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The Bible Society of Malaysia

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GS's Message

Reading the Bible, Knowing that God Rules with Power

Bible Text: Psalm 93: 1-5

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Introduction

I was on my family vacation in Tasmania in the last week of July. Rented a seater, we toured alongside the East Coast, from Bicheno to Coles Bay and from there to Hobart, the capital of Tasmania. In this stretch of coastal land, there are many scenic beaches and bays. We marveled at God's amazing act of creation. Above all, what attracted me is the oceanic wave, which thrust forward from afar to the coast, producing loud, thundering sounds. The wave at times move a bit further in the coast, but there is a limit set for them to soar and roll. Then comes the backwash, as the water returns to the ocean. Watching the wave and listening to its roaring sound remind me of the supreme rule of God in Psalm 93.

The Wave in Psalm 93

The power of water as the means of God's judgment and as the destructive force is to be found in the event of Noah's building of Ark (found in Genesis 6-9) and in the event of the drowning of the ancient Egyptian army at Red Sea (found in Exodus 14). Here, the Psalmist describes it as 'the flood' (NRSV, or 'ocean' in Good News Translation). The formal translation found in NRSV and ESV portrays the movement of the oceanic wave in three successive steps:

The floods have lifted up (v. 3a)
The floods have lifted up their voices (v.3b)
The floods have lifted up their roaring (v. 3c)

As audience reads the text attentively, it is like listening to an orchestra where the pitch becoming higher one after the other. The power of the water is manifested by its movement and its voices. Water, as it is so soft in our palm, is so powerful when it collectively joins with others and run forward, to the extent that even rock of the mountain succumbed to the piercing effect of the wave and thus caves were formed out of the momentum of the water. One of the caves that made me wondering of its formation is the Remarkable Cave in Port Arthur. Due to the constant impact of wave, a long tunnel was formed through the rocky mountain. How amazing it is to watch this scenic nature with Psalm 93 in our minds!

Where is the source of origin for 'the flood' in Psalm 93? It is believed in the Ancient Near East world that the raging water often symbolize uncontrollable chaos, even so in the primordial ocean. We find this concept in Gen 1:2 - 'darkness covered the face of the depth'. Or does it refer to the water of the Red Sea that has destroyed the mighty army of Egypt who pursued the fugitive Israelite, as in the Song of Red Sea: 'At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea' (Exodus 15:8). I think more likely it may even refer to the strong wave from the Mediterranean Sea that constantly surges toward the coast of Tel Aviv or other parts of West Coast of Israel. Amazingly, in A.D. 1050, when a Jewish poet Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai walked along the shore of Mediterranean Sea, the powerful wave inspired to compose a poem to tell others the powerful love of God. On this, he writes,

"Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole Though stretched from sky to sky."

Later in 1917, Frederick M. Lehman added the first and second stanzas to this poem to form the famous hymn, 'the Love of God'. It is beyond doubt that the love of God with its forces is more powerful than waters!

The King Who Rules in Psalm 93

The Structure of Psalm 93 is to be divided into three parts: verses 1-2 about the Lord's Rule over the world; verses 3-4 about the Lord's power more mightier than the oceans or waters; verse 5 about the Lord's Rule by His Decrees and His temple. It is like the challenges of life (as many waters) is controlled and ruled by the Lord and His ordained decrees and His own abiding among us!

In verses 1-2, the Lord is portrayed as the Ultimate King, and yes, in fact, He is! The passage begins with 'The Lord is King, He is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength'. Here, the Psalmist presents to us a King of glory and majesty. The 'robe' here signifies his rule and control over all, while the phrase 'girded with strength' carries the meaning of 'the execution of His plan by His own power'. In essence, the Lord is the One who not just rules over us, but also he has power to make his will complete in us.

Sowing God's Word in Every Way



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Next comes the second part of verse 1 describing the extent of the King's rule: 'He has established the world; it shall never be moved'. The sun rises and sets in His established times. The moon appears full and bright at a time but disappears altogether at another time. The wind blows and goes away. It is like what Matthew Henry comments, 'The world also is established; it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas; it is so still, by that providence which upholds all things and is a continued creation; it is so established that though he has hanged the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7) yet it cannot be moved; all things continue to this day, according to his ordinance.' To this Almighty God, we give thanks all the times for His wonderful providence!

The preserving power of God is followed by the length of His acts of establishment: 'Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting'. God rules from the beginning of the creation, and He will rule forevermore, as He is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8).

The Kingship of God is not complete without the acknowledgment of the manner of His rulership. It is appended at verse 5 where Psalmist declares with certainty that 'Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore'. The rule of God among us is closely connected to two gifts that He gives to us. The first is 'His decrees (or in some translation, His testimony)', and the second 'His house'. His decrees refer to His words or His deeds as recorded in the Bible, and these decrees are to be our guideline for our living in a way that fits in His rulership. In another words, if we are to submit ourselves to God's rule in our lives, it is of utmost important to read His Word, the Bible. Furthermore, the Bible becomes a testimony to us on how God rules over us. These decrees are described as the 'counselors' to those who have delight in them (Psa 119:24).

Next, there is the importance of 'your House' which refers to the temple of God where God and His people meet regularly. In our Christian context, the church is also described as the House of God too (1 Tim 3:15). The living power of God's testimony in our life, and the community of the faithful in which we share our experience of God's testimony to our fellowship sojourners, are a mirror of how God rules over us. In church worship, we submit ourselves again to God's rule in our lives, and at the same time, we give glory to Him for His goodness to us has been manifested in Christ and in our walk with Him.

Reflection

In the ministry of the Bible Society, we see ourselves as a part of God's rule among the churches. We translate the Bible into different languages so that people of these languages come to know that God is a King who rules over all, and this King cares about them just as He cares about us! We makes the Bible translation as our goal as we truly know that God desires to rule over all by His decrees and by His abiding among the faithful, that is, the church. As a matter of fact, we too acknowledge that the Lord is the King who rules over the Bible Societies, making them channels of blessing to bring His Words to all people whom He loves so dearly that He establishes His salvation plan by the cross! To God be the glory, Amen!





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News And Events

1. Rev Dr Daniel See, the Acting General Secretary and Translation Consultant, has tendered his resignation for both posts on 2nd July at the Exco Meeting, and the resignation has been accepted by the Board. His last day of work in BSM is 30 September 2016.

2. We have launched the Iban Study Bible since august last year (2015), and have since seen good progress of the translation in that the translator has finished the first draft for the books of Genesis and Ruth, as well as some introductory notes of the New Testament. The translator has just attended a training workshop in August this year, and from the use of this software, we expect the efficiency of translation will be further enhanced. The need for this project is grounded on the fact that the Iban Christian community is in need of Scripture engagement due to lack of study materials on the Bible itself. Please continue to pray for the health of the translator and the good progress of the project. If the Lord touches your heart and you are willing to play a part in giving financial support for the project, please alias with our Administration Manager, Grace Khoo (email: gracekhoo@bsm@gmail.com or mobile: 012-3127831).

3. The Bible society in Taiwan has published a series of high quality Study Bible notes based on each individual books of the Bible, and now some of them are available at our Damansara Kim office. We welcome personal enquiry and group order for all these materials.

The brochure is attached below:



4. We have published a Rungus Translation of the bible, Kitab Vagu Habal do Kovosihan, in 2013. If anyone would like to buy a copy for the distribution to the Rungus people in Sabah, you could contact Book Room in Damansara Kim.





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Speakers of four dialects of Kenya's Luhya language recently celebrated the launch of their own Bible. This is the sixth Bible translation into one or more dialects of Luhya. In total, the language has 18 dialects, but now five sub-tribes of the Luhya community are able to read God's Word in the language closest to their heart.

A unique new app developed by Bible Society New Zealand to help get children reading the Bible is being made available to other Bible Societies to use and adapt.



Migrants workers in Kuwait face very difficult conditions. Sharing God's Word of comfort and guidance with the Christians among them is a key part of the ministry of the Bible Society in the Gulf.