



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 68

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The title of this Psalm is *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. A Song*
- Some believe that *the Chief Musician* is the Lord God Himself, and others suppose him to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33, 16:5-7, and 25:6)
- As with Psalm 65, 66, and 67, this Psalm is described as both a *Song* and a *Psalm*
- The author of this Psalm is David in which he describes God using military language



Introduction

- There was a controversy among scholars as to the occasion of writing this Psalm
- Some believe that it was written by David to commemorate the victories over the enemies of his people as a whole
- Others believe that it was written to commemorate certain victories mentioned in 1 Chronicles 19:6-19; 2 Samuel 12:26-31
- And others believe that he wrote it to be sung during moving the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed Odom, in Kirjath Jearim, to Jerusalem celebrating not only that event, but also the faithfulness of God to give Israel victory over her enemies, and to make Jerusalem secure enough to bring the ark into the city



Introduction

- Others find an appropriate occasion for it in the victory of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram over Moab, or in the repel of the Assyrians in the reign of Hezekiah
- Others place it in the closing years of the Babylonian Exile, and others after the Return from Babylon, at a date decidedly later than the time of Nehemiah
- The obvious suggestion from this wide variety of opinion is that the data is insufficient for forming a definite conclusion
- The Psalm begins with almost the same words that Moses used when the ark set forward in his times, Numbers 10:35



Introduction

- The whole Psalm fitly pictures the way of the Lord Jesus among His believers and His ascent to glory
- David, by the eye of prophecy, saw the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven
- It is a Messianic Psalm that reveals the salvation presented by the Lord to the whole world
- This Psalm is quoted by St. Paul, (Ephesians 4:8-13)
- This Psalm is not in the Book of Agpeya
- The litany of the assemblies, in the liturgy, includes the first verse of this Psalm



Introduction

- The church quotes some of its verses to be used in the praise, sung during the month of Koiahk, that speaks about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation work, in preparation for the Feast of Nativity
- Some believe that it is rather difficult to interpret this Psalm considering it the most difficult Psalm in the Holy Book of Psalms as it is packed with symbolic and figurative expressions
- However, Psalm 68 is a lengthy expression of God's power and glory
- This Psalm expresses a triumphant and conquering God that other nations will pay tribute to or fall beneath



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The God of Victory 68:1-3
- Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6
- The Mighty Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10
- Celebrating His Victories in War 68:11-14
- Victory on the Mountains 68:15-18
- The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23
- The Procession of the Ark 68:24-27
- Confidence for Future Victories 68:28-31
- A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



The God of Victory 68:1-3

- The overall theme of 1-3 verses is: the advent of God brings terror and destruction to His enemies, blessing and joy to His people
- Psalms 67 begins with an echo of the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24, and the opening words of Psalms 68 are based upon the prayer used when the Ark, the symbol of the Divine Presence in the midst of Israel, set forward on its journeys in the wilderness, *“Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You.”* (Numbers 10:35)
- And in these same words David began this Psalm



The God of Victory 68:1-3

- Both are expressions of confidence, that, whenever God arises, His enemies will be scattered and dispersed before Him
- The same language was also used by Solomon when the ark was removed to the Temple, and placed in the most holy place 2 Chronicles 6:41
- This is also a fitting prayer by which to remember the glory and strength of the resurrected Jesus
- When Jesus rose, all His enemies scattered, none dared oppose Him
- This arising, may be interpreted of His incarnation, His manifestation in the flesh



The God of Victory 68:1-3

- Or of His resurrection from the dead, as it is interpreted by many church fathers
- Or this may also be understood of His arising and put forth His power on the behalf of His people, and against His enemies
- St. Athanasius, in his book *the Life of St. Antony*, tells us that St. Antony fought against the devil with this verse and defeated him
- *Let His enemies be scattered;* The Jews, who said, “*We will not have this man to reign over us;*” which has been literally carried out; for no nation was ever so scattered over the world as that of the Jews



The God of Victory 68:1-3

- *Let those also who hate Him flee before Him*, Some interpret this of the guards set to guard our Lord's Tomb; who, upon His rising from the dead, were filled with great fear and scattered, and fled to the priests, to inform them with what was done
- God's enemies have no ability to stand against Him, shown by the images of vanishing *smoke* and melting *wax*
- As smoke vanishes, so wax entirely melts away and disappears before a hot fire (Psalm 22:14,97:5)
- *Smoke*, Represents an object of no stability, having no power of resistance



The God of Victory 68:1-3

- And would thus represent the real weakness of the most mighty armies of men as opposed to God
- *As wax melts before the fire*, Losing all its hardness, its firmness, its power of resistance, so must the mightiest armies melt away before God
- This might be a metaphor, to the fire of divine wrath, and the smoke of eternal torments
- David prayed that the *wicked* would *perish* just as easily
- If we apply the *wicked* here to the demons, then it would mean that all their strength and power will be taken away from them



The God of Victory 68:1-3

- If we apply it to men, the meaning will be, that the oppressors of the just will be quickly and severely punished by God
- The Presence which brings sadness and destruction to the wicked, brings joy and blessing to the righteous
- While the wicked are driven away like smoke, let the righteous live, and flourish, and be safe
- *Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly*, The expression is designed to express great joy; joy that is multiplied and prolonged
- All these expressions denote the greatness, frequency, zeal, fulness, and continuation of their joy

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- The psalmist here exhorts the people of God to magnify with Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, the eternal and indescribable absolute name of Him
- *His name*, He is exhorting them to praise God with the knowledge of His character and knowing Him personally
- *Sing to God, sing praises to His name*, The repetition denotes intensity of desire; a wish that God might be praised with the highest praises
- David gave us two specific reasons to *rejoice* in God
- He *rides on the clouds*, in victory and triumph over all the earth

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- Also, He has revealed Himself to humanity in the name *Yahweh*, showing His love and loyalty to His people
- *Extol Him* It is to prepare the way before Him, as of one marching at the head of his armies, or as a leader of his hosts
- In almost identical words the prophet Isaiah calls to the exiles in Babylon (Isaiah 40:3), “*Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.*”
- As St. John the Baptist is said to do before Him, Isaiah 11:3
- And in Isaiah 57:14; Isaiah 62:10, the same word *prepare the way* is used of preparing for the return of Israel from Babylon

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- *YAH* or *JAH* is an abbreviation of the name Jehovah
- God's people must prepare a way for Him by the removal of the obstacles of unbelief and ungodliness which hinder Him from coming to deliver them
- *And rejoice before Him*, The presence of God is suited to give joy to all the worlds that He has made, or wherever He manifests Himself to His people
- Some apply this verse to Christ and His incarnation
- Him being manifest in the flesh, risen from the dead, ascended on high, set down at the right hand of His Father

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- Having exerted His great strength in their redemption; and therefore, people should sing the song of redeeming love, with grace and melody in their hearts, unto Him
- *sing praises* to honor His name Jesus because of the great work of salvation done by Him and give Him all the praise and glory which due unto His name
- God's greatness is not only defined by military-like triumphs
- Another reason to praise Him for is His compassionate concern and care for the weak and needy
- The *fatherless* need a *father*; Yahweh is there

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- The *widows* need a *defender*; God is there
- The orphan and the widow are typical examples of the defenseless who are under God's special guardianship
- God from His holy seat in the highest heaven pours down His grace and mercy, His defense and protection
- Though He is *in His holy habitation*, yet the eyes of His fatherly providence and care run to and from through the earth, to observe and help His people when they are in distress
- This may be understood in a spiritual sense of such who are called to leave father and mother for the sake of Christ and His Gospel

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- Or those who are deserted by their friends and society, God will show them mercy and will provide according to their needs, and will come and visit them, as in John 14:18; where the word *orphans* or *fatherless* is used of Christ's disciples, “*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*” (John 14:18)
- And also, those who, “*has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.*” (Matthew 19:29)
- Those who love God alone above all and long for the day when they shall see Him; it is with them that He mostly dwells, and their hearts are *His holy habitation*

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- Verse 6 describes general principles of God's dealings with men
- He give the outcasts, wanderers, those who are needy, deserted, forsaken, a comfortable home to dwell in
- He is a provider of homes for the forsaken, and a leader of prisoners to prosperity
- God is benevolent and kind, and those who have no other friend may find a friend in Him
- He sets captives and prisoners at liberty
- The reference might be to the settlement of Israel in Canaan, to their liberation from the bondage of Egypt, and to the fate of the rebels in the wilderness, or as the Egyptians did

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- In a spiritual sense St. Augustine says that *God sets the solitary in families means that* “God lets those of one mind dwell in one house.”
- Such as the early Christians, of one mind, one will, one faith, hope, and love, of whom the Acts say, they were “*one heart and one soul,*” (Acts 4:32)
- *He brings out those who are bound,* By the strength of His arm brings from captivity those that were bound in the chains of sin
- God brings men out from the of their own lusts and sins
- *the rebellious,* They are deprived of all true comfort

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- The difference in condition between those who are the objects of His favor, and those who are found in proud rebellion against Him, would be as great as that between such as have comfortable home in a land producing abundance, and such as are wretched and homeless wanderers in regions of *dry land*
- The *rebellious* are left to dwell in the *dry land* of their own unrepentance and self-will
- St. Augustine notes a difference between the *bound* and the buried
- The bound are they who are caught in the chains of their strong desires and lust

Singing Praise to the God of Victory 68:4-6



- But are eager to be freed unshackled and pray for help
- The buried are they who come to the very lowest grade of iniquity, and when they do, despise salvation altogether, and anger God greatly
- But still God's great love sometimes softens both hearts, brings them to repentance, and frees them from the slavery of the devil, the greatest ever known or thought of



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- In the central part of the Psalm, from verse 7-28, God is praised for His works in connection with the history of Israel and, above all, in this passage, for His works at Sinai and in the wilderness
- The psalmist proceeds to review the past history of Israel to proof God's victorious power, His gracious love towards His people, and His presence with and care for them *through the wilderness* on the way to Canaan
- When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He "*went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way,*" (Exodus 13:21; Micah 2:13)



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- *You went out before Your people*, emphasizes the idea that God was *with* Israel; He did not abandon them despite the many ways they provoked Him
- *Selah* occurs three times in this Psalm (7, 19, 32)
- It is a musical pause used to enforce the thought with which the verse begins
- *The earth shook*, It was moved when it began to tremble at the sight of God descending on mount Sinai, as we read in Exodus 19:18, where it is said, “*and the whole mountain quaked greatly.*”
- The earth and heavens are in subjection to God



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- As God was with Israel in the wilderness, they were protected
- His *might* was on their side
- No other nation could defeat them when they walked with God
- *The earth shook*, May also mean the trembling of the inhabitants of the earth, when they heard of the wonderful things God did for His people, Exodus 15:14
- As God was with Israel in the wilderness they were provided for their needs, rained on them the manna from heaven, and the quail
- They would never suffer hunger or thirst as they walked in God's *presence*



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- As part of that provision, God sent them *a plentiful rain* in a needy time
- This care for them was a way God *confirmed* the special place Israel had in His heart and plan
- They were His *inheritance*
- Some interpret *a plentiful rain*, of water literally, as when the Israelites passed through the sea
- Or when the thundering and lightning were on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the law, which are usually joined with rain, Exodus 19:16



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- Or in the land of Canaan, which was the land that *“drinks water from the rain of heaven,”* (Deuteronomy 11:11)
- It may also mean all the gifts and blessings which He bestowed upon them in the wilderness
- And some interpret it prophetically of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit
- Or the teaching of the Gospel which is compared to rain, *“Let My teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew.”* (Deuteronomy 32:2)



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- *Your inheritance*, Because temporal blessings are common to all, believers and unbelievers; but the grace of the Holy Spirit is set aside that it may be revealed to the faithful only, members of the Church, out of which there is no salvation
- After showing by a historical reference what God had done for the people in the wilderness, he returns here, though without expressly mentioning it, to the land of promise, and to what God had done there for His people
- *Your congregation*, Your people of Israel, who are all united in one body under Him



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- It may also mean His flock for God often compares Himself to a shepherd, and His people to sheep
- *dwelt in it*, Submitted to You, and not to themselves; they need *You*, and are not self-satisfied
- *O God, provided from Your goodness*, By His goodness only
- God did it not for their righteousness or worthiness, but out of His mere mercy and *goodness*
- God has provided for them when they had no resources of their own - when they were a poor, oppressed, and afflicted people - wanderers wholly dependent on God



The Might Presence of God in the Wilderness 68:7-10

- St. Augustine says, “The Lord shall give sweetness, and our land shall give her fruit:” in order that a good work may be done not for fear, but for love; not for dread of punishment, but for love of righteousness.”
- Then he comments on *for the poor* and says, “But the Lord has prepared this for one wanting, not for one abounding, whose reproach is that poverty: of which sort in another place is said, ‘Reproach to these men that abound, and contempt to proud men.’ For those he has called proud, whom he has called them that abound.”

Celebrating His Victories in War

68:11-14



- God's word is sovereign, "*For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*" (Psalm 33:9)
- He has only to command, and the victory is won
- The works of God on the behalf of His people were so glorious and wonderful, that all, both men and women, that heard of them, cry out and shout with songs of praise to God
- Also, *The Lord gave the word* of the Gospel to His apostles to preach the Good News
- According to St. Jerome, it refers to the apostles; whom the Lord granted a great power to preach the gospel

Celebrating His Victories in War

68:11-14



- The Lord will give confidence to those who preach His word
- They will preach with *Great* power; with such strength that their adversaries will not be able to resist or to contradict them
- The word for *company* signifies an army
- Christ's ministers are soldiers, and have spiritual, weapons and mighty through God, and they are made to triumph in Christ in every place
- Vast as their armies may be, they are powerless to resist One who has infinitely stronger armies at His command
- The message was that God has won a great victory over mighty enemies, *Kings of armies*

Celebrating His Victories in War

68:11-14



- And His people, even His weak people, benefited even though they did not directly fight *she who remains at home divides the spoil*
- This is the message of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ
- God won a great victory through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and His people gain everything through that victory in a battle they did not directly fight
- Spiritually might also mean those who went out to the battle, fought and conquered; the apostles, confessors, and martyrs and many benefited of their victory without being exposed to their conflicts

Celebrating His Victories in War

68:11-14



- The people of God come from humble circumstances they *lie down among the sheepfolds*, but they share in God's great victory over their enemies and are graced with great blessings and gifts
- *a dove*, Is the church of the New Covenant
- St. Augustine says, "the psalmist now talks to those spoils, that rest comfortably among the folds; namely, between the books of the Old and the New Covenants, enjoy the divine promises, and the work of salvation, to become the wings of the church, the one beloved dove, Her wings are covered with silver, namely with the word of God; while her feathers, by which she flies up high, are of gold, namely, the heavenly life."

Celebrating His Victories in War

68:11-14



- St. Augustine says that the two wings are the two commandments of love (to love God, and to love one's neighbor), (Matthew 22:40)
- He says, "And what is the light burden, but the love realized in these two commandments? For what seems difficult in a commandment is light for the one who loves."
- The sense of the verse is that though they have formerly been exposed to great bondage and misery, yet since that time God has changed their condition greatly for the better
- Such is the change made spiritually in any man, when he passes from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God

Celebrating His Victories in War

68:11-14



- *When the Almighty scattered kings in it*, The reference is to the act of God in causing kings to abandon their purposes of invasion, or to flee when their own countries were invaded
- David compares the heathen kings, scattered by the Almighty God, to the believers who came to have the splendor of the snow of Zalmon
- *Zalmon*, Is a mountain near to Shechem, Judges 9:48; which seems to have had its name from the shady trees upon it; and which also was sometimes covered with snow
- *snow in Zalmon*, Some interpret it spiritually saying it may mean the purity of the church and people of God

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- After talking about nations and mighty kings who fled and ran away before the people of God now David compares between Mount Zion and the other mountains, cherished by the surrounding nations
- Bashan was a rich and fruitful mountain beyond Jordan, it had several tops, and the term may include all the heights to the eastward of Jordan, stretching southward as well as northward
- Why are they called *a mountain of God* has been much discussed
- Some explain the term to denote ancient seats of religious worship; others take it simply as a general term expressing splendor and magnificence; an elevation of god-like greatness

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- They say that the mountain of Bashan, in spite of the fact that God did not chose it to be His holy mountain, on which to establish His temple; yet, because of its great height, beauty, and fertility, testifying to the work of God, the Mighty Creator, it is called *A mountain of God*”
- And others say because it was an impressive mountain and part of Israel’s heritage
- Spiritually speaking some say it is the church of God in which He dwells
- It is compared to the hill of Bashan for fertility and fruitfulness

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- The church is a green pastures, where His people become nurtured and prosperous, Psalm 23:2
- The great mountains of Bashan which rise in *of many peaks*, implying majesty, old, magnificence, are represented as looking enviously upon the insignificant mountain of Zion which God has chosen for His earthly dwelling-place
- *Bashan* was an impressive mountain, yet it seems to *fume with envy* when it sees how God has favored Zion
- Bashan is a symbol of the kingdoms of this world that elevate themselves above, and look with contempt upon the church of Christ; waiting and endeavoring to crush it; but all in vain

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- The choice of Zion is a parable of the method of God's dealings with men, *"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."*
(1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- Sinai had been His temporary dwelling (Exodus 24:16); on Zion He will dwell for ever, 1 Kings 8:13
- Of this mountain we read in Isaias 2:2-3, *“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.”* all of which certainly applies to the Church

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- *The chariots of God*, Are the angels, as they have appeared in such a form 2 Kings 2:11
- St. Augustine comments on *The chariots of God* and says, “Thus a vast number of saints and believers, who by bearing God become in a manner the chariot of God... By abiding in and guiding this, He conducts it, as though it were His Chariot, unto the end”
- *are twenty thousand, Even thousands of thousands*, An innumerable infinite immeasurable and countless
- God is abundantly able to defend the place which He had selected as His dwelling

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- Though it has less natural strength than *A mountain of many peaks* on account of their natural greatness, yet He who has selected it is fully able to defend it
- *The Lord is among them*; Is not only the presence of the angels, but of God Himself
- The presence of God is the strength of the church
- David now draws a comparison between God's descent on mount Sinai, to give the old law to the Jewish people; and Christ's ascension to heaven, to send from thence the gifts of the Holy Spirit

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- With the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul quoted verse 18 and applied it to Jesus, keeping the context but changing one key word
- St Paul quoted, “*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.*”
- St. Paul applied this to the ascension of Jesus into heaven and His sending of the power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to His Church
- The one word St. Paul changed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was *received gifts* to *gave gifts*

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- The triumph of God over the enemies of Israel prefigured the victory of Christ over the spiritual enemies of the Church
- God had achieved a complete victory; He had led all His enemies captive
- This would refer to those who were captives to Satan, and who were held in bondage by him, but who had been rescued by the Redeemer and went with Him in triumph to heaven
- In general sense it may refer to those who had been captives to the devil in sin, He made them captives to Himself, transformed a most miserable captivity into a most glorious one

Victory on the Mountains

68:15-18



- *Even from the rebellious*, God's most stubborn and rebellious enemies, whether Jews or Gentiles, yet to these, as well as others, God gave those saving gifts and graces, as we read, Acts 2
- Some think the Gentiles are intended, on whom the Holy Spirit was poured forth after our Lord's ascension
- *The rebellious*, being now partakers of the grace of God and His gifts, *might dwell with the Lord God*
- In His churches; enjoy His divine presence and have communion with Him
- His Holy Spirit dwells in their hearts by faith

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- Having described the ascension of Christ to the kingdom of heaven, he gives thanks to God, saying, *Blessed be the Lord, Who daily*, which means every day
- We bless God every day, because He blesses us every day, and overwhelms us with His goodness
- He will bless us every day; for He will not desert us on our daily journey, until we shall have come to the day of eternity
- We are thus promised daily, constant, protection from God while here below on our pilgrimage
- God is the only Author of our present and eternal salvation

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- *Selah*, A musical pause to contemplate or to enforce the thought with which the verse begins
- The God whom we worship is the God from whom salvation comes, and who brings salvation to us
- It is not in vain that we serve Him, for He is the only being who can save us, and He will save us
- In the uttermost extremity of danger and threat, when death seems inevitable, He can prepare means of deliverance
- God alone can help us to escape everlasting death
- Christ has abolished death and He will deliver all His people from it, for He has the keys of hell and death in His hands

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- Having mentioned what the Lord would do for His faithful people, he now tells us how He will deal with His enemies, those who remained unbelievers and refused to be subjected to Him
- God will assuredly destroy them, wounding them where a *wound* is fatal
- *wound the head*, complete destruction
- God will humble their pride when He shall condemn them to hell to be punished with everlasting torments
- In describing God's victory, David used an image from Genesis 3:15 where God promised that the Messiah would strike a fatal head wound against Satan

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- Christ crushed Satan's power and authority, demolished his empire, and eternally destroyed him with the fire prepared for him and his angels
- *The hairy scalp*, Some say that it points almost certainly to Absalom
- Others take it as a type of pride and arrogance
- *the one who still goes on in his trespasses*, The one who persists in his wickedness
- If he repents, God will be merciful to him; if he persists in sin, he will be punished

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- Some commentators believe that David talks here in verse 22 about God's enemies
- God confirms the sentence pronounced on the destruction of the wicked
- Though His enemies fly to Bashan and hide in its woods, or even hide themselves in the depths of the sea, God will search them out, and *bring them back*, that punishment may be taken on them
- Though His enemies should try to escape, they will not be able
- Neither the heights of Bashan nor the depths of the great sea can shelter from His eye

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- Amos 9:2-3 describes the Lord as saying, *“Though they dig into hell, From there My hand shall take them; Though they climb up to heaven, From there I will bring them down; And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, From there I will search and take them; Though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, From there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them;”*
- Other commentators believe that David talks here about God’s people
- God would deliver His people and save them from all sorts of danger

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- God, in His care for His people, and for their salvation, will bring them back, even if they are in far places like Bashan, or where it would seem impossible like the depths of the sea
- God promised to ransom them out of the hands of those who were stronger than them
- He will deliver them from the power of darkness into His own kingdom, and save them from all the bulls of Bashan, *“Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.”* (Psalm 22:12)
- *from the depths of the sea*, Out of the most wretched and desperate condition

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- And the allusion is to the bringing of the children of Israel through the Red sea, and out of the depths of it, unto dry land
- And some interpret the passage of the Lord's gathering of His people, in the effectual calling, from the east and from the west
- From the east, signified by Bashan; and from the west, by the depths of the sea; *“Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west”* (Isaiah 43:5)
- God will turn the wicked from their enjoyment and pleasure to final destruction; and such will be the bloodshed of the enemy

The Lord's Goodness and Justice 68:19-23



- The victory would be total, with God's people walking as winners over the field of battle *that your foot may crush them in blood*
- He tramples them underfoot and soaks the ground in their blood
- So overwhelming should be the defeat of the enemies that dogs should lick their blood
- They will lick it up, as the dogs licked the blood of Jezebel, 1 Kings 21:19
- The Lord defeats these enemies to liberate His people, with this victory being compared to His defeat of the gods of Egypt in the Exodus 7-10

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- This portrays what used to happen whenever they came with the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem after their conquests in battle
- David was full of joy, seeing the procession of victory under the leadership of God Himself
- The ark of the covenant representing His presence among His people, and His leadership of them
- The warm and genuine triumphal processions which celebrated the victories achieved by God, have been witnessed by multitudes
- David emphasizes that this great God, so glorious, is his God
- *They have seen*, Saving His people, and destroying His enemies

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- Having related Christ's victory and triumph over His enemies, he now informs us that they who witnessed such wonders began to announce and spread them to the whole world, with great joy
- *They have seen Your procession, O God,* Many witnessed what Christ did, His battles and His victories
- *into the sanctuary,* Whether that be heaven or the Church, for it may apply to either, Christ being visibly present in the one, and in the other, through faith
- For Christ, who is God over all, the Lord and King, is here, as throughout the Psalm, intended

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- On either side of the procession of singers and musicians playing upon stringed instruments were the girls beating their *timbrels* as they danced joyously along
- The scene recalls the thanksgiving by the Red Sea when Miriam, “*took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.*” (Exodus 15:20)
- The word *singers* in the Septuagint version, came as princes, who, according to St. Augustine, refer to the apostles who precede the congregation, singing the joyful Good News of the gospel, playing on the musical instruments of the good works, to praise and glorify the Lord

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- Verse 26 might be a part of the processional hymn
- He exhorts them to acknowledge God as the true God and praise Him
- The appeal is to the Hebrew people the lineal descendants of Jacob to unite in praising God
- David foreseeing the future joy of the *congregations* of the Church, exhorts them to *Bless God*
- *the fountain of Israel*, This is to remind them of the privileges of their ancestry
- Some consider it to be the Temple, or Jacob the patriarch being regarded as the fountain-head from which the nation is derived

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- But *the fountain of Israel* is the Lord Himself, the source of His people's life
- The representatives of four tribes are specified as taking part in the procession
- *little Benjamin*, The name *little* is given to the tribe either because Benjamin was the youngest of the sons of Jacob, or, more probably, because that tribe was among the smallest of the tribes of Israel
- Benjamin may owe its position to the fact that it gave the nation its first king

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- Judah was a large and powerful tribe and it would naturally appear great as the tribe of David
- Four tribes only are mentioned, not because no more than four took part in the processions, but as representatives of the whole number
- The tribes selected for mention are from the two ends of the land - the extreme south and the extreme north
- Zebulun and Naphtali were the most important of the northern tribes (Judges 4:6,10,5:18), as Judah and Benjamin were of the southern ones

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- These four tribes by the general consent of the fathers, mean the Apostles
- Benjamin is named first, by whom the Apostle Paul is meant
- He was of the tribe of Benjamin, and the last apostle to be called and was little in his own eyes, less than the least of all the apostles
- He labored more than all the rest in preaching, and praising the victories of Christ; and he was so united with the singers in the third heaven as he did not know "*whether he was in the body or out of the body,*" (2 Corinthians 12:2), as he testifies himself

The Procession of the Ark

68:24-27



- By the *princes of Juda* are meant the Apostles, who belonged to that tribe, and are called Christ's brethren in the Gospel
- They were James and Simon, Jesus' cousins
- The other Apostles, are included in the princes of Zabulon and Nephthali, such as Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Matthew, who were from Bethsaida or Capharnaum, and the neighboring towns that belonged to Zabulon and Nephthali, as it mentioned in Matthew 4:13

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- The psalmist here addresses Israel
- He provides a summary statement of past experiences
- In past times God has given Israel *strength*; therefore, Israel can now pray with confidence for the renewal and continuance of His support
- David was grateful for the wonderful victory but also knew that many challenges were still ahead
- He prayed that God would increase the strength thus manifested and let it be still greater

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- Prophetically speaking, David now, after having described the victory of Christ, and the consequent joy of the Apostles, asks of God that the power so exercised by Him in defeating and crushing His enemies, and founding His Church, may still be exercised in protecting and preserving His work
- The Temple of God is prophesied as becoming a marvel to all people, and when it changed from the tabernacle of David to the temple of Solomon, it was so
- Its structure was so impressive and wonderful that the queen of far-off Sheba came with her gifts

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- And many neighboring kings and princes, impressed by the wealth and power therein displayed, came with tribute to Israel's God
- However, spiritually speaking it is not the material temple but the Messiah's of which He is the builder, foundation, and cornerstone
- *Kings will bring presents to You*, The Gentile nations who will come to faith, to become members in the church, and to present gifts to God like the great king Constantine and others, in the earlier ages of Christianity; who brought their riches and wealth to Christ, and into His church

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- He now in verse 30 directs his prayer against the enemies of the Church, who seek to disturb its peace
- The most terrifying enemies of the people of God, represented here by wild beasts and he prays that God restrain them and bring them to be subdued, and would be made to show their submission by bringing gifts - by *pieces of silver*, or, with tribute
- Thus, the idea corresponds with that in the previous verse, that *Kings will bring presents*
- *Bulls... calves*, These are possibly symbols of the strong and the weak—the princes and the common people

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- *The herd of bulls*, Represents heathen powers
- *with the calves of the people*; The people, comparable to calves for their weakness and foolishness; these are the common people under the influence of the kings and princes of the earth
- St. Augustine says that “Calling them bulls because of the pride of a stiff and untamed neck: for he is referring to heretics. But by ‘*the calves of the peoples*,’ I think souls easily led astray must be understood, because easily they follow these bulls.”
- *Scatter the peoples*, Rebuke these various world powers that delight in war by *scattering* them

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- Verse 31 is a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, under the names of Egypt and Ethiopia
- Egypt is referred to here as one of the most prominent of the foreign nations then known
- The Gospel was preached in Egypt by Mark the Evangelist
- The fathers think that in the expression, *Ethiopia stretching out her hands*, he alludes the Ethiopian eunuch who was one of the first among the Gentiles who received the Gospel, Acta 8
- Princes shall come and acknowledge the true God

Confidence for Future Victories

68:28-31



- The idea is, that the distinguished men of foreign nations - the rulers and princes of the world - would come and submit themselves to God and be united to His people
- The expression *will quickly stretch out* denotes the eagerness or haste with which it would be done
- *stretch out her hands to God*, may mean a gesture of submission, or in supplication; or with gifts of worship and respect
- St. Augustine sees in Egypt and Ethiopia, a reference to the Gentiles as a whole, from which will come the ambassadors of Christ to preach the joyful word of the gospel, and to hasten to stretch out their hands to God, proclaiming their faith in works

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- In conclusion, David called on the nations to praise God, the sovereign ruler over all
- God's *procession* of power and majesty, so beautifully described in this Psalm, is sufficient reason to do so
- David proceeds to prophecy the conversion of the gentiles to Christianity
- All the world powers having submitted to the Church, can be called upon to join in the praise of God
- *Sing*, in faith acknowledging Him as the true God, sing His praises, not only in words but by good works

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- The musical pause *Selah* is for contemplation
- *the heaven* is represented as the special dwelling-place of God where His throne is
- *rides*, It is the act of sitting on them, as on a throne
- *the heaven of heavens*, which were created from the beginning of time by Christ Himself, “*the heavens are the work of Your hands.*” (Psalm 102:25)
- “*and the heavens are the work of Your hands.*” (Hebrews 1:10)
- Jesus who, after His ascension, sits on the highest heaven

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- David means to convey that Christ our Lord, after His ascension to heaven came to be higher and more elevated than heaven itself, sitting thereon as a man would on a horse or a chariot, or as a king upon His throne
- *rides* He appears there as a victorious, or that He moves in majesty and glory
- *which were of old*, From the very beginning of the world in which God dwelt from all eternity - long before He created *the heavens*
- *He sends out His voice*, A voice that is heard and obeyed in every part of creation

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- The thunder is called God's voice, Psalm 29:3
- Jesus who appeared so humble and, *"Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,"* (Isaiah 53:7), now sits on *the heaven of heavens*, and will shortly *sends out His voice, a mighty voice* which shall come to pass, *"the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice. and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation"* (John 5:28-29)
- No more powerful voice can be imagined and, in both cases, will be obeyed without the slightest effort at resistance

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- The power of that voice that will, on the last day, in one moment, bring together, the living, and raise up the ashes of all the dead from the beginning of the world!
- It will also be a voice of power that will on that day pronounce, *“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire;”* (Matthew 25:41) and *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* (Matthew 25:34)
- God’s voice, is also His word, the gospel of Christ that was preached by His apostles through the help of Holy Spirit

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- It is *a mighty voice* because it gave such great and wonderful effects, as are here mentioned, in converting all the kings and kingdoms of the earth
- The nations would only benefit from recognizing and surrendering to God's *strength* and seeing His rule over Israel
- David is asking the nations to acknowledge by the tribute of their praises, His power which He exercises in the world
- *His excellence*, His majesty, His glory; His protecting care which was manifested particularly in His protection of His people
- *clouds*; or, the heavens, it may point to God's two dwellings, the one in His church and the other in heaven, Isaiah 57:15

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- St. Augustine believe that the clouds are His apostles
- He says, “For not alone He shall come to judgment, but with the elders of His people: to whom He hath promised that they shall sit upon thrones to judge, who even shall judge angels. These be the clouds.”
- David thought of the land of Israel as God’s holy place, belonging to Him in a special way
- Yet he also understands that God was greater than any *holy place*, whether it be land, a mountain, or a temple
- God can protect His people and equip them with strength

A Call to all the Kingdoms of the Earth to Praise God 68:32-35



- He can sustain them in the trials of life
- The God whom they acknowledge as their God is not one whose strength fails, or who is seen to be powerless when His help is needed
- Their trust in Him is never in vain
- With great justice all should bless that God whose mercy, justice, power, and wisdom so wonderfully appear in so many mysteries
- The Psalm is concluded with an attribution of blessing to the Messiah, who is God blessed for evermore; and who, as Mediator, is the promised seed, in whom all nations were to be blessed



Discussion

- What does this Psalm celebrate?
- How does this Psalm foreshadow the resurrection, ascension, rule, and final triumph of Christ?
- What images did David use to describe how the wicked will perish?
- What acts of the Lord did David recall for the benefit of his listeners?



Discussion

- What poetic image did David use to celebrate the way that God defeated Israel's enemies and abundantly provided for them?
- What mighty acts of God in history does David refer to here in this psalm?
- What does the "high hill" stand for in this Psalm?
- Why did David encourage God's people to praise the Lord?



Discussion

- What is St. Paul saying about Jesus when he applies this Psalm to Him?
- What can we learn from this Psalm about God's power?
- Which focus of this Psalm stood out to you the most: Boldness against the wicked, praise from the godly, or the identity of the Lord?