

[Ps 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (1) Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.
Shout joyfully to God, all the earth,
sing praise to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.

Say to God, "How tremendous are your deeds!"

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

"Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you,
sing praise to your name!"

Come and see the works of God,
his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

He has changed the sea into dry land;
through the river they passed on foot;
therefore let us rejoice in him.

He rules by his might forever.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare
what he has done for me.

Blessed be God who refused me not
my prayer or his kindness!

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

Jerome Biblical Commentary

Ps 66. A mixed type: A hymn of praise and, thanksgiving for national deliverance (1-12) and a thanksgiving by an individual (13-20). There is no convincing explanation of the relationship between 1-12 and 13-20. It is not clear that 1-12 are a sort of choral prelude to 13-20 (Gunkel) or that the individual in 13-20 is a king who speaks for the "we" of 1-12 (the "king-Ego" style of Mowinckel). And it always remains possible that two separate Pss have been joined. Structure: 2-4, an invitation to praise God; 5-7, the praise is motivated by his works, especially at the Exodus; 8-12, the invitation is renewed and allusion is made to God's testing of Israel; 13-15, a declaration of an individual that he will offer sacrifice; 16-20, a testimony addressed to God-fearing bystanders about God's kind intervention.⁶ The reference is to God's saving action in the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan.⁷ God's world-wide rule is the reason why "nations" and "peoples" (8; cf. 2, 4) can be urged to praise him.⁹⁻¹² These lines acknowledge Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from some trial, presumably the Exodus experiences alluded to in 6.13. A thanksgiving song of an individual, accompanying a sacrifice (15), begins here.16. Preaching to bystanders (the "testimony") is a characteristic part of a thanksgiving Ps.

Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Haydock's Catholic Commentary

Ver. 1. *Psalm*. Cassiodorus, &c., add, "of David." But it is thought, he was not the author of this and the following piece, as his name is not in the original. (Calmet) --- This argument is, however, of small weight. --- *Resurrection*. Hebrew, Origen's Septuagint, &c., omit these words, (Berthier, T. iii.) which seem to have been added by some Greek Christian, who thought he perceived some allusion to the resurrection of Christ, ver. 9. The Fathers have well explained it in this sense, though they also apply it literally to the return of the captives, (Theodoret; Calmet) and to the general resurrection, the end of all the miseries of the elect, (Bellarmine) as well as to the conversion of the Gentiles, (Genebrard) and the resurrection of a soul from the state of sin. (Haydock)

Ver. 3. *Lie*. Prove faithless *to thee*, (Psalm xvii. 46., &c.) notwithstanding the evidence of thy wonders, and their deceitful professions. Thus the Samaritans pretended they wished to assist the Jews to build the temple; yet soon after obtained an order from court to hinder it, 1 Esdras iv. 1., and viii. 36. (Calmet) --- Pharaoh frequently promised to let the people go, but as often broke his word. (Worthington) --- They had been moved with servile fear. (Menochius) --- The sight of God's judgments upon the world was enough to inspire terror. (Worthington)

Ver. 5. *Men*. Choosing some, and rejecting others, (St. Jerome) calling the Gentiles, while he casts off the Jews. (St. Augustine)

Ver. 6. *In him*. God, (Haydock) Jesus, (Eusebius) or "on it," the river Euphrates, which we shall pass over with as much ease, as our ancestors did the Red Sea. So the prophets frequently speak in a figurative sense, Isaias xi. 16., and i. 3., and Zacharias x. 10., and 4 Esdras xiii. 41. (Calmet) --- As Josue led the Israelites across the river Jordan on dry land, (Haydock) so we shall extol thy wonders. (Worthington) --- *There*, reflecting on these prodigies, both past and present, we shall rejoice. (Menochius)

Ver. 7. *Provoke him*. The faithless Jews, or Gentiles; particularly those of Babylon; or those among God's people, who neglected his service, Aggeus iv., and 1 Esdras ix., &c. (Calmet) --- These often gave way to murmuring, and are therefore exhorted not to be proud, lest they should be brought low.

Ver. 8. *Gentiles*. By this invitation, he predicts their conversion.

Ver. 9. *Moved*. The apostles were most courageous. Only those Jews returned, who had separated themselves from impure idols, 1 Esdras v. 21. The Church never fails. If some apostatize, others embrace the faith. (Worthington)

Ver. 10. *Tried*. So Daniel was treated, Daniel iii. 21. The Babylonian captivity is compared to a furnace, as well as all severe trials of virtue, Proverbs xvii. 3., and Zacharias xiii. (Calmet)

Ver. 11. *Back*. Hebrew, "loins." The Captives had experienced the greatest miseries, as the martyrs of Christ have done since. (Calmet) --- The Church is put to the most severe trials. (Worthington) --- Yet God brings no one into the *net* of sin. This is solely the effect of man's corruption. (Haydock)

Ver. 12. *Fire and water*, which the Egyptians considered as the emblem of purity, (Horus. xli.) and which here denote the greatest tribulations. (Calmet) --- The just still overcome by God's grace, (Worthington) notwithstanding all the efforts of tyrants who may be set over them. (Menochius)

Ver. 14. *Uttered*. These were alone deemed obligatory by the Jews, (Leviticus v. 4.; Calmet) yet the more enlightened knew that God discerns the secrets of hearts, whence the force of a vow proceeds. (Haydock)

Ver. 15. *Marrow*. Malachy (Malachias i. 13.) reproaches some for presenting lean victims. (Calmet) --- *Offer*. Hebrew *ehese*, "will make." Septuagint use *Greek: poieso*, in the same sense, and are followed by the writers of the New Testament. --- *Do this, &c.* (Berthier) --- The best external victims of the old law are here specified. Yet even then the internal sacrifice was most pleasing. (Worthington)

Ver. 16. *My soul*. Every Israelite ought to cherish the same sentiments. (Calmet)

Ver. 17. *Extolled*, by meditation, (Muis) or God has immediately granted my request. (Theodoret) --- Some Latin Bibles read, "I have exulted under my tongue," which my heart directs. (Worthington)

Ver. 18. *Heart*. Being enslaved to any passion. (Haydock) --- Iniquity and dissimulation hinder the effect of our prayers; and in some sense, it is true, that God does not hear sinners: (John ix. 31., and 2 Timothy ii. 9.) though He regards favourably such as wish to repent, like the publican, Luke xviii. 14. (Calmet) --- Whosoever would be heard, must repent of his sins. (Worthington)

Bible Text & Cross-references:

An invitation to praise God.

1 Unto the end, a canticle of a psalm of the resurrection.

Shout with joy to God, all the earth, 2 sing ye a psalm to his name; give glory to his praise.

3 Say unto God, How terrible are thy works, O Lord! in the multitude of thy strength, thy enemies shall lie to thee.

4 Let all the earth adore thee, and sing to thee: let it sing a psalm to thy name.

5 Come and see the works of God: *who* is terrible in his counsels over the sons of men.

6 Who turned the sea into dry land, in the river they shall pass on foot: there shall we rejoice in him.

7 Who by his power ruleth for ever: his eyes behold the nations; let not them that provoke *him* he exalted in themselves.

8 O bless our God, ye Gentiles; and make the voice of his praise to be heard.

9 Who hath set my soul to live: and hath not suffered my feet to be moved:

10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us by fire, as silver is tried.

11 Thou hast brought us into a net, thou hast laid afflictions on our back: 12 thou hast set men over our heads.

We have passed through fire and water, and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings: I will pay thee my vows, 14 which my lips have uttered,

And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

15 I will offer up to thee holocausts full of marrow, with burnt-offerings of rams: I will offer to thee bullocks with goats.

16 Come and hear, all ye that fear God: and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul.

17 I cried to him with my mouth: and I extolled him with my tongue.

18 If I have looked at iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

19 Therefore hath God heard me, and hath attended to the voice of my supplication.

20 Blessed be God, who hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

Daily Study Bible Series (non-Catholic)

COME AND SEE—COME AND HEAR

Psalm 66:1–7

To the choirmaster. A song. A Psalm.

¹Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;

²sing the glory of his name;

give to him glorious praise!

³Say to God, “How terrible are thy deeds!

So great is thy power that thy enemies cringe before thee.

⁴All the earth worships thee;

they sing praises to thee,

sing praises to thy name.”

Selah

⁵Come and see what God has done:

he is terrible in his deeds among men.

⁶He turned the sea into dry land;

men passed through the river on foot.

There did we rejoice in him,

⁷who rules by his might for ever,

whose eyes keep watch on the nations—

let not the rebellious exalt themselves.

Selah

What a strongly “evangelical” psalm this is! The temple minister speaks first. He invites not just believing Israel, but *all the earth* (!) to make a joyful noise to God. Evidently man, the creature, is not meant to keep his praise of God tucked up in his heart. There is a missionary element in his praise. The shouting can become a form of attack against the powers of evil. It is like a Maori *haka* which a rugby team can use to scare the opposing team out of its wits before the game begins. We find it used in this way by Joshua at the siege of Jericho (Josh. 6:20). *Sing* (or, better, sing to the accompaniment of a musical instrument) *the glory of his name*. As we shall see, as the poem proceeds, God’s glory is to be equated with his power. This is the equation that Paul uses in his Letter to the Romans. And God’s *name*, as we have seen, is the very essence of his being.

But of course we do not and cannot know the essence of God. “No man can see God and live.” But we can know and we can see what God has *done*. The deeds he has done are *terrible*, because they are performed by him to whom all power belongs. Those who oppose him find that he opposes them. So they feign submission, or *cringe before thee*. But those who willingly submit to him are glad to “bow with their face to the ground” before him. This last verb should be noted, for there are several words for *worship* in Hebrew. The physical position here is that employed to this day by the Muslim when he is at prayer. He spreads his prayer-mat on the ground, kneels down on it, then touches the ground in front of him with his forehead. Neither Jews nor Christians, however, have kept up this position, probably because in cold and wet Europe there are easier ways to bow down! What happened was, as time went on, that people either (a) stood to pray, or (b) knelt on the ground—not on a kneeler or on a nice soft cushion as is common today, or else (c) remained seated in a chair or pew. All three positions have survived to this day. Naturally the physical position is not important to God. This great invitation then ends with a clash of cymbals, shown by the word *Selah*.

Come and see what God has done. Not, “Come and let us have an argument about the existence of God”. Rather we remember the simple [NT](#) cry: “This one thing I know”, as the man born blind exclaimed, “though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). What God has done is awe-inspiring, *terrible*. *He turned the sea into dry land*. Israel remembered her escape from Egypt. *Men passed through the river on foot*. They remembered the crossing of the river Jordan (Josh. 4:23). But, theologically speaking, the river here means also the waters of chaos, shown as the power of sickness and death. We have kept that idea alive to this day in the hymn, “One more river, and that’s the river of Jordan, one more river to cross”, meaning, of course, the river of death.

There then in those historical moments of crisis *did we rejoice in him*—without seeing him, remember, without arguing about his existence, for all we saw was what God had done. So we can now take the next three steps of faith: (a) We can declare that *God rules by his might*, (b) that *God rules for ever*, and we can declare that (c) *God rules over all nations*. So then, warns the psalmist, you who rebel against his rule—watch out!

THE TRAINING OF THE SERVANT

Psalms 66:8–12

- ⁸Bless our God, O peoples,
let the sound of his praise be heard,
⁹who has kept us among the living,
and has not let our feet slip.

¹⁰For thou, O God, hast tested us;
 thou hast tried us as silver is tried.
¹¹Thou didst bring us into the net;
 thou didst lay affliction on our loins;
¹²thou didst let men ride over our heads;
 we went through fire and through water;
yet thou hast brought us forth to a spacious place.

The Good News is meant for all peoples. The poet invited the heathen to *bless* or lay their hands on the head of *our* (Israel's) *God* (as we have seen the action means literally; see at Ps. 63:4). What an extraordinary invitation to the heathen! He goes on: *God has kept us*, (Israel), *among the living—why? He has not let our feet slip—why?* Yet Israel already knows why, already knows the answer. Our poet need only hint at it here, because he has already suggested the answer as given above.

The next three verses describe what it means to *pass through the river*, and so to be *tested and tried* by God. Here we must recall the familiar language of the great prophets. As we have now seen twice in this psalm, God is *terrible*. The prophets therefore dare to declare, again and again, that “Our God is a consuming fire” (e.g. Deut. 4:24; Isa. 10:17; 33:14, etc.). This is why God speaks to man *out of* the fire, for that fire is himself (Exod. 3:2; 24:17; Deut. 4:12, etc.). No wonder later generations pictured Hell in terms of flames of fire; for “it is a fearful thing” (as Heb. 10:31 puts it) “to fall into the hands of the living God”, this God who is terrible in his deeds.

But there is another aspect to fire. A metal can be refined only if it goes through the furnace, be melted, and then be *re-created* in a new form. Before it entered the flames it was of course a precious commodity, even though it was still mixed with dross. Yet the dross in it simply must be burned away (see Job 23:10; Isa. 1:25; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2–3). But the “evangelical” element in all this is the proclamation that God too goes through the fire and through the floods *with* his people Israel (e.g. Isa. 43:2), a reality that is made clear to us in a memorable parable (Dan. 3). It may be that the parable, written some centuries later than the exile in Babylon, was actually intended to interpret our passage here as well as such others as Isa. 43:1–2. If such a parable does not offer us “good news”, then what does? Our passage, then, ends with *thou hast brought us forth* (not “sent us out”, but “led us out” thyself) to full satisfaction (see [RSV](#) verse 12, [ftn.](#)). This last word covers the idea we find at Ps. 23:5, where we meet with the phrase “my cup runs over”; for the cup is so full that it cannot hold any more, just as a sponge can be so full that it is “satiated” (the word in Hebrew here); and so one becomes totally satisfied, and made ready for service to God.

TWO STEPS TO SALVATION

Psalm 66:13–20

¹³I will come into thy house with burnt offerings;
 I will pay thee my vows,
¹⁴that which my lips uttered
 and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.

¹⁵I will offer to thee burnt offerings of fatlings,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

Selah

¹⁶Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for me.

¹⁷I cried aloud to him,
and he was extolled with my tongue.

¹⁸If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.

¹⁹But truly God has listened;
he has given heed to the voice of my prayer.

²⁰Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me!

We have to note here how well this psalm expresses the deep recesses of biblical theology. Let us therefore begin by remembering the two words we have met before, *yeshā* (masculine form), *yeshuah* (feminine), both of which, unfortunately, are translated in the RSV by the same word, “salvation” (see the Introduction). *Yesha* tells us what God *has done* to save us, as we found the psalmist considering above. God had delivered them, rescued them, saved them, had brought them out of slavery into his life in a *spacious place* (verse 12), that is, into their land flowing with milk and honey. In the same way, we today can “know” what God has done for us when he rescued us from the powers of evil, whether these be greed, or lust, or alcohol or drugs, or just sheer emptiness of life, and gave us a place in his spacious Kingdom. Thus we “know” what *yeshā* means. Yet in the passage we cited above, Isa. 43:1–4, the prophet makes the event of salvation even more clear, for there God goes on to address Israel *after* he has redeemed her and *after* he has claimed her as his people, using the lovely words, “You are mine...and I love you”. This is because God’s redemptive activity is not complete in his act of *yeshā*. None of us, for example, dare declare “I am saved” and do no more about it. We have got to get into the act of “saving” others. We have to enter upon the second step in God’s plan of salvation. For until we do so then we are not saved ourselves. In the Bible a person is “saved” only when he or she has accepted the whole new way of life of love and compassion that is a reflection of the essential nature of God himself. We recall how, after Jesus had said to Peter “You are my disciple”, he went on to challenge him with the words: “Take up your cross and follow me” (see also Matt. 10:38–39; 16:24–25).

Paul interprets what this psalm is referring to in his Letter to the Romans. In the first eleven chapters he expounds *yeshā*, what God’s salvation means as it comes to us from his free grace. Till that point he has dealt with God’s plan at its Stage I. But he begins chapter 12 with the word *therefore*, and then leads us his readers to discover the essential nature of

Stage II. This second Stage is described in terms of the [OT](#) word *yeshuah*, which speaks of God empowering a person who has now been “saved” to take up his own cross, and so to present his body as a living sacrifice. For sacrifice is God’s chosen way of changing the world, and both the psalmist and the Christian must necessarily share in the act. It is not for nothing that the theology of sacrifice is laid out for us in the book of Leviticus. (See the study of this in the *Daily Study Bible* volume on *Leviticus*.)

Thereafter Paul spells out in detail what presenting your body as a living sacrifice means for ordinary people, how it means costly giving, costly hospitality, carrying the spite of one’s enemies without retaliating, and so on. “The new man” is learning to live in the Kingdom of God where the accent is not upon progress from one event to another; but upon the reality that good comes out of evil, love out of hate, but only at the expense of the Cross that is always there in the heart of God (Hos. 11:8–9). When we follow God’s command then we find that he is always *with* his servant who is being prepared for service to the world; consequently since we must carry our cross, we discover that God shares with us in carrying it. The pure metal spoken of in this psalm is an intimation of the “Kingdom of God” that can emerge only once God *didst lay affliction on our loins* (verse 11), and *didst let men ride over our heads*.

It is because God has been through the fires with “me” that “I” consider no offering to be too costly to make to him in responsive gratitude. This God of ours is extraordinary. He has actually invited this “I” to share in the cost of the world’s redemption with himself. But in the meantime he has brought us into *a spacious place*, the place where our cup runs over.

Verses 16–20. Earlier on in the psalm we heard the words “Come and see what God has done” (verse 5). Now we meet with the words, “Come and hear...” The Church has always needed a ministry. Someone, trained to do so, has always interpreted by word of mouth what God has *done*. Yet here the speaker is his own interpreter—I *will tell what he has done for me*, in fact, how he went through the fires with me.

John Bunyan immortalized these very words for us, writing from prison, in his famous book *Grace Abounding*. Surely he of all people knew all about the fires of suffering. *He was extolled “under”* (literally) *my tongue*, that is, I kept my story there, ready to tell it to any who would listen to me. When *I cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not listen*, but instead, *he has given heed to the voice of my prayer*.

Blessed be God, then. Despite the sin in my heart (for though redeemed I am still a sinner) which I myself have noticed, he has chosen neither to *reject my prayer*, nor to take away his *steadfast love from me*.

[NT](#) New Testament.

[RSV](#) Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

[ftn.](#) Footnote to a verse in the RSV.

[OT](#) Old Testament.

Knight, G. A. F. 2001, c1982. *Psalms : Volume 1*. The Daily study Bible series. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville

Old Testament Survey series – James E. Smith (non-Catholic)

Praise for Awesome Works (Ps 66).

Ps 66 is anonymous, but the language appears to connect it with the deliverance of Judah from the host of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (Isa 36–38). The psalm has two main divisions. The first twelve verses use the first person plural, as though a choir were singing; verses 13–20 are in the first person singular, as though it were intended for a soloist. Within these two main divisions four stanzas appear: (1) a summons to praise God (vv. 1–4); (2) the mighty works of God (vv. 5–7); (3) the marvelous ways of God (vv. 8–12); and (4) the exuberant worship of God (vv. 13–20).

66:1–4. All are summoned to worship God and acknowledge the greatness of his power. They should “make a joyful noise” or shout, i.e., greet him with the acclaim which befits a victorious king. They should “sing forth” the honor of God’s name, i.e., his character. The praise should recognize the awesome works of God. It should contemplate the day when all enemies will become submissive to the Lord. It should acknowledge that one day all the earth will worship and praise God.

66:5. The nations are invited to contemplate some of God’s awesome works for his people in the past. All men must fear God; but it depends on themselves whether they will reverence him as their God, or dread him as their enemy.

66:6. God turned the Red Sea and the Jordan River into dry land before his people. Identifying with the Israelites of ancient times, the psalmist regards the nation as possessing an unbroken continuity of life. Thus he can say: “there [at the Red Sea and Jordan] did we rejoice in him.”

66:7–8. This God of awesome works past is still ruling in the present. He keeps watch lest any foe should injure Israel. The psalmist warns those who obstinately resist God’s will to humble themselves. The psalmist calls upon the nations to praise God. He is conscious of Israel’s mission to the world.

66:9. Israel was at the point of national death and ruin, but God preserved and upheld the nation. The particular deliverance will be described in the following verses.

66:10. Through the ordeal of the invasion, Israel had been purged of dross as impurities are smelted out of precious metals.

66:11. God had deliberately brought his people into the power of enemies to punish them for their sins. He had laid a crushing blow upon their “loins,” i.e., an affliction which caused them to bow down under its weight.

66:12. As a vanquished people Israel had been flung down upon the ground, and trampled under the horse hoofs and chariot wheels of their conquerors. “Fire and water” are symbolic of extreme and varied dangers. God brought them through that adversity to “abundance,” the opposite of the privations which had been endured.

66:13–15. The change to the singular pronoun indicates that the king enters the temple. He comes with burnt offerings expressing devotion, and peace offerings to fulfill his vows which he made in the hour of national distress. “Incense of rams” denotes the sweet savor of the sacrifice ascending as it was consumed by fire. Rams and he-goats were prescribed in the law for worship by the entire nation or its leaders, not by ordinary Israelites.

66:16. “All who fear God” are bidden to hear what he has done for the king who is speaking. In the light of the universal emphasis of this psalm, the phrase probably includes pious Gentiles who had been converted as well as Israelites.

66:17–19. Even while the king prayed, he had praises ready to offer up, so sure was he of

a positive answer from the Lord. Hypocrisy would have disqualified the suppliant, but he was confident that he was no hypocrite. The answer to the prayer indicates that his assessment was correct. This is not self-righteousness, but the simplicity of a clear conscience.

66:20. The psalm concludes with praise to God for answered prayer and continued mercy.

Smith, J. E. 1996. *The wisdom literature and Psalms*. College Press Pub. Co.: Joplin, Mo.