

Psalm 118 - The Stone the Builders Rejected

We have been looking at the *hallel*, or praise, Psalms that were recited at most of the Jewish holidays. Of all the Jewish holidays, the *Full Hallel* made up of Psalms 113-118 in their entirety was recited on the three main feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, and also on Chanukah. On the other holidays, *Half Hallel*s were parts of Psalms 113-118 were read. As we read Psalm 118, we can see how it is the final praise in this set of praises.

1. The conclusion of praise.

Ps 118:1-4 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: because his mercy *endureth* for ever.

2Let Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

3Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

Psalm 118:2-4 are similar to Psalm 115:9-11. Israel, Aaron, and all others who fear the LORD speak of the scope of God's redemptive work.

One understanding could be that Israel enjoyed its chosen status because of the priestly work of Aaron and had a special mission to all the rest of the world who feared the LORD.

You could also say that as Israel represented the living as the elect people of God, the rest of the world represented the dead as the non-elect, and Aaron stood between the living and the dead as the priest of God. We see him in that role in the book of Numbers at one of the judgments of Israel:

Numbers 16:46-48 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun.

47And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

48And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

Psalm 118:2-4 have also been described this way: first, the Israelites who are holy, or set apart, only in that they have been set apart by God. They are not necessarily holy in spirit, but just by birth. Next, those who are officially holy, the priests. Finally, there are those

who truly holy, those who fear God.

However you apply these verses, they speak of the perfection and conclusion of praise. This is a perfect Psalm to bring to conclusion the *Hallels*.

2. The joy of salvation.

Next, we read about the joy of salvation that the Psalmist had because he feared the Lord.

Psalm 118:5-6,8,14-18 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.

6The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

8*It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

14The LORD *is* my strength and song, and *is* become my salvation.

15The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

16The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

17I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

18The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

Notice in vs. 6, 8, 14 how the Psalmist was in distress and called upon the LORD. He knew that his salvation did not come from man, and that the LORD is his salvation. Ultimately, he knew, according to vs. 17-18 that he would have power over death, even though he might go through times of chastening before that time.

- The first thing I want to point out is that he he had the joy of salvation because he did not place his trust in any system of organization for worship.

According to the false doctrine of Formalism, man mistakenly trusts that he can achieve holiness and salvation by adhering to various *forms* – bowing at the right time, using the right formula for incense, the right form of having communion (whether it be under "one kind" or "two kinds", bread only or bread and fruit of the vine), the right form of baptism (immersion, pouring, or sprinkling), etc. Now there is nothing wrong with organizing for worship; Paul said to do all things decently and in order (1Cor 14:40). According to Formalism however, one does not necessarily need faith, just using the right forms will provide salvation or holiness.

The next thing to point out is that none of man's efforts will provide salvation or holiness. Our works are as filthy rags and cannot provide salvation.

Isa 64:6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

What holiness we enjoy is not by our efforts, but by Christ *in* us.

Rom 7:22-25 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:
23But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

24O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

25I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Our salvation and sanctification is wholly based on God.

- The next thing to point out is that the Psalmist had the joy of salvation because he called upon the Lord.

Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

- The last thing to point out that he had the joy of salvation because there was power over death itself.

Heb 7:24-27 But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

3. Salvation's foundation.

This brings us to the final part in Psalm 118:18-29. It presents Christ, Who

is the foundation of our salvation. The theology of the first two parts is solid and strong. This part, however, is really exciting. It was written about 1100 years before the crucifixion of Christ and yet it so elegantly and prophetically anticipates the Triumphal Entry of Christ in Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday. Many commentators pick up on the immediate application of the Psalm, but it is the prophetic application that is so important.

Matt 21:2-5 Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me.

3And if any *man* say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Matt 21:12-13 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,
13And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Psa 118:19-20 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD:

20This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

The *gates of righteousness, this gate of the Lord* in Psalm 118:19-20 are understood to be the gates of the Temple. This is why Jesus was disturbed when He entered into Jerusalem and then on the next day into the Temple grounds.

Matt 21:42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

1Pet 2:4-8 To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious,

5Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6Wherefore also it is contained in

the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Ps 118:21-23 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

22The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

23This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes. Jesus plainly declared that Psalm 118:21-23 applied to Him. Peter points out *two* aspects of Christ as the rock. He is the rock of our foundation. Which Paul proclaims in 1Cor 3:10-11.

1Cor 3:10-11 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Peter then points out that He is the perfection of our salvation with Jesus as the head of the corner, or the capstone of the Temple.

Similarly, the Psalmist points out how that Jesus would be our salvation, the head of the corner that ties the walls together, the crown of God's work done by the LORD, and then he declares that it is to be marveled at. We should stand in absolute awe of the arrival of the Israel's King as He presented Himself in Jerusalem.

Matt 21:9-10 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, **Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;** Hosanna in the highest.

10And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

Mark 11:10 Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

Psa 118:25-26 **Save now,** I beseech thee, O LORD: O

LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

26Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. *H o s a n n a* in Matthew is transliterated from *save now* in Psa 118:25-26. This psalm is usually recognized as a statement about the success of David. Notice in Matthew and Mark report how the people recognized that this Psalm should be applied to Jesus in His entry to Jerusalem. They identify that salvation is come to the kingdom of David by the Son of David.

Psalm 118:27 God *is* the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.

Just after the Triumphal Entry, Jesus would become the sacrifice for our sins, as John the Baptist prophesied:

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

1Pet 1:18-21 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

19But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

This is the day the lord hath made in Psalm 118:24 is a reference to the fulfillment of the prophecy when Jesus entered into Jerusalem. There is something very powerful about Psalm 118. It is fascinating that the *Full Hallel*, starting with Psalm 113, ends with Psalm 118 and a prophecy of the Triumphal Entry of Christ. The entry of Christ in Jerusalem *should* have been the end of the story; except for one problem. God knew that they were going to reject their King. Psalm 118:22 points out that the king would be rejected.

Psalm 118:22 The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

After all was said and done at the trial of Christ, Pilate, wittingly or unwittingly, testified against the Jews.

John 19:19-22 And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

They cried out, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews." Pilate replied, "What I have written, I have written." There is a judgment that accompanies the fact that Jesus was to be the head of the corner, the stone rejected of the builders. Look again starting at Matt 21:42 and read a little further than we did before:

Matt 21:42-44 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Israel was indeed judged. The book of Acts closes with the Jews rejecting and being set aside.

Acts 28:22-29 But we [the Jews of Rome where Paul was awaiting trial before Caesar] desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear,

and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

29And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

By ending the *Hallel* Psalms with Psalm 118, it was like saying, "That's all you get, there is nothing more beyond this. If you reject Christ, there is nothing more. All that is left is to receive your king, and if you don't do that you will be judged. There's nothing more to praise God for after this. If you miss this, you miss the perfection and completion of Judaism." For hundreds of years, they repeated numerous times this closing Psalm and then when the day that the Lord had made came, they *almost* got it as a nation.

Paul warned the Hebrews there remains nothing more that could be done after the sacrifice of Christ.

Heb 10:26-29 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

28He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

29Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;

Every year at Passover, the Jews recited this Psalm as the final word of praise. At the Triumphal Entry, they demonstrated that they got it. They knew that Jesus was fulfilling Psalm 118...and

then they "dropped the ball." They missed their opportunity.

If you don't take advantage of this opportunity to let Christ take His throne on your heart then there is nothing else that can bring salvation.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If you don't take the opportunity daily to keep looking to Christ on the throne of your heart there is nothing else for your daily sanctification.

1. The conclusion of praise. Ps 118:1-4, Numbers 16:46-48
2. The joy of salvation. Psalm 118:5-6,8,14-18, Isa 64:6, Rom 7:22-25, Gal 2:20, Rom 10:13, Heb 7:24-27
3. Salvation's foundation. Matt 21:2-5, Matt 21:12-13, Psa 118:19-29, Matt 21:42, 1Pet 2:4-8, 1Cor 3:10-11, Matt 21:9-10, Mark 11:10, John 1:29, 1Pet 1:18-21, John 19:19-22, Matt 21:42-44, Acts 28:22-29, Heb 10:26-29, 2:3