

PSALM 95

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 95

This psalm, though without a title, was written by David, as appears from (^{<S047>}Hebrews 4:7), and to him the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions ascribe it. It belongs to the times of the Messiah, as Kimchi observes; the apostle applies it to the Jews of his time, and bespeaks them in the language of it, (^{<S087>}Hebrews 3:7-11), and in which time Israelites, believers in Christ, are called upon to serve and worship him, in consideration of his greatness in himself, and his goodness to them. Theodoret thinks that David spoke prophetically of King Josiah and his times; and wrote it in the person of him, and the priests of God.

Ver. 1. *O come, let us sing unto the Lord*, etc.] To Jehovah the Messiah, the Lord our righteousness; setting forth, in songs of praise, the glory of his person, the riches of his grace, and our thankfulness to him for spiritual mercies by him: Christ is to be the subject of our spiritual songs, and is the person to whose honour and glory they should be directed: in the New Testament we are instructed to sing unto the Lord, the Lord Christ, (^{<B59>}Ephesians 5:19 ^{<S086>}Colossians 3:16), and this is what Pliny ^{f1354} tells Trajan, the Roman emperor, the Christians in his time did; they sung a hymn to Christ, as to a God:

let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation; to Christ, the Rock, (^{<B00>}1 Corinthians 10:4), a Rock, for height, being higher than the saints, than the kings of the earth, than the angels in heaven, than the heavens themselves; for strength, being the mighty God, and mighty Saviour; for shelter, being the saints security from avenging justice and wrath to come: a Rock, on which the church and all believers are built, and which endures for ever; “the Rock of salvation”, being the author of spiritual and eternal salvation, and the strength and security of it; not only is he strong to do it, but, being done by him, it is safe in him; wherefore shouts of joy and songs of praise are due unto him. This shows that vocal singing is meant, singing with an harmonious and musical voice; and that social singing, or singing in concert together, is intended. The Septuagint renders it, “to God our Saviour”, (^{<Q147>}Luke 1:47 ^{<B125>}Jude 1:25).

Ver. 2. *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving*, etc.] Come with the sacrifice of praise, there being no other in the days of the Messiah, all ceremonial sacrifices being put an end to when his sacrifice was offered up; so Arama observes, that the offering of thanksgiving shall remain, or be left in the days of the Messiah; come with this to Christ as a priest, to offer it by him to God his Father, to whom it is acceptable through him, and with this to himself for the great salvation he has wrought out: “to come before his presence”, or “face”^{f1355}, supposes his being come in the flesh, his being God manifest in it, and also as clear and free from the veil of types and shadows; these all being gone now he is come, and to be beheld with open face; and likewise his having done his work as a Saviour, and now upon his throne as a King; into whose presence chamber saints are admitted to make their acknowledgments to him, and profess their allegiance and subjection to him, and their gratitude for favours received. It signifies an attendance on him in his house and ordinances, where he shows his face, and grants his presence; and intends not merely bodily exercise, or a presentation of our bodies only to him, but a drawing nigh to him with true hearts, and serving him in a spiritual manner:

and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms; with a melodious voice, and grace in the heart, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; this belonging to Gospel times shows that singing of psalms vocally in a musical way is an ordinance of Christ, to be performed to him under the Gospel dispensation, (⁴⁰⁵⁹Ephesians 5:19 ⁵⁰⁸⁶Colossians 3:16).

Ver. 3. *For the Lord is a great God*, etc.] Christ is truly and properly God, wherefore divine service is to be performed unto him; particularly singing psalms, setting forth therein his greatness and glory: and he is a great one; great in power, wisdom, justice, truth, mercy, and grace; greatness is to be ascribed unto him, and worship given him, because of his greatness, (⁵⁰²³Titus 2:13)

and a great King over all gods; he is King of the whole world; his kingdom ruleth over all; he is King of kings, and Lord of lords; he is King of saints, the government of the whole church is upon his shoulders, which he exercises in the most wise, powerful, and righteous manner imaginable; he is above all that are called gods, all the nominal and fictitious deities of the Heathens; above all civil magistrates, who are gods by office; and above the angels, who have this name, (⁴¹⁸²1 Peter 3:22). Aben Ezra interprets it of angels.

Ver. 4. *In his hand are the deep places of the earth*, etc.] The “penetrals”^{f1356} of it; not only what are penetrated by men, the minerals that are in it; but what are of such deep recess as to be penetrated only by the Lord himself; these are in the hands and power of Christ, which he can search into, discover, and dispose of; these are the foundations of the earth, which cannot be searched out beneath by men, (^{<23137>}Jeremiah 31:37),

the strength of the hills is his also; or, “the wearinesses”^{f1357} of them, the tops^{f1358} of them, which make a man weary to go up unto, they are so high; the Targum is,

“the strengths of the height of the hills;”

which takes in both ideas, both the height and strength of them. The hills, that are both high and strong, are set fast by his power, and are at his command; and bow and tremble before him, whom men ought to worship.

Ver. 5. *The sea is his, and he made it*, etc.] He made it, and therefore it is, and all creatures in it; he sets bounds to it, and its waves, and restrains the raging of it at his pleasure, (^{<4026>}Matthew 8:26,27),

and his hands formed the dry land; the whole world, all besides the sea, the vast continent; he is the Maker of it, and all creatures in it; without him was nothing made that is made; and, being the Creator of all things, is the proper object of worship, (^{<4026>}John 1:2,3 ^{<40125>}Romans 1:25), as follows.

Ver. 6. *O come, let us worship and bow down*, etc.] Before him who is the Rock of our salvation, the great God and great King, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the proper object of all religious worship and adoration: Christ is to be worshipped with every part of external worship under the New Testament dispensation; psalms and songs of praise are to be sung unto him; prayer is to be made unto him; the Gospel is to be preached, and ordinances to be administered, in his name; and likewise with all internal worship, in the exercise of every grace on him, as faith, hope, and love: (see ^{<49511>}Psalms 45:11),

let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; both in a natural and spiritual sense: Christ is the Maker of us as creatures, of our souls and bodies; we have our natural being from him, and are supported in it by him; and he is the Maker of us as new creatures; we are his workmanship, created in him, and by him; and therefore he should be worshipped by us, (^{<4120>}Ephesians 2:10 ^{<49403>}Psalms 100:3,4). Kimchi distinguishes these several gestures,

expressed by the different words here used; the first, we render worship, signifies, according to him, the prostration of the whole body on the ground, with the hands and legs stretched out; the second, a bowing of the head, with part of the body; and the third, a bending of the knees on the ground; but though each of these postures and gestures have been, and may be, used in religious worship, yet they seem not so much to design them themselves, and the particular use of them, as worship itself, which is in general intended by them.

Ver. 7. *For he is our God*, etc.] God over all, blessed for ever, truly and properly God, and therefore to be worshipped: “our God”; in whom we have interest, who became our head and surety in covenant; took upon him our nature, is our “Immanuel”, God with us, which increases the obligation to worship him; these are the words of New Testament saints:

and we are the people of his pasture; for whom he has provided a good pasture; whom he leads into it, and feeds in it, even by the ministry of the word and ordinances:

and the sheep of his hand; made and fashioned by his hand, both in a natural and spiritual sense; led and guided by his hand, as a flock by the hand of the shepherd; are in his hand, being put there for safety by his Father; and upheld by it, and preserved in it, and from whence none can pluck them; (see ^{f133B}Deuteronomy 33:3 ^{f130B}John 10:28,29) receiving such favours from him, he ought to be worshipped by them. The Heathens had a deity they called Pan, whom they make to be a keeper of sheep ^{f1359}; and some Christian writers have thought that Christ the chief Shepherd is meant; since, when the Heathen oracles ceased, after the coming and death of Christ, a voice is ^{f1360}said to be heard at a certain place, “the great Pan is dead: today, if ye will hear his voice”; the voice of the Shepherd, the voice of God, says Aben Ezra, his Word, as the Targum; the voice of the Messiah, both his perceptive voice, his commands and ordinances, which ought to be hearkened to and obeyed; and the voice of his Gospel, and the doctrines of it; which is to be heard not only externally, but internally: when it is heard as to be understood, to be approved of and believed, and to be distinguished; so as to have a spiritual and experimental knowledge of it; to feel the power and efficacy of it, and practically attend to it; it is an evidence of being the sheep of Christ; (see ^{f130D}John 10:4,5,27), where the sheep are said to know the voice of the shepherd, and not that of a stranger; of which Polybius ^{f1361} gives a remarkable instance in the goats of

the island of Cynnon, who will flee from strangers, but, as soon as the keeper sounds his trumpet, they will run to him: though the words may be connected with what follows, as they are in (^{<SRB>}Hebrews 3:7,8), where they are said to be the words of the Holy Ghost, and are applied to times, and are interpreted of the voice of the Son of God in his house; for though it may refer to some certain day in David's time, as the seventh day sabbath, in which the voice of God might be heard, the word of God read and explained; and in Gospel times, as the Lord's day, in which Christ speaks by his ministers; and to the whole time of a man's life, which is called "while it is today", (^{<SRB>}Hebrews 3:13), yet it chiefly respects the whole day of the Gospel, the whole Gospel dispensation, (^{<THP>}2 Corinthians 6:2).

Ver. 8. *Harden not your hearts*, etc.] Against Christ, against his Gospel, against all the light and evidence of it. There is a natural hardness of the heart, owing to the corruption of nature; and an habitual hardness, acquired by a constant continuance and long custom in sinning; and there is a judicial hardness, which God gives men up unto. There is a hardness of heart, which sometimes attends God's own people, through the deceitfulness of sin gaining upon them; of which, when sensible, they complain, and do well to guard against. Respect seems to be had here to the hardness of heart in the Jews in the times of Christ and his apostles, which the Holy Ghost foresaw, and here dehorts from; who, notwithstanding the clear evidence of Jesus being the Messiah, from prophecy, from miracles, from doctrines, from the gifts of the Spirit, etc. yet hardened their hearts against him, rebelled against light, and would not receive, but reject him:

as in the provocation; or "as at Meribah"^{f1362}; a place so called from the contention and striving of the people of Israel with the Lord and his servants; and when they provoked not only the meek man Moses to speak unadvisedly with his lips; but also the Lord himself by their murmurings, (^{<QTB>}Exodus 17:7 ^{<QTB>}Numbers 20:13) though this may respect their provocations in general in the wilderness; for they often provoked him by their unbelief, ingratitude, and idolatry; (see ^{<HDS>}Deuteronomy 9:8,22,23),

and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness; or "as in the day of Massah"^{f1363}; the time when they tempted him at Massah, so called from their tempting him by distrusting his power and presence among them, by disobeying his commands, and limiting the Holy One of Israel to time and

means of deliverance; (see ^{<1277>}Exodus 17:7) and this being in the wilderness was an aggravation of their sin; they being just brought out of Egypt, and having had such a wonderful appearance of God for them, there and at the Red sea; and besides being in a place where their whole dependence must be upon God, where they could have nothing but what they had from him immediately, it was egregious folly as well as wickedness to provoke and tempt him.

Ver. 9. *When your fathers tempted me*, etc.] Or, “where” ^{f1364}; that is, in the wilderness, particularly at Meribah and Massah; it was Christ they tempted, as appears from (^{<4010>}1 Corinthians 10:9)

proved me: had proof of his power, goodness, and mercy, in providing for them, and in the preservation of them: or “tried” ^{f1365} him, his patience, longsuffering, and forbearance, by their repeated provocations of him:

and saw my work; his work of judgment upon their enemies the Egyptians, by inflicting plagues upon them, and by the destruction of Pharaoh and his host at the Red sea; and his work of goodness to them, in bringing them out of bondage, leading them through the Red sea safely, raining manna about their tents, and giving them water out of the rock; or particularly his work in consuming them in the wilderness, as he swore he would, and which they saw with their eyes, and was near forty years a doing. The Syriac version joins the “forty years” at the beginning of the next verse to this; the phrase standing in such a situation as to be connected with both, and is true of each; so the apostle uses it both ways, (^{<3810>}Hebrews 3:9,17).

Ver. 10. *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*, etc.] The generation of the wilderness, as the Jews commonly call them; and which was a stubborn and a rebellious one, whose heart and spirit were not right with God, (^{<4978>}Psalms 78:8), wherefore, speaking after the manner of men, God was grieved with them, as he was with the old world, (^{<0006>}Genesis 6:6), or he was “weary” of them, and “loathed” them as the word ^{f1366} sometimes signifies; wherefore, after the affair of the spies, to which Aben Ezra thinks this had reference, they did not hear from the mouth of the Lord, there was no prophecy sent them by the hand of Moses, as the same writer observes; nor any history or account of them, from that time till they came to the border of Canaan; so greatly was their conduct and behaviour resented: and it was much such a term of time that was between the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist and of Christ, and the destruction of Jerusalem; during which time the Jews tempted Christ, tried

his patience, saw his works, and grieved his Spirit, which brought at last ruin upon them:

and said, it is a people that do err in their heart; he was not only inwardly grieved with them, but, speaking after the same human manner, he gave his grief vent, he spoke and gave this just character of them. The apostle adds “always”, (^{<S810>}Hebrews 3:10) and so does the Arabic version here, and which is implied in the words “do err”; they not only had erred, but they continued to do so; and their errors were not merely through weakness, ignorance, and mistake, but were voluntary, and with their whole hearts; they sprung from their hearts, which were desperately wicked; they erred willingly and wilfully; and this the Lord, the searcher of hearts, knew and took notice of:

and they have not known my ways; they had his law, his statutes, and his judgments, and so must know the ways he prescribed them to walk in; but they did not practically observe them: or his ways of providence; which they did not take that notice of as they ought to have done; they did not consider them as they should, nor improve them in the manner as became them; they were not thankful for their mercies as they ought; nor did the goodness of God lead them to repentance.

Ver. 11. *Unto whom I swear in my wrath*, etc.] Being angry with them, he swore for the confirmation of what he said; the form of the oath was, “as truly as I live”; he swore by himself, for he could swear by no greater; (see ^{<H42>}Numbers 14:21-23,28-30,35)

that they should not enter into my rest; the land of Canaan, or Israel, as Kimchi; which the Lord provided, promised, and gave to the Israelites, as their rest; the land of Israel and Jerusalem, as Jarchi; or the house of the sanctuary, the temple, as the Targum; which Jehovah chose for his rest, and took it up in it, and where he promised the Messiah, the Prince of peace, who gives to his people spiritual and eternal rest. Canaan was typical of the rest which remains for the people of God; the use that believing Jews, and all Christians under the Gospel dispensation, are to make of this, see in (^{<S818>}Hebrews 3:18,19 4:1,9-11).