

Psalm 68

To the chief Musician, A Psalm [or] Song of David.

Psalm 68: Though no superscription is found in this psalm, most interpreters agree that it was written when the Ark of the Lord was transferred from the house of Obed-edom to the new location on Zion's mountain (2 Sam. 6:2-18). Certainly, it describes the procession attached to that significant event, but it is more than a historical narrative. It is rich with theology since, at that time, God's person and His place for Israel in the world seem to have been understood in a much deeper way. The procession is first introduced (verses 1-3). Because the Ark represented the presence of God with His people, its movement to a new location is a reflection of God's continual blessing on His people and conquest of her foes. Next is a call to praise the Lord for His majesty and His care for the needy (verses 4-6). The present event of relocating the Ark is now put into perspective within the history of the Lord's works (verses 7-23). Specifically, it is, in a sense, a reliving of the Exodus (verses 7-10), and of the conquest of Canaan (verses 11-14).

The Lord has clearly elected Zion as His abode from which He protects His people (verses 15-23). David next describes the procession itself (verses 24-27), with its "singers" and "players" (verse 25), and the various tribes (verse 27). Finally, the psalm concludes with two hymns (verses 28-35): a hymn of Israel expressing her prayer for continued deliverance (verses 28-31), and a universalistic hymn that speaks of the Lord's rule over all the earth (verses 32-35). The theological significance of this majestic hymn is twofold. First, it reiterates in a beautiful way, the Lord's election of Israel as a basis from which His rule and blessing flow to the earth. Second, it reveals a growing understanding of the person of the God of Israel. A study of the names of God alone in the psalm establishes this second point: "God" (verse 1), "his name JAH" (verse 4), "the Almighty" (verse 14), "the Lord" (verse 16), "the Lord God" (verse 18), "the Lord" (verse 19); a different Hebrew word from (the one in verse 16), and "God the Lord" (verse 20). The action of God in deliverance (verse 18), is interpreted messianically by Paul and applied to the ascension of our Lord (Eph. 4:8).

Verses 1-35: This exuberant psalm includes prayer, praise, thanksgiving, historical reminder, and imprecation. It expresses a pride in Jehovah God for His care over His people and His majesty in the universe. The writing of this psalm may have come out of David's jubilant restoration of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (compare 2 Sam. 6:12-15).

- I. A Fanfare of Commendation (68:1-6).
- II. A Reflection on Faithfulness (68:7-18).
- III. An Acclamation of Majesty (68:19-31).
- IV. An Invitation to Praise (68:32-35).

Verses 1-6: None ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. God is the joy of his people, then let them rejoice when they come before him. He who derives his being from none, but gives being to all, is engaged by promise and covenant to bless his people. He is to be praised as a God of mercy and tender compassion. He cares for the afflicted and oppressed. Repenting

sinners, who are helpless and exposed more than any fatherless children, are admitted into his family, and share all their blessings.

Psalm 68:1 "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him."

"Let God arise": The first sentence in this psalm is essentially the same as (Num. 10:35). It was perhaps a fanfare of words announcing the movement of the Ark of the Covenant (compare verses 24-27; also 2 Sam. 6:12-15).

This psalm echoes the Song of Deborah in (Judges chapter 5): the presence of the wicked on the earth is an affront to the holiness of God.

God in verse one above, is Elohim. Some noted scholars believe that this was sung when the Ark was moved to mount Zion. This is about the same thing that happened when the cloud by day, and the fire by night, moved to lead the children of Israel in the wilderness. As long as the presence of God was stationary over the camp, the Israelites stayed camped, but when the presence of God moved, by the fire or the smoke, the people followed. In a sense, it was God rising and moving. We do know that when God sent them into battle with the Ark with them, they won the battle. In a sense again, the enemy was scattered. I believe we would be more successful in our endeavors for God now, if we would let Him lead the way. Many times, we get ahead of God and that is when we fail. We also know that the fame of what happened to the Pharaoh of Egypt spread, and the people before the company of Israelites were afraid of Israel's God and they fled.

Psalm 68:2 "As smoke is driven away, [so] drive [them] away: as wax melteth before the fire, [so] let the wicked perish at the presence of God."

This both describes the character of wicked men, Christ's enemies; as their darkness and ignorance, their will worship and superstition, and their detestableness to God (Rev. 9:2). And the manner of their destruction; which is as easily brought about as smoke is driven by the wind, and is as irretrievable, like smoke that vanishes into air (see Psalm 37:20).

"As wax melteth before fire": Whereby its consistency, form, and strength, are lost. Respect may be had, both in this and the foregoing metaphor, to the fire of, divine wrath, and the smoke of eternal torments; since it follows.

"So let the wicked perish at the presence of God": The appearance of Christ, either in his awful dispensation against the Jews, or in the last judgment. When the wicked shall not be able to stand before his face, but shall call to the rocks and mountains to hide them from him. And when they shall be bid to depart from him, and shall be punished with everlasting destruction in soul and body, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.

Smoke is of no permanent nature. When the wind blows, it moves with the wind. Perhaps that is what is intended here. The enemy is like a puff of smoke, blown away. Everyone who has ever lit a candle knows what happens to wax when the heat comes in contact with it. It is very much

like the smoke, it is gone. The wicked will perish at the presence of God. If God looks upon sin, He burns it up. This is the case here.

Psalm 68:3 "But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice."

That is, let them be prosperous and happy. Let them be under thy protecting care, and partake of thy favor. While the wicked are driven away like smoke, let the righteous live, and flourish, and be safe (compare Psalm 32:11).

"Let them rejoice before God": In the presence of God; or as admitted to his presence. The wicked will be driven far off. The righteous will be admitted to his presence, and will rejoice before him.

"Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice": Margin, as in Hebrew, rejoice with gladness. The expression is designed to express great joy; joy that is multiplied and prolonged. It is joy of heart accompanied with all the outward expressions of joy.

We have spoken over and over, about the righteous being those who are in right standing with God. When God arises, it would do nothing but bring overwhelming joy to those who are in right standing with Him. Only those who have not been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and taken on the righteousness of Christ, would have fear or dread. These next Scriptures say it better than I ever could.

1 Peter 1:5-9 "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:" "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see [him] not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" "Receiving the end of your faith, [even] the salvation of [your] souls."

Psalm 68:4 "Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him."

"His name JAH": Other names for God in this psalm include God (Elohim, verse 1), Lord (Adonai, verse 11), Almighty (verse 14), Lord God (verse 18), God the Lord (verse 20), and King (verse 24).

The false god Baal was called "the rider of the clouds", so using the title here for God emphasizes God's superiority over all other gods (Deut. 33:26).

"YAH" is a shortened form of the divine name Yahweh (translated "I AM" as in Exodus 3:14-15).

JAH is the same name as Jehovah. He is LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. When we sing praises to God, it should be worshipful. The praises we sing should not be for entertainment, or even for the people around us to hear, but for the ears of God.

2 Chronicles 2:6 "But who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who [am] I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?"

Really, we should praise Him, when we think of why the Son of God would suffer the humiliation of the cross for us.

Psalm 68:5 "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, [is] God in his holy habitation."

He now proceeds to mention some of the reasons for which God is to be praised. Of these this is one, that he is the patron of such as are injured and oppressed, and have not power to help themselves.

"And a Judge of the widows": Of such who are widows indeed in a literal sense, and especially that are believers, his elect that cry unto him (see Luke 18:2). And of such who are so in a spiritual sense; even of the whole church of Christ, who may, even now, be said to be in a widowhood estate, as well as under the former dispensation. Since Christ, her bridegroom, is gone to heaven, and who yet, in the meantime, is her Judge, protector, and defender. And when she is made ready for him, as a bride adorned for her husband, will come and take her to himself, and she shall remember the reproach of her widowhood no more (Isa. 54:4).

"Is God in his holy habitation": In heaven, the habitation of his holiness, where is Christ the high and Holy One. And has respect to the poor and lowly, the fatherless and the widow. Or in his church, his holy temple, where he dwells and walks, and grants his gracious presence. And will do to the end of the world, according to his promise. Or in his holy human nature, the temple and the tabernacle, in which the Godhead dwells.

You may not have a father on this earth, but if you are a Christian you have a heavenly Father that you can call by His special name, Abba. Only His children are allowed to call Him by this name. God has always taken care of His family. Widows will not be widows in heaven, if they are believers in Christ. They will be the bride of Christ. Where is the holy habitation of God? God is omnipresent. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, but He is also in the believer. Christ in us the hope of glory. Where two or three or gathered, He is in the midst.

Psalm 68:6 "God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry [land]."

"Setteth the solitary in families": God cares for those who have lost families, especially the orphans and widows (verse 5; compare Exodus 22:22-24; Psalm 10:14; James 1:27).

"Those which are bound with chains": Speaks of God's liberating prisoners of war.

This was so true of those who came across the wilderness to the Promised Land. Those rebellious children who had no faith, died in the wilderness. Sometimes only one in a family believes and follows God. To be in a family of non-believers, is truly to be bound.

Verses 7-14: Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies. If God brings his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and to bring them out of it. He provided for them, both in the wilderness and in Canaan. The daily manna seems here meant. And it looks to the spiritual provision for God's Israel. The Spirit of grace and the gospel of grace are the plentiful rain, with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found. Christ shall come as showers that water the earth. The account of Israel's victories is to be applied to the victories over death and hell, by the exalted Redeemer, for those that are his. Israel in Egypt among the kilns appeared wretched, but possessed of Canaan, during the reigns of David and Solomon, appeared glorious. Thus the slaves of Satan, when converted to Christ, when justified and sanctified by him, look honorable. When they reach heaven, all remains of their sinful state disappear. They shall be as the wings of the dove, covered with silver, and her feathers as gold. Full salvation will render those white as snow, who were vile and loathsome through the guilt and defilement of sin.

Psalm 68:7 "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:"

In the pillar of cloud, and in the pillar of fire, as the Targum adds. And this divine Person was the Son of God, the Angel of his presence, in whom his name was, even his name JAH or Jehovah before mentioned.

"When thou didst march through the wilderness": At the head of the Israelites, leading, guiding, and directing them. Providing for them all things necessary, and protecting them against their enemies. And so Christ goes before his people, as they pass through the wilderness of this world. And does the like good offices for them, until he, as the great Captain of their salvation, brings them safe to glory. For what is here said is taken notice of as a resemblance of what he now does, or has done, under the Gospel dispensation, to which this psalm belongs. Particularly of his marching through the wilderness of the Gentile world, in the ministry of the word by his apostles. Wherein he went forth conquering and to conquer.

God did go before them in the wilderness. His presence led them. The amazing thing to me, is that He would still call these rebellious people His. Selah, of course, means pause at this point and think on this.

Psalm 68:8 "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: [even] Sinai itself [was moved] at the presence of God, the God of Israel."

Not only about Sinai, but in other places (see Psalm 114:1). It may also design the dread and trembling of the inhabitants of the earth, when they heard of the wonderful things God did for his people (Exodus 15:14).

"The heavens also dropped at the presence of God": The Targum supplies, dew; to which may be added, quails and manna. Though it rather seems to design a large shower of rain, which followed the lightning and thunder, when the law was given.

"Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel": It is said to quake greatly (Exodus 19:18). The words of this verse and (Psalm 68:7), seem to be borrowed out of the song of Deborah (Judges 5:4). Like effects followed the promulgation of the Gospel, even a shaking of the heavens and of the earth as an emblem of the removing of the ceremonial rites and Mosaic ordinances. Let it be observed, that Christ, who went before the Israelites in the wilderness, and whom they tempted and rebelled against, is called the God of Israel.

We know that the earth, and the mountains, and the heavens are all subject to the God that made them. The presence of God was so great at mount Sinai, that the people were frightened greatly. Look with me in the next few verses, at the effect the presence of God had on the people and on the mountain. Look also and see that God appeared as a fire and smoke, the same as the way He led them in the wilderness.

Exodus 19:16-18 " And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that [was] in the camp trembled." "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount." "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

At this time, the Israelites were the only people known as God's people.

Psalm 68:9 "Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary."

"Confirm thine inheritance": God sustains His covenant people.

Each time the children of Israel sinned against God, He forgave them and blessed them. It rained Manna from heaven to feed them when they were hungry. God led them to water to drink even where there seemed to be no water. The Rock provided water for them. They wore the same shoes for 40 years, and they did not wear out. This is miraculous provision for His children. All the nations around them never doubted their inheritance, because of the miraculous provision God made for them.

Psalm 68:10 "Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor."

That is, in the Lord's inheritance, in the midst of his church and people. The word for "congregation" signifies "beasts" or "living creatures". Some understand them of the Gentiles, who, before the Gospel came among them, were comparable to such. But, under the Gospel dispensation, being called and taken out by it, were put among the people of God, and dwelt in his inheritance. Though, without any limitation, it may be applied to all that are quickened and

made alive by the grace of God. To all that are written among the living in Jerusalem. And particularly to the ministers of the Gospel, who are signified by the four living creatures, in Ezekiel's vision and in John's Revelation. Though not to the exclusion of any living believer, who has a name and a place here, and who are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

"Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor": Blessings of goodness, spiritual blessings, blessings of grace and of glory. Which flow from divine goodness, are in themselves good, and in their effects; and these were prepared in the covenant of grace and in Christ from all eternity. And that for persons poor and mean, indigent and helpless. And so the goodness of God in preparing them appears to be free and unmerited. The Targum is, "thou hast prepared a host of angels to do good to the poor of God." Arama interprets it of the manna.

The children of Israel were the congregation of God. These people had been in bondage to the Egyptians, yet God kept them, without them working for these 40 years.

Psalm 68:11 "The Lord gave the word: great [was] the company of those that published [it]."

the matter of the word or discourse here following. He put this triumphant song into their mouths. He gave his people all those successes and victories which are here celebrated. Or, gave the matter or thing which was published.

"Great was the company of those that published it": The works of God on the behalf of his people were so glorious and wonderful, that all sorts of persons, both men and women, that heard of them, broke forth into songs of praise to God for them. The Hebrew word is of the feminine gender, because it was the manner of the Hebrews, that when the men returned victorious from the battle, the women went out to meet them with songs of triumph (Psalm 68:25; Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; 1 Sam. 18:6).

This company that published it, was approximately 3 million people. The Word of God is still alive and being published today by His true followers.

Psalm 68:12 "Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil."

This contain allusions to the Song of Deborah and possibly to similar poems which have not been preserved to us. Many commentators regard them as the triumphal song of the women celebrating the victory. But it is better to take them as the continuation of the poet's description of the victory. The verses run in pairs (and Psalm 68:13 is parallel to 68:12). The first line paints the scene in the battle-field; the pell-mell rout of the defeated kings: the second line depicts the scene at home when the warriors have returned with their spoils.

"And she that tarried at home divided the spoil": The church, compared to a woman that keeps at home (Titus 2:5). Who shared in the spoils taken out of the hands of Satan, and from among the Gentiles, even converted souls, brought unto her. What is promised to Christ (Isa. 53:12); is said

of the church. She being made more than a conqueror through him, and sharing in all his victories and spoils. It denotes the certain and easy success of the Gospel ministry, attended with a divine power, and the advantages thereof to the church of Christ. This was particularly true of the church in the times of Constantine.

As we said earlier in this lesson, the nations that Israel passed on the way to the Promised Land had heard of how God fought their battles for them and they were afraid and fled before them. This is saying, that the women, who were not actually in the battle, shared in the spoil they got in battle.

Psalm 68:13 "Though ye have lien among the pots, [yet shall ye be as] the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Though ye, ye Israelites, to whom he now turns his speech.

"Have lien among the pots": Like scullions, that commonly lie down in the kitchen among the pots or hearthstones, whereby they are very much discolored and deformed. Which is fitly opposed to the following beauty. Though you have been filled with affliction and contempt.

"Yet shall ye be": Or, ye have been. Which may seem more suitable to the context, both foregoing and following, wherein he doth not speak prophetically of things to come, but historically of things past. So the sense of the verse is, though you have formerly been exposed to great servitude, and reproach, and misery, to wit, in Egypt. Yet since that time God hath changed your condition greatly for the better.

"As the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold": Beautiful and glorious, like the feathers of a dove, which according to the variety of its postures, and of the light shining upon it, look like silver or gold.

The thing to do with this I suppose, is to look at the symbols. The dove speaks of the Holy Spirit. The silver speaks of redemption and the gold speaks of God. It appears that the women (symbolic of the church), has been in a lowered condition among the pots. This to me, is symbolic of the church filled with the spirit of God being redeemed by God. Enough said.

Psalm 68:14 "When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was [white] as snow in Salmon."

"Snow in Salmon": A mountain near to Shechem (Judges 9:48); which seems to have had its name from the shady trees upon it; and which also, as it seems from hence, was sometimes covered with snow; as was Lebanon, so called from the whiteness of the snow on it. Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it, "in darkness", or "in the shadow of death"; God Himself fought their battles. They may be said to be so, as having got the victory over all their enemies; and especially this will be the case when the kings of the earth will be scattered and destroyed by the Almighty Savior (Revelation 7:9).

White symbolizes righteousness. When God scattered His enemies, righteousness reigned.

Verses 15-21: The ascension of Christ must here be meant, and thereto it is applied (Eph. 4:8). He received as the purchase of his death, the gifts needful for the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of believers. These he continually bestows, even on rebellious men, that the Lord God might dwell among them, as their Friend and Father. He gave gifts to men. Having received power to give eternal life, the Lord Jesus bestows it on as many as were given him (John 17:2). Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. The glory of Zion's King is, that he is a Savior and Benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming fire to all that persist in rebellion against him. So many, so weighty are the gifts of God's bounty, that he may be truly said to load us with them. He will not put us off with present things for a portion, but will be the God of our salvation. The Lord Jesus has authority and power to rescue his people from the dominion of death, by taking away the sting of it from them when they die, and giving them complete victory over it when they rise again. The crown of the head, the chief pride and glory of the enemy, shall be smitten; Christ shall crush the head of the serpent.

Psalm 68:15 "The hill of God [is as] the hill of Bashan; a high hill [as] the hill of Bashan."

“Hill of Bashan”: A mountain across the Jordan to the east, here figuratively described as jealous of Mt. Zion (compare verse 16), the place which had been chosen for the special presence of God (compare Jer. 22:20-21).

Bashan was a very tall mountain physically. This is saying then, that the hill of God was high and lifted up. The hill of God, even though not physically as high, was spiritually higher.

Psalm 68 Questions

1. God, in verse one, is _____.
2. Most noted scholars believe this was associated with what event?
3. What prior event does, the fact that God arises, remind us of?
4. When God sent the Israelites into battle with the Ark leading the battle, what happened?
5. We would be more successful in our endeavors today, if we did what?
6. The fame of what God had done to Pharaoh spread, and had what effect on the nations Israel passed by?
7. What is the nature of smoke?
8. What happens to a candle, when a flame gets too close?

9. What does God do when He looks upon sin?
10. Who are the righteous?
11. What is the end of your faith?
12. What unusual name is God called, in verse 4?
13. When we sing praises, it should be _____.
14. Whose ears should the praise be for?
15. You may not have a father on this earth, but if you are a Christian, you have a heavenly _____.
16. Who will be the bride of Christ?
17. Where is the holy habitation of God?
18. Those rebellious children that had no faith, died in the _____.
19. What effect did the presence of God on mount Sinai have on the people?
20. What effect did the presence of God on mount Sinai have on the mountain?
21. The Lord descended on the mountain in what?
22. Who were the only people known as God's people at this time?
23. How did God confirm their inheritance?
24. What kind of provision did God make for the children of Israel on the way to the Promised Land?
25. Who were the congregation of God at the time of the wilderness experience?
26. Who publishes the Word of God today?
27. Did the women, who were not in the heat of battle, share in the spoil?
28. What does the dove symbolize?
29. What does silver symbolize?
30. What does gold symbolize?
31. Who are the women symbolic of?
32. When God scattered His enemies, _____ reigned.

33. What is Bashan, in verse 15?