glory (the full truth) of God to others in every nation on earth. Proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ can lead people of every race and nationality to saving faith in Him. God’s marvelous deeds in the history of Israel can be proclaimed to

illustrate God's power, justice, and acts in history. Declaring God's most marvelous deeds when revealing His love and mercy in Jesus Christ can truly transform anyone and lead them to receive the gift of eternal life through faith in Him.

**(Psalms 96:4) For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.**

The Bible gives us numerous reasons to praise God and tell all nations about Him. As we read the Psalms, we can stop, offer words of praise to God, and thank God for every reason the psalmist gives us. The Lord is great, but sometimes people think they are the greatest. More important than "greatness" from a human perspective is being worthy of true praise because of one's character. God is morally worthy of praise and God uses His greatness and power for holy and worthy purposes. The Lord is to be feared and revered above all "gods" (that are not really "gods" since they are powerless), because the Lord is almighty and just, and He will bring justice to those who cry out to Him because of what they suffer from those who serve false gods or idols.

**(Psalms 96:5) For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.**

As the Holy Spirit inspired him to write his Psalm, the psalmist could think of the idols of Egypt, Canaan, and his pagan or rebellious neighbors. There is only one God, the

Lord. The New Testament reveals that demons have inspired the creation and worship of the “gods” or idols of the nations; Paul wrote, “Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons” (1 Corinthians 10:19-20). Satan tempted Jesus to worship Satan and become a king over all the nations of the earth, something Jesus refused to do because that would have made Him a slave of Satan; furthermore, that would have made it impossible for Jesus to be our Savior (see Matthew 4:1-11). The psalmist reminds his readers that the Lord made the heavens and no man-made idol has such power, not even with Satan behind it.

**(Psalms 96:6) Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.**

No matter how carefully carved or gilded with gold or silver, the wood or metal of an idol will decay and fade away or melt and be reformed by man or nature. Because it has no power, an idol can lay under rocks and rubble for centuries and may never be found. The splendor and majesty of God are from everlasting to everlasting. When believers enter the sanctuary of the Lord, they know the Lord has the strength to answer their prayers and glorify His Name through His answers to their prayers. God will become greater and greater in the eyes of those who love and serve Him.

**(Psalms 96:7) Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.**

To “ascribe” is to attribute something to a thing or person. Greatness might be “ascribed” to a sports figure by a fan. The Psalm challenges all families of all nations to ascribe or attribute to the Lord the true facts of God’s existence, nature, moral qualities, and lordship over all as the Creator and Ruler over all. Every person should ascribe to the Lord or declare that God is magnificent and honorable, perfect and powerful.

**(Psalms 96:8) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.**

People can know the name of someone, but until they know some truths about how that person thinks and acts, they cannot attribute qualities to them. The more people learn about God from the Bible and their personal experiences with God, the more they love God and the more they love to tell others about God. They give offerings to show their love and thankfulness to God and to those who have taught them more about God.

**(Psalms 96:9) Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.**

God’s holiness is beautiful. Moral purity is beautiful. The ability to show forth justice and mercy with the perfect

balance that love alone can achieve is beautiful or splendid. Such beauty is far greater than a painting, because holiness involves the choice to do what is right and the power to do what is best for all concerned. Everyone should tremble before the only One who has all these qualities and abilities – the Lord.

**(Psalms 96:10) Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns.” The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.**

The nations follow false gods and deceiving leaders; therefore, the Psalm encourages believers to declare to all the nations that the Lord reigns. The Lord is Lord over all, and all should tremble before the Lord because of His holiness and because He created and established the world. No matter what appears to be the case, God rules over all creation and it cannot be moved without the permission and power of God. Furthermore, God the Lord is the Just Judge over all the world and every person. God will judge us with equity (impartiality, on the same terms, without prejudice, with justice, without respect of persons) every person in the world, and this is another reason for people to tremble. When believers come to faith in Jesus Christ, they know God is their friend; so they have no need to tremble in craven fear before the Lord, but they will always show their Friend the love and respect God deserves.

**(Psalms 96:11) Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.**

Because the true God creates and rules over the universe so amazingly and wonderfully, the Psalm declares that it is fitting and proper for the entire universe to rejoice and be glad over the fact. The entire universe can be glad that the Lord is such a benevolent and wise Creator and Ruler over all, a Ruler who cares about and looks over the needs of every individual and all He created.

**(Psalms 96:12) Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.**

In poetic imagery, the psalmist wants everyone to consider the fact that our Lord reigns over all, and everyone should proclaim this fact. Every created being and thing is or should be not only happy but jubilant over the fact that our Lord reigns supremely over the nations instead of false gods or demons. Even the fields and forests have reason to sing for joy to the Lord, and perhaps they do in a language unknown to us.

**(Psalms 96:13) Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.**

Finally, the Psalm looks to the future when God will make all things right. Whereas creation now groans (see Romans 8:20-22), all creation can rejoice in the Lord because of what God will do in the future through Jesus the Messiah. The psalmist foretold that the Messiah is coming, and He will judge the world in righteousness and faithfulness. Jesus did so when He fulfilled John 3:16, and He will complete the task of judgment in righteousness and faithfulness when He comes again as He promised. Even now, as the psalmist foresaw, Jesus is preparing for His Second Coming. He will judge with a righteous judgment those who practice injustice, and He will bring justice to those who suffer unjustly. He will save with faithfulness those who trust and obey Him as their Lord and Savior.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What are some reasons someone might give today for singing a new song to the Lord?
2. In what ways does Psalm 96 show God's concern for everyone?
3. Name one marvelous deed of God from the Old Testament and from the New Testament.
4. Give one or more reasons why God is worthy of praise.
5. How can Psalm 96:10 give you confidence and courage when facing an unknown future?

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Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson*.

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