

# PSALM 44

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 44

### *To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil*

It is not certain who was the writer of this psalm, nor when it was written, and to what time it belongs: some have thought it was composed by one of the Babylonish captivity, and that it gives an account of the church and people of God in those times; but what is said in (<sup><B417></sup>Psalm 44:17,18,20) does not seem to agree with (<sup><2085></sup>Daniel 9:5,6,10,11,13). It is most likely it was written by David, and to him the Targum ascribes it; though it does not respect his times; since what is said in (<sup><B419></sup>Psalm 44:9-14) cannot agree with them; yet he being a prophet might, under a prophetic influence, speak of future times, and represent the church in them. Some are of opinion that he prophetically speaks of the times of the Maccabees and of Antiochus, when the church and people of God suffered much for the true religion, and abode steadfast in it; so Theodoret: but rather the whole may be applied to the times of the New Testament, since (<sup><B422></sup>Psalm 44:22) is cited by the Apostle Paul, (<sup><B835></sup>Romans 8:36), and is applied to his times, and as descriptive of the suffering state and condition of the church then; and which seems to be the guide and key for the opening of the whole psalm.

**Ver. 1.** *We have heard with our ears, O God,* etc.] The church being in distress calls to mind the past favours of God to his people, in order to encourage her faith and hope; and this expression, delivered in such a form, shows the clearness, evidence, and certainty of what was heard; and which was heard not only as a tradition from father to son; but being recorded in the writings of Moses and the prophets, and these things read both in private and in public, were heard with the ear;

*our fathers have told us [what] works thou didst in their days, in the times of old:* such as the signs and wonders in Egypt, the slaying of the firstborn there, and the bringing of the people of Israel from thence with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; which fathers were used to tell in the ears of their sons, and sons' sons; and of which there were memorials continued in future ages, which led children to ask their parents the meaning of them;

when they informed them of the wondrous works of Providence done in former times, and by which means they were handed down from age to age: (see <sup><1200></sup>Exodus 10:2 12:26 13:8).

**Ver. 2.** [*How*] *thou didst drive out the Heathen with thy hand*, etc.] Of power; that is, the Canaanites, as the Targum; the seven nations which inhabited the land of Canaan before the children of Israel came into it, (<sup><870></sup>Deuteronomy 7:1);

*and plantedst them*: not the Canaanites elsewhere; but, as the same Targum explains it the house of Israel in their land; which, like a vine, was removed from one place, and planted in another; and the settlement of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan is frequently expressed by this metaphor, (<sup><1257></sup>Exodus 15:17 <sup><880></sup>Psalms 80:8 <sup><2350></sup>Isaiah 5:1,7) (<sup><3422></sup>Jeremiah 2:21);

[*how*] *thou didst afflict the people*; the Egyptians, according to Arama; rather the Canaanitish nations by wars and desolating judgments;

*and cast them out*; that is, the same nations out of their land; though some render this clause, “and didst send them out”; the captive Israelites, as Arama; or “didst propagate them” <sup>f595</sup>; meaning the people of Israel; who being like a vine planted in the land, sent out its boughs and branches, and became very flourishing and fruitful; (see <sup><880></sup>Psalms 80:9-11); and so the Syriac version renders it, “and thou confirmedst them”; but the former sense seems best, agreeably to which is the Targum, “thou hast broken the nations, and hast consumed them”; and that all this was the Lord’s work appears by what follows.

**Ver. 3.** *For they got not the land in possession by their own sword*, etc.] There were many things which show that the possession of the land of Canaan was not of the Israelites themselves, but of the Lord; as their passing over into it through Jordan as on dry land; the manner in which Jericho, the first city of it, was taken, and the smiting of the Israelites by the men of Ai;

*neither did their own arm save them*; from their enemies, and deliver them into their hands: they were too apt to ascribe things to their own righteousness, merit, and power; but such methods were taken by the Lord as to prevent such attributions to themselves; (see <sup><886></sup>Deuteronomy 8:16,17 9:3-6);

*but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance*; the mighty power of God, his outstretched arm in their favour, and which arose from his pure good will to them;

*because thou hadst a favour unto them*; was well pleased, and took delight in them; chose them to be a special people to himself, above all people on the face of the earth.

**Ver. 4.** *Thou art my King, O God*, etc.] Besides the favours God had done for his people in time past, the church takes notice of her interest in God as her King, who was able to protect and defend her, and to deliver her out of all her distresses, in order the more to strengthen her faith and hope in him; and, claiming her interest in him, she draws nigh to him with an holy boldness, and desires him as a King, that by a word of his (for where the word of a king is, there is power) he would

*command deliverances for Jacob*; not literally, but mystically understood; the spiritual Jacob, and people of God; all Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile; meaning herself and members: the blessing desired is “deliverances”, or “salvations”; so called, because the, deliverance or salvation the Lord commands grants, and works out for his people, is of different kinds, both spiritual and, temporal, and is a deliverance from various things; from sin, Satan, the present evil world, wrath to come, and all enemies; and out of various temptations and afflictions, and which follow successively one upon another; and at last it is complete and perfect.

**Ver. 5.** *Through thee will we push down our enemies*, etc.] The Chaldee paraphrase renders it, “through the Word”: the essential Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the church’s King and God, and has wrought out complete deliverance and salvation for his people; and he is the horn of salvation, by which, though weak in themselves, they push down their enemies, which are many and mighty, and they are more than conquerors over them: the metaphor is taken from creatures pushing with their horns those that oppose them, and in defence of themselves; and there seems to be an allusion to (<sup><63317></sup>Deuteronomy 33:17);

*through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us*; in the name of the Lord the saints set up their banners, and in his name they come forth and fight with their spiritual enemies, that rise up against them, as sin, Satan, and wicked men; and in the name, and through the power of the Lord, they tread them down as mire in the streets; and before long Satan

will be wholly bruised under them; and the antichristian party shall be trodden down by them, and be as ashes under the soles of their feet; (see <sup><5161></sup>Romans 16:20 <sup><304B></sup>Malachi 4:3).

**Ver. 6.** *For I will not trust in my bow*, etc.] In any carnal weapon, in any creature help and assistance, or in an arm of flesh, but in the word of the Lord, and in his name; (see <sup><1007></sup>Psalm 20:7);

*neither shall my sword save me*; that is, I will not ascribe salvation to it; the church's weapons are not carnal, but spiritual; not the sword of the civil magistrate, but the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Christ's kingdom, being not of this world, is not supported and defended by worldly means, or carnal weapons.

**Ver. 7.** *But thou hast saved us from our enemies*, etc.] Spiritual ones, and not we ourselves; and therefore will not trust in ourselves, nor in anything of ours, but in the Lord, and give him the glory of salvation;

*and hast put them to shame that hated us*; the men of the world, the seed of the serpent, and the serpent himself, when his works were destroyed, and his principalities and powers spoiled by Christ upon the cross; hence the following boasting of the Lord, and glorying in him.

**Ver. 8.** *In God we boast all the day long*, etc.] Or, as the Targum, "in the word of the Lord", in Christ, who is God over all, and who of God is made to his church and people wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; so that there is always matter of glorying and boasting in him;

*and praise thy name for ever and ever*; in this world, as long as life continues; and in the other world to all eternity; both for the works of providence and of grace; for deliverances commanded, and for salvation from all enemies wrought out.

*Selah*; of this word (see Gill on "<sup><1002></sup>Psalm 3:2").

**Ver. 9.** *But thou hast cast off*, etc.] This, with what follows to (<sup><10417></sup>Psalm 44:17), describe the desolate and afflicted state of the church, under the Gospel dispensation, in some parts and ages of it; and in the light in which it was viewed by the church, previous to the encouragement she took from the consideration of favours and benefits formerly bestowed, and of her covenant interest in God, related in the preceding verses. She looked upon herself as cast off, because afflicted and persecuted, and the Lord did not

arise to her immediate help and deliverance; this may regard the ten persecutions under Rome Pagan; (see Gill on “<sup>1982</sup>Psalm 43:2”);

*and put us to shame*; before men, at the taking of the ark, as Arama; rather for their faith in God, and boasting of him, when he did not appear for them, but suffered them to continue in their afflictions and distresses; which occasioned their enemies to triumph over them, and say unto them, where is your God? and also before God, who being forsaken by him, could not come before him with that holy boldness and confidence they were wont to do; (see <sup>2114</sup>Song of Solomon 2:14);

*and goest not forth with our armies*; as the Generalissimo of them; (see <sup>1083</sup>1 Samuel 8:20 <sup>1044</sup>Judges 4:14); not leading them forth, and going before them; not teaching their hands to war and their fingers to fight; nor inspiring them with courage and valour; nor giving success and victory to them as formerly; but seeing that Christians, at least in the first ages of Christianity, had no armies in a literal sense, this may rather be understood of the lack of success of the Gospel in some period of it, and of the power and prevalence of antichrist, the man of sin. The Gospel ministry is a warfare; the preachers of it are good soldiers of Christ under him; their weapons are not carnal, but spiritual; great success attended the word in the first times of the Gospel; Christ went forth with his armies conquering and to conquer; and multitudes were subdued by him, and became subjects of him; but in some ages there has been but little success, few have believed the report of the Gospel, and been converted by it; Christ’s ministers have laboured in vain, Satan’s kingdom, though attacked, yet not weakened, nor Christ’s kingdom enlarged, but rather all the reverse; antichrist has been suffered, as to make war with the saints, so to prevail and overcome, and will do so, (<sup>6104</sup>Revelation 13:4,7 11:7); but it will not be always the case, Christ will go forth with his armies, and make great conquests again, (<sup>6115</sup>Revelation 11:15 17:14 19:11-16); this may refer to the wars of the Papists with the Waldenses and Albigenses, who were vanquished by the former.

**Ver. 10.** *Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy*, etc.] In the times of Eli, according to Arama; but may he understood of some of the visible members of the church, and professors of religion, not being valiant for the truth, and deserting the cause of God and Christ, by reason of tribulation and persecution arising because of the word;

*and they which hate us spoil for themselves*; by seizing on the goods and substance of those they persecuted; enriching themselves by confiscating their estates and possessions to their own use; or by spoiling others of them, they deceived with their corrupt doctrines and soul destroying principles, whereby they became slaves to the antichristian party; this may respect the same wars as before.

**Ver. 11.** *Thou hast given us like sheep [appointed] for meat*, etc.] To be butchered, and then eaten as sheep are; and therefore are called “the flock of slaughter”, (<sup><3104></sup>Zechariah 11:4,7); as the church was, not only under the ten persecutions of Rome Pagan, but through the butcheries and massacres of Rome Papal; who have worried many of Christ’s sheep, have eaten their flesh and drank their blood, and have become drunken with it; it has been their meat and drink to persecute the saints of the most High;

*and hast scattered us among the Heathen*: the Pagan world, as the first Christians were, who were scattered up and down in the Gentile world everywhere; (see <sup><0001></sup>1 Peter 1:1); or the Papacy, who are sometimes called Gentiles, (<sup><6102></sup>Revelation 11:2); because much of the Gentile idolatry is introduced into the Popish religion; and among these many of the true members of Christ and of his church have been carried captive and scattered; and such will be found there a little before the destruction of Babylon, and will be called out from thence; (see <sup><6103></sup>Revelation 13:10 18:4).

**Ver. 12.** *Thou sellest thy people for nought*, etc.] So God, when he is said to deliver up his people into the hands of their enemies, is said to sell them to them; (see <sup><0724></sup>Judges 2:14 3:8 4:2); and selling them for nought suggests, that in their apprehensions he had no esteem of them and value for them; just as men, when they have any person or thing to dispose of they have no regard unto, but choose to be rid of, will part with it for nothing: and as it follows,

*and dost not increase [thy wealth] by their price*; get nothing by the bargain. This must be understood after the manner of men, and in the opinion of the church, and not as in reality; no otherwise than as it has been true, that God has suffered some of his people to be in the bondage and slavery of mystical Babylon, called Egypt, one part of whose wares and merchandises are slaves and souls of men, (<sup><6108></sup>Revelation 11:8 18:13).

**Ver. 13.** *Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours*, etc.] Which is the common lot of Christians: Christ and his apostles have given reason for the saints in all ages to expect it, and have fortified their minds to bear it patiently, yea, to esteem it an honour, and greater riches than the treasures of the antichristian Egypt;

*a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us*; being always represented as mean and despicable, and reckoned ignorant and accursed, and as the faith of the world, and the offscouring of all things.

**Ver. 14.** *Thou makest us a byword among the Heathen*, etc.] Among the Papists, as the Jews were among the Gentiles, (<sup><6837></sup>Deuteronomy 28:37 <sup><6849></sup>Jeremiah 24:9); calling them schismatics, heretics, fanatics, and what not?

*a shaking of the head among the people*; by way of indignation, scorn, and contempt; (see <sup><6927></sup>Psalm 22:7 109:25).

**Ver. 15.** *My confusion [is] continually before me*, etc.] Meaning that which is the occasion of it;

*and the shame of my face hath covered me*; not by reason of sin, which is often the cause of confusion and shame in God's people; (see <sup><6825></sup>Jeremiah 3:25 <sup><6908></sup>Daniel 9:8); but on account of what follows.

**Ver. 16.** *For the voice, of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth*, etc.] That is, antichrist, to whom a mouth speaking blasphemies has been given, and which he has opened in blasphemy against God, attributing that to himself which belongs to God; blaspheming his name, his tabernacle, and them that well in heaven; (see <sup><6615></sup>Revelation 13:5,6 <sup><6914></sup>2 Thessalonians 2:4);

*by reason of the enemy and avenger*; which are very proper characters of antichrist, who is the enemy of Christ and of his people, and breathes out vengeance against them; as the same titles are also given to the Scribes and Pharisees, the implacable enemies of Christ, (<sup><6902></sup>Psalm 8:2).

**Ver. 17.** *All this is come upon us*, etc.] Not by chance, but according to the purpose and counsel of God; not for sin, and as a punishment of it, but for Christ's sake and his Gospel; for a profession of faith in him, and for the trial of it;

*yet have we not forgotten thee*; not the being and perfections of God, on which they often meditated, especially as displayed in the affair of salvation by Jesus Christ; nor the works of God, which were remembered to encourage faith and hope in their present circumstances, (<sup>3940</sup>Psalm 44:1); nor the benefits and favours bestowed upon them by him; nor his word, worship, and ordinances; their reproach, afflictions, and persecutions, did not move them from the hope of the Gospel, and the service of God;

*neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant*; by disbelieving their interest in God as their covenant God; by disregarding or not coming to and making use of Christ the Mediator of it; and by calling in question their interest in the blessings and promises of the covenant; for nothing can be more called dealing falsely in or with respect to the covenant of grace than unbelief about it; which remains firm and sure notwithstanding all the afflictions that may come on such who are interested in it: moreover, as this may respect the formal exhibition of the covenant under the Gospel dispensation, by the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances, the sense may be, that though the church and her members met with so much reproach and persecution from men, yet did not drop nor deny any of the truths of the Gospel, nor corrupt the ordinances of Christ, nor neglect an attendance on them; but were virgins, pure and incorrupt in doctrine and practice, and followed the Lamb whithersoever he went.

**Ver. 18.** *Our heart is not turned back*, etc.] To its original hardness, blindness, and bondage, to its former sin and folly, to cherish, gratify, and fulfil its lusts and desires; not from God, from love to him, faith in him, and desires after him; nor from his worship and service; their trials had no such influence upon them as to cause them to apostatize from God, neither in heart, nor in action;

*neither have our steps declined from thy way*; from the way of his commandments, from the paths of holiness, truth, and faith, being directed and guided therein by the counsel of the Lord, and kept and preserved by his power.

**Ver. 19.** *Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons*, etc.] Where men, comparable to dragons or their poison and cruelty, dwell; particularly in Rome, and the Roman jurisdiction, both Pagan and Papal, the seat of Satan the great red dragon, and of his wretched brood and offspring, the beast, to whom he has given his power; here the saints and followers of Christ have been sorely afflicted and persecuted, and yet have



held fast the name of Christ, and not denied his faith; (see <sup><6123></sup>Revelation 2:13 12:3); the wilderness is the habitation of dragons; and this is the name of the place where the church is said to be in the times of the Papacy, and where she is fed and preserved for a time, and times, and half a time, (<sup><6126></sup>Revelation 12:6,14);

*and covered us with the shadow of death*; as the former phrase denotes the cruelty of the enemies of Christ's church and people, this their dismal afflictions and forlorn state and condition; (see <sup><6234></sup>Psalm 23:4) (<sup><2302></sup>Isaiah 9:2); and may have some respect to the darkness of Popery, when it was at the height, and the church of Christ was covered with it, there being very little appearances and breakings forth of Gospel light any where. According to Arama, the "place of dragons" denotes the captivity of Egypt, which is the great dragon; and the "shadow of death", he says, was a name of Egypt in ancient times, as say the Rabbins; and observes that (<sup><3425></sup>Psalm 44:25) explains this; (see <sup><0034></sup>Genesis 3:14).

**Ver. 20.** *If we have forgotten the name of our God*, etc.] As antichrist, and the antichristian party did in those times, (<sup><2713></sup>Daniel 11:36,37);

*or stretched out our hands to a strange god*; as not to any of the Heathen deities under the Pagan persecutions, so not to any images of gold, silver, brass, and wood, under the Papal tyranny; not to the Virgin Mary, nor to angels and saints departed; nor to the breaden God in the mass, never heard of before; (see <sup><2713></sup>Daniel 11:38,39 <sup><0021></sup>Revelation 9:21).

**Ver. 21.** *Shall not God search this out?* etc.] Undoubtedly he would, was it so, and expose it, and punish for it; as he will the Balaamites and children of Jezebel, (<sup><6128></sup>Revelation 2:18-23); this seems to be an appeal to God for the truth of all that the church had said concerning her steadfastness and integrity under the most trying exercises;

*for he knoweth the secrets of the heart*; whether the heart is turned back, or there is any inclination to apostatize from God, or his name is forgotten in it; as well as whether in fact the hand has been stretched out, or prayer made to a strange god, (<sup><2470></sup>Jeremiah 17:9,10).

**Ver. 22.** *Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long*, etc.] These words are cited by the Apostle Paul in (<sup><4836></sup>Romans 8:36); and are applied to his times, showing the then close attachment of the saints to Christ, and their strong love and affection for him; and they have the same sense here, being an instance and proof of the church's integrity and faithfulness in the cause

of God, amidst the sorest afflictions and persecutions; for the truth of which she appeals to the searcher of hearts; and had their accomplishment in the ten persecutions under the Heathen emperors, and under the Papal tyranny; and may be understood of their being threatened with death, being in danger of it, and exposed unto it continually, (<sup>465B</sup>1 Corinthians 15:31 <sup>470D</sup>2 Corinthians 4:10-12); or of their being in such troubles and afflictions, which may be called death, (<sup>470B</sup>2 Corinthians 1:8-10 11:23); or of the actual slaying them: and what was done to many of the members of the church she attributes to herself, because of the union between them; and for the sake of the worship of the true God, because they would not worship the gods of the Heathens, nor the image of the beast, multitudes of them were put to death; and that all the day long, and every day, and that for a long series and course of time, or continually; and indeed, ever since the Gospel day or dispensation began, this killing work has been more or less; and it will continue during the reign of antichrist, until the measure of his iniquity is filled up, and the afflictions of the saints are accomplished;

*we are counted as sheep for the slaughter*; or “as sheep of slaughter”<sup>f596</sup>; (see <sup>3810B</sup>Zechariah 11:4,7); that is, either as sheep to be slaughtered for food, their enemies delighting to eat their flesh and drink their blood; (see Gill on “<sup>3941B</sup>Psalm 44:11”), or for sacrifice, they reckoning it doing God good service to take away their lives, as though they sacrificed a lamb or a sheep unto him; and which, like sheep, they have patiently endured: this is the account made of them, not by the Lord, in whose sight their death is precious; nor by the saints, with whom their memory is dear; but by their furious persecutors, among whom they are as sheep among wolves; (see <sup>4013B</sup>1 Corinthians 4:13).

**Ver. 23.** *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?* etc.] Not that sleep properly falls upon God: the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; his eyes are always upon his people; he never withdraws them from them, and he watches over them night and day: but sometimes he seems and is thought to be asleep; as when wicked men flourish and triumph over the righteous, and go on in sin with impunity; when their judgment seems to linger, and their damnation to slumber, though it does not; and when the saints are under sore afflictions, and the Lord seems to disregard them, and does not appear for their deliverance; and when things are as when the disciples were in a storm, and Christ was asleep, to whom they said, “carest thou not that we perish?” and the Lord may be said to awake, and it is what is here prayed for, when he stirs up himself and takes vengeance on his

enemies, as he will before long on antichrist and his followers; and when he takes in hand the cause and judgment of his people, and pleads it thoroughly, and delivers them out of the hands of all their oppressors, and gives them the dominion and kingdom under the whole heaven; (see <sup><2311></sup>Isaiah 2:9 <sup><1785></sup>Psalm 78:65,66 35:23);

*arise*; to revenge the blood of his people, and to have mercy on his Zion;

*cast [us] not off for ever*; as he might seem to do, by suffering their enemies to triumph over them; but in reality he does not; much less with loathing and abhorrence, as the word <sup>f597</sup> used signifies, since his church is his Hephzibah, in whom he delights, (<sup><2311></sup>Isaiah 62:4); and still less for ever, since his love to them is from everlasting to everlasting, and they shall be for ever with him; (see Gill on “<sup><1981></sup>Psalm 43:2”).

**Ver. 24.** *Wherefore hidest thou thy face?* etc.] (see <sup><1901></sup>Psalm 10:1 12:1);

*[and] forgettest our affliction and our oppression.* Not that the Lord does really forget either the persons of his people, which he cannot, since they are engraven on the palms of his hands, and a book of remembrance is written for them: nor the afflictions of his people; he knows their souls in adversity; he chooses them in the furnace of affliction; he makes all afflictions work together for good, and delivers out of them. But because deliverance is not immediately wrought, and they sometimes continue long under their afflictions and oppressions, they seem to be forgotten by him, as during the ten persecutions and the long reign of antichrist.

**Ver. 25.** *For our soul is bowed down to the dust,* etc.] Which may signify great declension in spiritual things, much dejection of mind, and little exercise of grace, (<sup><1125></sup>Psalm 119:25 <sup><2112></sup>Lamentations 3:29); or a very low estate in temporals; subjection to their enemies; they setting their feet upon their necks, and obliging them to lick the dust of them: and even it may signify nearness to death itself; (see <sup><1614></sup>Joshua 10:24 <sup><2423></sup>Isaiah 49:23 <sup><1326></sup>Psalm 22:16);

*our belly cleaveth to the earth*; as persons that lie prostrate, being conquered and suppliants.

**Ver. 26.** *Arise for our help,* etc.] Or, “arise our help” <sup>f598</sup>. God is the help of his people, and he is a present help in time of trouble; and he is the only one; and he can help and does, when none else can;

*and redeem us for thy mercies' sake*; not for the sake of her integrity and faithfulness; nor for her sufferings for Christ's sake; but for his grace and mercy's sake, which is the source and spring of redemption or deliverance, both temporal and spiritual; and to that the saints ascribe it, and not to any merit of theirs, or works of righteousness done by them.