

PSALM 113

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 113

With this psalm begins the great “Hallel”, which ends with Psalm 118; and was used to be sung at the Jewish festivals, particularly at the feast of tabernacles and of the passover; and is thought by some to be the hymn sung by Christ and his apostles, after the celebration of the Lord’s supper; in which there are many things pertinent to that occasion as well as to the above feasts. This psalm is a song of praise for redemption by Christ, to be sung in Gospel times, when the name of the Lord should be known among all nations, from the rising to the setting sun. It is thought by some to be an abridgment of the song of Hannah, (~~1~~ 1 Samuel 2:1-10), there is an agreement.

Ver. 1. *Praise ye the Lord*, etc.] Or, “hallelujah”. This is the title of the psalm, as in the two preceding, and directs to the principal matter of it.

Praise, O ye servants of the Lord; meaning not the angels, nor all men, nor the priests and Levites only; but all the saints, who are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God; who are servants, not of sin, nor of Satan, nor of men, but of God and Christ; and who serve the Lord willingly and cheerfully, with much pleasure and delight, in righteousness and holiness, with reverence and godly fear, and without trusting to and depending on their service for salvation: and one principal branch of their service is praise, especially under the Gospel dispensation; in which all legal sacrifices are abolished, and the sacrifice of praise is continued; and which is pleasant and delightful work, and yet there is a backwardness to it; and therefore there is need of such an exhortation to excite unto it, and to repeat it, as follows:

praise the name of the Lord; not any particular name, as Jehovah; but him himself, and the perfections of his nature; his holiness, justice, truth, faithfulness, power, goodness, grace and mercy. The repetition of the exhortation denotes either the abundance of praise to be given to the Lord, or the constancy and continuance of it; which ought to be done at all times, every day, since his mercies are new every morning. Some have thought

the threefold repetition respects the trinity of Persons, who are each to be praised, as in (⁴⁰⁶³Numbers 6:24-26 ⁴⁹⁰¹Psalms 96:1), but this is doubtful, and perhaps not sufficient to build such a doctrine on; and especially since the first of these exhortations is the title of the psalm: however, this is a certain truth, that Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, are to be praised.

Ver. 2. *Blessed be the name of the Lord*, etc.] Some prefix the word “saying”, as directing to the matter and manner of praising the Lord, and to express themselves thus; “let the name of the Lord be blessed”; honoured, glorified, spoken well of.

From this time forth and for evermore; from the beginning of time, or as soon as time began, the Lord’s name was to be praised, and was praised by the holy angels, who were present at laying the foundation of the earth, (⁴⁸⁸⁴Job 38:4-7), and all the works of the Lord, in their way, have praised him ever since. Here it may respect the time of penning this psalm, or the time when the persons called upon commenced the servants of the Lord, the time of their conversion; a time of love, life, light, and deliverance, and therefore a time to begin to praise the Lord: or the whole time of the Gospel dispensation, to which this psalm refers; the accepted time and day of salvation, and of the Gentiles glorifying God for his mercy; in which the Lord is to be and is praised, as he will be to all eternity, by angels and glorified saints.

Ver. 3. *From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same*, etc.] Meaning not from morning tonight; for it designs not time, but place, even all the space from east to west, or that lies between the rising and setting sun; even all nations, and the inhabitants of them; and who ought to praise the Lord for the rising sun, and the benefit and advantages of it; and yet many of them have worshipped the sun, and served the creature more than and besides the Creator. All within this compass are the creatures of God, and the care of his providence, and therefore are bound to praise him and yet he has had this tribute due unto him but from a few. Here it respects Gospel times, when the Gospel should be sent into all the world; and many should be called from the east and west, from the north and south, and fear the Lord and worship him, and offer a pure offering of praise unto him; and his name be great among the Gentiles, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, (³⁰¹¹Malachi 1:11). For within this wide space

the Lord's name is to be praised; it ought to be, though it is not; and ere long it will be, when all nations shall come and worship before him, (Rev 15:3,4).

Ver. 4. *The Lord is high above all nations*, etc.] He is the most High in all the earth; he is higher than the highest; he is King of kings and Lord of lords: all nations are made by him, and are under his government and dominion; he is the Governor among the nations; they are in comparison of him as the drop of a bucket, as the small dust of the balance; as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity. Here it seems to respect the time when the Lord shall be more visibly King over all the earth, and the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, (^{<3840>}Zechariah 14:9 ^{<6115>}Revelation 11:15).

And his glory above the heavens; it is above what the heavens do or can declare; they declare something of it, but not all. Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, is made higher than the heavens, and has ascended far above them; and is above the angels in them, both as to nature, name, office, and place, (^{<3004>}Hebrews 1:4-14 7:26).

Ver. 5. *Who is like unto the Lord our God*, etc.] Among the gods of the nations, as Kimchi; or among the angels of heaven, or among any of the mighty monarchs on earth; there is none like him for the perfections of his nature, for his wisdom, power, truth, and faithfulness; for his holiness, justice, goodness, grace, and mercy; who is eternal, unchangeable, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; nor for the works of his hands, his works of creation, providence, and grace; none ever did the like: and what makes this reflection the more delightful to truly good men is, that this God is their God; and all this is true of our Immanuel, God with us; who is God over all, and the only Saviour and Redeemer; and there is none in heaven and earth like him, or to be desired besides him.

Who dwelleth on high? in the high and holy place, in the highest heaven, which is his throne; or "who exalteth himself to dwell"^{f1597}; so the Targum,

"he exalteth his habitation to dwell,"

suitable to the dignity and the greatness of his majesty; as he is high and above all, so he has fixed his habitation in the highest heavens; as he is self-existent, he is self-exalted, and none can exalt him as himself; he is exalted above all blessing and praise; and if it is an exaltation of him to dwell in the highest heavens, what an exaltation will it be of the saints to dwell with him

there, in those mansions in his house which Christ is gone to prepare for them! This clause may be applied to Christ, who, both previous to his humiliation, and after it, dwelt in the highest heavens with his Father, in his bosom, from whence he came down on earth, and whither he is gone again, and is highly exalted there.

Ver. 6. *Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth.*] The persons the highest heavens, the angels whom he upholds in their beings, and admits into his presence; who always behold his face, and he beholds them, delights in their persons, and accepts their services; which, though pure and perfect, it is a condescension in him to do, since they are but creature services, and chargeable with folly and weakness; and who themselves are as nothing in comparison of him, and veil their faces before him; (~~RUBS~~ Job 4:18), also glorified saints are continually in his view, and favoured with intimate communion with him: and he humbles himself to look lower than this, and behold the things in the starry heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars; whom he preserves in their being, directs their courses, and continues their influence; brings out their host by number, calls them by their names, and because of his power not one fails: he looks lower still, and beholds the things in the airy heavens; there is not a meteor or cloud that flies, or a wind that blows, but he observes, guides, and directs it; nor a bird in the air but his eye is on it; he feeds the fowls of the air, and not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge and will: and he also humbles himself to behold persons and things on earth, even every beast of the forest, the cattle on a thousand hills, all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field; and their eyes are on him, and he gives them their food in due season; he looks down from heaven and beholds all the children of men, and is the Saviour of them in a providential way; in an especial manner his eye, both of providence and grace, is on his own people, whom he beholds in Christ as fair and comely: and rejoices over them to do them good; and he has respect to their services for his sake, and condescends to dwell on earth with them. This may also be applied to Christ, who humbled himself to look upon the angels in heaven, and take them under his care and protection, be the head of them, and confirm them in that estate in which they were created: and who from all eternity vouchsafed to look with delight upon the sons of men, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, where he knew they would dwell; and in the fulness of time he humbled himself to come down on earth in human nature and dwell among men, and

become very man in that nature; made himself of no reputation, and humbled himself so as to become obedient to death, the death of the cross, and be made sin and a curse for his people. This was an humiliation indeed!

Ver. 7. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust*, etc.] Persons of mean extraction and in low life are sometimes raised by him to great honour and dignity, as Saul, David, and others; and is true of many who are spiritually poor and needy, as all men are, but all are not sensible of it; some are, and these are called poor “in spirit”, and are pronounced “blessed”, for “theirs is the kingdom of heaven”: they are raised out of a low and mean estate, out of the dust of sin, and self-abhorrence for it, in which they lie when convicted of it.

And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; which denotes a mean condition; so one born in a mean place, and brought up in a mean manner, is sometimes represented as taken out of a dunghill ^{f1598}: and also it is expressive of a filthy one; men by sin are not only brought into a low estate, but into a loathsome one, and are justly abominable in the sight of God, and yet he lifts them out of it: the phrases of “raising up” and “lifting out” suppose them to be fallen, as men are in Adam, fallen from a state of honour and glory, in which he was created, into a state of sin and misery, and out of which they cannot deliver themselves; it is Christ’s work, and his only, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to help or lift up his servant Israel, (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 49:6 ⁴¹⁵¹Luke 1:54 ⁴⁰⁰⁸1 Samuel 2:8).

Ver. 8. *That he may set [him] with princes*, etc.] As all the saints are by birth, being the sons of God, the King of kings; born of him, and not of the will of man; and are of a princely spirit, have a free spirit, and offer themselves and services willingly to the Lord; have the spirit of adoption, in opposition to a spirit of bondage; and, as princes, have power with God and prevail; and are also heirs of God, heirs of salvation, heirs of a kingdom, as princes be; now such as are raised by Christ and his grace from a low estate and condition are set among those princes here; they are brought to Zion, and have a place and a name in the house of God, better than that of sons and daughters; and become fellowcitizens with the saints; and they are set among princes hereafter in the kingdom of heaven.

Even with the princes of his people; the more eminent among the people of God, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom they shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven; and with the prophets of the Old Testament, and

the apostles of the New; and even with all the saints, who are made kings and priests unto God; (see ^{<1951G>}Psalm 45:16).

Ver. 9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house*, etc.] Or “to dwell in the house”, as the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and other versions; or rather “to cause the house to be inhabited”; to fill the house with inhabitants, to build up the house, as the barren woman, when made fruitful, does, as Rachel and Leah built up the house of Israel, (^{<1801I>}Ruth 4:11). This may be applied to the church of God, as it is to the congregation of Israel by the Targum,

“who makes the congregation of Israel, which is like to a barren woman, that sitteth sorrowful, to dwell with the men of her house, full of multitudes.”

Jarchi interprets it of Zion, who was as a barren woman; (see ^{<2501>}Isaiah 54:1) (^{<1807>}Galatians 4:27). It may be illustrated by the case of the primitive and apostolic church, which at first had but very few converts, but afterwards, both in Judea and in the Gentile world, had large numbers; as the church in the latter day will also have, when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and the nation of the Jews born at once.

And to be a joyful mother of children; as the barren woman is when she becomes the mother of children; and indeed every woman rejoices when a man is born into the world, (^{<1621>}John 16:21), and so does the church of Christ and people of God, when souls are born again among them; this causes great joy among the saints; (see ^{<1870>}Psalm 87:4-7 ^{<1151B>}Acts 15:3 ^{<2308>}Isaiah 49:18-21 60:4,5).

Praise ye the Lord; not only for the church’s fruitfulness, but for all the great and good things the Lord has vouchsafed to do for his people, mentioned in this psalm.