

Rhema Christian Center
Triumphant Tuesday Bible Study
PSALM 68
Teacher: Sarah Twitty

This is a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving written by David. It calls for the wicked to flee before God, celebrates God's victorious march from Egypt to Jerusalem and calls for the nations to praise God.

GOD ARISES – ENEMY SCATTERED

¹Let God arise, let Your enemies be scattered; let those who hate You flee before You. The message bible says, *“Up with God! Down with his enemies!”*

When the Levites, lifted the ark of the covenant to bring it to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), David was making a victory declaration and connecting it with his historical past regarding the ark. In Numbers 10:35 Moses spoke these same words when the ark of the covenant was lifted at Mt. Sinai. *“Rise up, O Lord. Let your enemies be scattered.”*

What was the ark of the covenant?



It was a symbol of God's presence among His covenant people--the Israelites. It was a reminder that God had made a covenant with Israel and was going to keep it. As Israel travelled through the wilderness for 40 years, the ark was present with them. Only the Levites could handle the ark. When the ark was present with Israel in battle, their enemies were defeated.

After the Israelites had settled in Canaan, they had constant battles with the Philistines who captured the ark of God and took it to Ashdod.

- The ark was taken to Dagon's temple and placed beside Dagon. Dagon was the idol of the Philistines. The next morning Dagon had fallen on the ground before the ark of the LORD. They put Dagon back in its place. The second morning Dagon had fallen again. This time his head and hands had been broken off. Also, the people of Ashdod were afflicted with tumors.
- They moved the ark from place to place in Philistine country trying to find a home for it, but it only brought devastation. People were stricken with tumors and other illnesses. Finally they tried to take it to Ekron, but the people cried out, "Send the ark of the God of Israel away; let it go back to its own place, or it will kill us and our people (I Sam. 5:11).

The ark was finally returned to the Israelites, and it remained in the house of Abinadab for 20 years. However, it was David's heart desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem. On David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, he was unsuccessful because Levitical guidelines for transporting the ark were not followed. The priests were transporting the ark on a cart. When the oxen stumbled making the ark tilt, Uzza, the priest puts forth his hand to steady the ark and is immediately killed by God.

The ark was then moved to Obed-edom's house for the next three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household. When David hears about this, he decides once again to move the Ark to Jerusalem. This time the Levites get it right. They follow the guidelines for proper handling of the Ark. Instead of placing it on a cart, the priests carried the ark using two wooden poles inserted through rings on each side of the ark as stated in the law.

The verse goes on to say, “. . . *let those also who hate Him flee before Him.*” This is talking about the enemies of God—many of the heathen nations were enemies of God.

Just as God had enemies, Moses had enemies, David had enemies and you too have enemies. Anyone who stands up for what is right will have enemies. David compares his enemies to smoke and wax. Verse 2 says, ***“As smoke blown away by the wind, may you blow them away; as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God.”***

What can smoke do to us? It can suffocate us, but if we keep fresh air coming in—the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit—it can't bother us. Smoke is quickly blown away, and the wax quietly melts. David prayed that the wicked would perish just as easily. (Weirsbe). The msg. bible says that our enemies are ***“Gone like a puff of smoke, like a blob of wax in the fire.”***

Verse 3 says, let ***“3. . . the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.”*** The righteous are those who are in right standing with God. When God arises in our hearts, it brings nothing but overwhelming joy.

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS: A KING OF GOODNESS (68:4-6)

4“Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds. By His name JAH and rejoice before Him.” The false god Baal was called the rider of the clouds, so using the title JAH for God or Yahweh emphasizes His superiority over all other gods. God is the mighty conqueror riding on the clouds.

God is ***5“A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows. . .”*** He expresses his special concern for the orphan and widow and His care to make those who are lonely part of His family. His desire is to help those in need.

6 “God makes homes for the homeless, leads prisoners to freedom, but leaves rebels to rot in hell. (Msg). God cares for the weak and vulnerable. He led Israel, a nation of prisoners, into the prosperity of the Promised Land. Those who failed to follow His lead ended up dying in the wilderness.

WILDERNESS BLESSINGS (68:7-10)

In verses 7-10, David describes the giver of blessings and the victories of God.

⁷O God, when You went out before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, ⁸The earth shook; the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. ⁹You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, whereby You confirmed Your inheritance, when it was weary. ¹⁰Your congregation dwelt in it; You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor.

As the nation of Israel journeyed through the wilderness, God was with them every step of the way. All they had to do was to obey. They didn't have to figure out the logistics—God was their guide. By night He led them by a pillar of fire and by day by a cloud. The ark of the covenant went before them.

Through God's Holy Spirit, He is still guiding us today. He told His disciples that if He did not go away the Comforter which is the Holy Spirit would not come, but when He came, He would guide into all truth and righteousness. God did not leave us to fin for ourselves. He has gone before us and bore our sins on the cross. We are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

David continues his thoughts on God's presence and care for Israel as they travelled through the wilderness on the way to Canaan. God protected them from their enemies. As long as they walked with God, no nation could defeat them. He was their protector and provider. They didn't have to worry where their meals were coming from. They were given manna and quail for food, and God sent rain to quench their thirst.

VICTORY OVER ENEMIES (68:11-14)

Verses 11-14 speak of God granting Israel victory in its battles against the armies of various kingdoms on the way to subduing the Promised Land.

¹¹The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those who proclaimed it: ¹²Kings of armies flee, they flee, and she that tarried at home divided the spoil." ¹³Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. ¹⁴When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Zalmon

God has already declared victory. When the men returned victorious from battle, the Hebrew women went out to meet them with songs of triumph. Example: Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:34); David returning from war as Saul's general (1 Sam. 18:6). And even though some didn't go out to battle, they shared in the spoils.

These verses not only speak of Israel's victory but our victory and how Jesus became a curse for us and carried our sins to the cross. And through Jesus' death, we have the victory in a battle that Jesus won for us. And because He won the victory for us, we as a great company are to praise him and proclaim to the world that Jesus saves.

CELEBRATION OF GOD'S ASCENT TO MOUNT ZION (68:15-18)

¹⁵A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; a mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan. ¹⁶Why do you fume with envy, you mountains of many peaks? This is the mountain which God desires to dwell in; yes, the LORD will dwell in it forever.

According to the Ryrie Study Bible, “this probably refers to the Mt. Herman Range. These mountains were depicted as jealous of Mt. Zion (Jerusalem), which God chose for his dwelling place.” Bashan was higher physically, but God’s mountain was higher spiritually. God usually chooses the lesser things to exalt. (***“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”***)” Isa. 55:8-9.

¹⁷The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the Holy Place.

God had instructed ancient Israel not to have many chariots because God was their Commander-in-Chief. He would protect and fight for them. He had power greater than thousands of chariots.

ASCENSION OF THE MESSIAH (Psa. 68:18)

¹⁸You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell there.

This is a picture of the Conqueror distributing the spoil. The victorious reap the benefits of the spoils from the defeated. When Jesus won the victory over our and His enemy. We reaped the benefits of that victory.

Ephesians 4:8, 11-12 says, ***“Wherefore he saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;” “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”*** These are the gifts Jesus gave to the body of Christ.

BLESSINGS OF GOD’S PEOPLE (68:19-20)

¹⁹Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation!

Jesus is the God of our salvation. We are covered by His blood and he daily loads us with benefits. However, some commentators think the verse is more accurately translated, *Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden* (RSV).

God is the One who gives us the burdens of life. If we are walking in the will of God on the path of His choosing, and if we have burdens to bear, He is the One who has given them to us.

Example: Paul

²⁰Our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death.

David reminisces about how God defeated Israel’s surrounding enemies. He knew that everything was under God’s control. Just as God was in control then, He is in control now.

GOD'S TRIUMPH OVER ENEMIES (PSA. 21-31)

21But God will wound the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses.

This verse is saying that those who do not repent will be destroyed. God is longsuffering and willing that all come to repentance, but all will not. I John 3:6 says, “*Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.*” Those who continue in their sins are headed for destruction.

22The Lord said, “I will bring back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, 23That your foot may crush them in blood, and the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies.”

The dog’s tongue portrays that much blood of the enemy will be shed in the battle and Israel will be victorious. God’s people are victorious.

PARADE OF PRAISE (68:24-31)

In the next few verses, the psalmist describes the triumphal procession as the singers, musicians and dancers, followed by the tribal representatives, as they enter the sanctuary (24-27).

Msg. bible says, “***24-26See God on parade to the sanctuary, my God, my King on the march! Singers out front, the band behind, maidens in the middle playing timbrels. The whole choir blesses God. Like a fountain of praise, Israel blesses GOD.***”

It was no secret when God was in the sanctuary either the fire or the smoke from the fire was visible. When God was ready for them to move, smoke and fire led the way. David personalizes his relationship with God by saying MY GOD. In our relationship with God, it must be personal for “***God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***” (John 4:24).

David made it clear that this was not his parade, but God’s parade to honor Him. For, “***God Inhabits the Praises of His People***” – Psalm 22:3

The fountain of Israel speaks of those who came from the loins of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The law of God as well as Jesus came from the fountain of Israel. Therefore, we should bless God at all times and His praises shall continually be in our mouth.

27Look—little Benjamin’s out front and leading princes of Judah in their royal robes, princes of Zebulun, princes of Naphtali

Benjamin was the smallest tribe and Judah was the largest tribe in the south. Zebulun and Naphtali were northern tribes that David may have chosen because together these four tribes represent all the Israelites, from the south and the north.

28Your God has commanded your strength; Strengthen, O God, what You have done for us. David knew that in his weakness, God is strong and ***through Him we would do valiantly: for God shall tread down Israel’s enemies.*** (Psa. 60:12). As the song goes, let the weak say that they are strong.

CONFIDENCE FOR FUTURE VICTORIES. (29-31)

No longer will other nations conquer Israel and force it to pay heavy taxes. Instead, these nations will bring *their* offerings to Israel, as they submit themselves to the rule of God (29-31).

²⁹Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, Kings will bring presents to You. The world shall acknowledge you by bringing tribute, as subjected kings brought tribute to their conquerors.

The temple that Solomon built for God in Jerusalem was the most magnificent building anywhere. When the Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom and magnificent temple, she brought gifts of gold, spices and precious stones to Solomon.

³⁰Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples, till everyone submits himself with pieces of silver. Scatter the peoples who delight in war. ³¹Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.

David names Egypt and Ethiopia as the two great ancient enemies of God, and of his people, as the most wicked, and idolatrous, and incorrigible sort of men. In fulfillment of prophecy through Jesus, he says ***princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia*** acknowledging that the **Gentiles** will come into the knowledge and worship of the one true God.

THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH PRAISE THE GOD OF ISRAEL (32-35)

³²Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; Oh, sing praises to the Lord, Selah. ³³To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which were of old! Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.

Knowing the ultimate victory of God, David invited the nations to worship Him *now*. It was far better for them to do it now out of a willing, surrendered heart than to do it later as conquered enemies of God.

³⁴Ascribe strength to God; His excellence is over Israel, And His strength is in the clouds.

David is saying that God has all power in heaven and in earth and occupies both heaven and earth. ***The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe.*** When we are weak, He is strong. If we need strength from God, we should just ask for it. (Isa. 40:32, says ***“But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”***

³⁵O God, You are more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to His people. Blessed be God!

The psalm is concluded with an ascription of blessing to the Messiah, who is God blessed for evermore. And who, as Mediator, is the promised seed, in whom all nations of the earth are to be blessed.

Sources:

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