

PSALM 135

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 135

This psalm was written very probably by the same hand as the former. It begins in much the same manner; it has some likeness with Psalm 113 and 114. It begins and ends with “hallelujah”; and is throughout an exhortation of praise to God, on account of his name, nature, and perfections; and because of his works of creation, providence, and grace, many of which are enumerated. The Syriac interpreter says, there is an intimation in it of the conversion of the people of the Messiah unto the faith.

Ver. 1. *Praise ye the Lord*, etc.] Or hallelujah; which may be considered as the title of the psalm; as in the Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions:

praise ye the name of the Lord; that is, the Lord himself, and the perfections of his nature; his greatness, goodness, grace, and mercy; his holiness, justice, power, truth, and faithfulness; and also his word, by which he makes known himself, and is a distinguishing blessing to his people, and to be praised for it; (see ^{<B98E>}Psalm 48:1 147:19,20);

praise [him], O ye servants of the Lord; priests and Levites, and ministers of the word, and all the people of God; who once were the servants of sin, Satan, and the world, but now by the grace of God become his servants; (see ^{<B98E>}Romans 6:17). Some observe that the word praise is here used three times, which is thought not to be without a mystery; and may have regard to the three divine Persons in the Godhead, who are each to be praised; the Father for electing grace, the Son for redeeming grace, and the Spirit for regenerating and sanctifying grace.

Ver. 2. *Ye that stand in the house of the Lord*, etc.] That have a place and standing there, and go not out, being sons as well as servants; (see Gill on ^{<B98E>}Psalm 134:1”) and (see Gill on ^{<B98E>}Psalm 84:4”);

in the courts of the house of our God; alluding to the courts in the temple, the court of the priests, where they stood and ministered, slaying and offering their sacrifices; and the great court, where all the Israelites stood

and worshipped, (⁴⁰⁰2 Chronicles 4:9). So this may describe the worshippers of God in common, who should praise him: and happy are they that have a place here; (see ⁴⁸⁰Psalms 84:1,2,10).

Ver. 3. *Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord [is] good,* etc.] Essentially and communicatively; he is good, and he does good, in a providential way, to all men; and in a way of special grace to his own people; for whom he has laid up and to whom he has promised good things, and on whom he bestows them; as pardon, righteousness, and eternal life; both grace and glory; and therefore they should praise him;

sing praises unto his name, for [it is] pleasant; either the work of singing praise is pleasant, being the employment of angels and glorified saints; the subject matter of it delightful, the blessings of grace flowing from the everlasting love of God it leads unto, which is excellent and better than life; and it must be pleasant work to a saint, because it is pleasing to God; and especially when the presence of God is enjoyed in it, and melody is made in the heart as well as with the mouth. Or the sense is, “his name is pleasant”; so Aben Ezra and Kimchi interpret it: for though it is holy and reverend in itself, and fearful and terrible to sinners; yet as it is proclaimed in Christ, it is exceeding delightful, and in whom all the perfections of God are glorified; particularly the name of God, as a covenant God and Father in Christ, blessing, with all spiritual blessings in him, is exceeding pleasant; as are all the names of Christ, and therefore to be praised.

Ver. 4. *For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself,* etc.] To be his own special people, and not another’s; for his own service, and for his glory; and to be an habitation for himself, and to be for ever with him. This is not to be understood personally of Jacob, though a chosen vessel of mercy; nor of his natural posterity as such, though chosen as a nation to outward favours; for not all they, only some of them, were chosen to special grace and glory, a remnant according to the election of grace: but mystical and spiritual Jacob and Israel are meant, even the whole church and people of God, whether Jews or Gentiles; these God has chosen, of his own free grace and good will, to all the blessings of grace and glory, and that from all eternity; which choice will remain firm and immutable, in time and for ever; and therefore is worthy of praise and thanksgiving, now, and to all eternity;

[and] Israel for his peculiar treasure; by whom they are accounted as such; even as the peculiar treasure of kings, as silver, gold, jewels, and

precious stones; as his inheritance, his portion, and peculiar people; (see ^{<1295>}Exodus 19:5 ^{<3017>}Malachi 3:17).

Ver. 5. *For I know that the Lord [is] great,* etc.] Jehovah the Father is great in his perfections; in his power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, and goodness; and in his works of creation, providence, and grace: and so is Jehovah the Son, who seems chiefly designed, who is called “our Lord” or “Adon” in the next clause; he is great, having the same perfections his Father has; and doing the same works, besides the miracles he wrought here on earth, and the great work of our redemption: he is the great God and our Saviour, and a great Saviour he is; and indeed he is great in all his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King: and so is the blessed Spirit, who is equal to the Father and Son, and greater than he that is in the world. Now all this the psalmist could say from his own knowledge; he knew the Lord was great, from the consideration and meditation of his wondrous works; he knew the greatness of Christ, from the revelation made to him of his person, offices, and grace; he knew the greatness of the divine Spirit, from the inward experience of his upon his heart, as well as from his being divinely inspired by him; and because of this greatness of the Lord, as well as his goodness, he is to be praised; it is mentioned as a reason of it;

and [that] our Lord [is] above all gods; the Lord our righteousness; Immanuel, God with us: our Lord, not only by right of creation, but of redemption; he is above all that the Heathens called gods, even the greatest of them; not the idols their hands made only, but the heavens and all the host of them, the sun, moon, and stars; his glory is above them, being the Maker of them, as God; and he is made higher than they, as man and Mediator: he is above civil magistrates, princes, and kings of the earth, called gods, (^{<1815>}Psalm 82:5); he is King of kings, and Lord of lords, he is higher than they; by him they reign, and to him they are accountable; and he is above the angels, sometimes called “Elohim”, or gods, (^{<1905>}Psalm 8:5); he has a more excellent name and nature than they; he is the Creator of them, the object of their worship, to whom they minister, whose servants they are; and he is now exalted above them in the human nature, at the right hand of God; (see ^{<3014>}Hebrews 1:4-14).

Ver. 6. *Whatsoever the Lord pleased, [that] did he,* etc.] In creation, producing into being what creatures he thought fit; in providence, doing according to his will in heaven and in earth; in grace, predestinating men to grace and glory, according to the good pleasure of his will, and calling by

his grace whom he pleased: so Christ quickens whom he will; and the Spirit dispenses his gifts and grace severally to men as he pleases. Sovereignty, or acting according to will and pleasure, is peculiar to the Lord; the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, are at his direction, and act by the laws of creation, which are at his control; angels do his will, and not their own: the most arbitrary and despotic princes cannot do everything they please; but the Lord can and does, even everything;

in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places; in the formation of them, and filling them with inhabitants, and fitting them to perform the several ends and uses for which they were designed; as well as performing many wonderful things in them out of the ordinary course of nature, as did our Lord, or as were done when he was here on earth: a wonderful star appeared in the heavens, which guided the wise men to the place of his birth; unusual voices were heard from heaven at his baptism, transfiguration, and other times; the Spirit, with his extraordinary gifts, descended from hence after his ascension thither: surprising miracles were done by him on earth; the great work of redemption was finished here, where he glorified his divine Father; and throughout it he sent his apostles to publish his everlasting Gospel. He did wonders in the mighty waters; more than once he made the boisterous sea a calm, and walked upon the surface of it: and as of old he broke up the fountains of the great deep, and drowned the world; and at another time dried up the sea, and led his people through the depths, as through a wilderness; so he will hereafter bind the old serpent the devil, and cast him into the abyss, into the great deep, into the bottomless pit; where he will continue during the thousand years' reign of Christ with his saints.

Ver. 7. *He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth,* etc.] Up to the heavens. Aben Ezra interprets this of the mist which went up out of the earth, and watered it, (^{000B}Genesis 2:6); and still vapours are exhaled out of the earth by the force of the sun, and carried up into the air, and form various things, as wind, rain, etc. The Targum, Kimchi, and others, explain it of the “clouds”, so called from their elevation on high: these rise up out of the sea, the borders, and boundaries, and uttermost parts of the earth; (see ^{118H}1 Kings 18:44 ^{310B}Amos 5:8). Jerom interprets these clouds, spiritually and mystically, of the apostles and prophets, raised from a low and mean estate; and so may be applied to the ministers of the word, who are clouds full of water; of good doctrine, which they are sent to carry about the world, and publish in it; (see ^{280B}Isaiah 5:6);

he maketh lightnings for the rain: for the descent of the rain, as the Targum; by lightning oftentimes the clouds are broke, and so pour down rain; (see ^{<838>}Job 28:26); or, “lightnings with the rain”,^{f1803}; as Kimchi: these frequently come together, which is very surprising, that two such different elements should meet together as fire and water; and yet the fire not quenched by the water, nor the water heated by the fire: these the above ancient Christian writer interprets of the light of knowledge, and the rain of doctrine; (see ^{<8094>}Zechariah 9:14 ^{<6538>}Deuteronomy 32:3 ^{<2850>}Isaiah 55:10,11);

he bringeth the wind out of his treasures; as he has his treasures for the snow and hail, (^{<882>}Job 38:22); so for the winds: not the caverns of the earth, thought to be the repositories of the wind^{f1804}; nor are there proper repositories of it: but the air, as Suidas^{f1805}; which, when without wind, is easily moved by the wise hand of God; so Theodoret, from whom he seems to have taken this hint. In Scripture only mention is made of four winds, (^{<3579>}Ezekiel 37:9 ^{<4263>}Matthew 24:31 ^{<6101>}Revelation 7:1); and so the ancient Greeks only reckoned four cardinal winds, but at length they added four more; and at Athens was a marble temple, built by Andronicus Cyrrhestes, called “the temple of the eight winds”: this was an octagon, and on each side were engraven the images of every wind; and on the top of it was a Triton of brass, with a rod in his right hand, which being moved about by the wind, pointed to that which then blew^{f1806}: but now, through the great improvement of navigation, the winds are divided and subdivided in the points of the compass; and, besides the four cardinal ones, there are twenty eight collateral ones, in all thirty two; but be they reckoned as many as they may, they are all in the hands of God, and disposed of at his pleasure. Jerom here interprets them of the angels; perhaps it might be better to apply them to the gifts and graces of the Spirit, sometimes compared to wind, which are treasured up in Christ; (see ^{<4388>}John 3:8 ^{<4111>}Acts 2:1-4).

Ver. 8. *Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.*] Which was the last of the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians; and is particularly mentioned, because, by means of it, they were made willing to let the children of Israel go out of their land: and so this includes the deliverance of the Israelites, God’s firstborn, when he slew the firstborn of Egypt; and who were typical of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven; and the deliverance of them, through the blood of the passover, was an emblem of the deliverance of those by the blood of Christ; (see ^{<4122>}Exodus 12:22,23,27,29,30).

Ver. 9. [*Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,* etc.] Or, “signs and wonders”. Meaning the other extraordinary plagues sent among the Egyptians, before that of slaying their firstborn; and which have some likeness to the vials of God’s wrath, which will be poured out on the city called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, (~~Gen~~ Revelation 11:8 16:1);

upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants: his courtiers: some of them are particularly observed to affect him and his court; as the plagues of the frogs, and slaying the firstborn: and he and his princes must be more or less affected with them all, as well as the common people; who were an emblem either of Satan and his principalities, as Jerom interprets it; or rather of antichrist and his followers; to whom the tokens of God’s wrath and displeasure will be sent in a wonderful way and manner.

Ver. 10. *Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings.*] Or “many nations”^{f1807}. The seven nations of the Hittites, Gergashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites; the kings of which were mighty and many, even thirty one in number, (~~Gen~~ Joshua 12:1-24). This the Lord did by Joshua, a type of Christ; who has overcome the world by his sufferings and death, and delivered his people from it; who went forth conquering and to conquer, into the Roman Pagan empire, called the whole world, and subdued it by his Spirit and word; and will show his power in all the kingdoms of this world, either by converting or destroying them; and at last will judge all the nations and kings of the earth. Aben Ezra interprets this of the kings of Midian, or of those next mentioned, which is best.

Ver. 11. *Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan,* etc.] These are particularly named, because they were the first that were slain, and were the most mighty and powerful; (see ~~Gen~~ Deuteronomy 3:11 ~~Gen~~ Amos 2:9). These the Lord slew by the hand of Moses, a type of Christ; who has destroyed the god and prince of this world, that had the power of death, the devil; and has spoiled all his principalities and powers;

and all the kingdoms of Canaan; thirty one of them. These words explain the former; as the two kings mentioned point at the mighty kings slain, these kingdoms show who the great nations were that were smitten.

Ver. 12. *And gave their land [for] an heritage,* etc.] The land of the two kings before mentioned, which was given to the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh, (~~Gen~~ Deuteronomy 3:12-17); and the lands

belonging to the several kingdoms of Canaan were given to the rest of the tribes;

an heritage unto Israel his people; a type of the heavenly Canaan, the glorious, incorruptible, undefiled, and eternal inheritance; which is of God's free grace, chosen, prepared, and given; even a right unto it, and meetness for it, to the true and spiritual Israel of God, to his special people, his chosen, redeemed, and called ones.

Ver. 13. *Thy name, O Lord, [endureth] for ever*, etc.] The Lord himself endures for ever, in his nature, being, and perfections; and the fame of him, the fame of those acts of power and goodness before mentioned: the name of Christ endures for ever; his person and offices, his Gospel, which is his name; his children and people, who are called by his name, and in whom his name is perpetuated; the fame of his wondrous works in nature, providence, and grace; and especially of his great work of redemption and salvation;

[and] thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations; or “the remembrance of them to, generation and generation”; to every age; the love of Christ is remembered by his people in every age, the blessings of his grace in redemption, justification, pardon, etc. and cannot be forgotten as long as his Gospel is preached, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper administered, and he has a people in the world, all which will be as long as the sun and moon endure, there will be a memorial of him.

Ver. 14. *For the Lord will judge his people*, etc.] Rule and govern, protect and defend them; plead their cause, and avenge them of their enemies; judge between them, distinguish them by his care and providence, make them visible, so that others shall see the difference between them; especially at the last day, when he will judge them, and, as the righteous Judge, give them the crown of righteousness. Or “though the Lord judges his people”^{f1808}; chastises them in a fatherly way, that they may not be condemned with the world;

and, or “yet”^{f1809};

he will repent himself concerning his servants; of the evil of affliction he has brought upon them; he will change the course of his providential dealings with them, according to his unchangeable will; and turn their adversity into prosperity, and their mourning into joy: some render it, “he will be entreated for his servants”^{f1810}; he will hear prayer on their account,

and save them out of their afflictions; or, as others, “he will comfort himself concerning his servants”^{f1811}; take pleasure in them and their prosperity, comfort them, and take delight in so doing. The Targum of the whole is,

“for the Lord will judge the judgment of his people by his word, and to his righteous servants will return in his mercies.”

Ver. 15. *The idols of the Heathen [are] silver and gold*, etc.] This, with what follows, is observed, to show that when God judges his people, and takes vengeance on their enemies, the idols they serve will not be able to protect them, and deliver them out of his hands; and also to prove what is before asserted, that our Jehovah is great above all gods, (~~135:5~~ Psalm 135:5); the matter of which they are made is at best gold and silver, which are the dust and metals of the earth, or what the prophet calls thick clay, (~~2:6~~ Habakkuk 2:6); and are the creatures of Jehovah, and at his dispose, who says, the silver and the gold are mine, (~~2:8,9~~ Haggai 2:8,9); and who is infinitely above them in value and worth; even the knowledge of him, and the words of his mouth, doctrines, and precepts, are better than gold and silver, (~~3:14,15 8:10,11~~ Proverbs 3:14,15 8:10,11 ~~19:10 119:72,127~~ Psalm 19:10 119:72,127);

the work of men’s hands; which they form out of gold and silver into such shapes and figures, and therefore can never have deity in them; and a most stupid thing it is to imagine that the Godhead is like to gold and silver, graven by art and man’s device, (~~17:29~~ Acts 17:29); (see Gill on “~~115:4~~ Psalm 115:4”).

Ver. 16. *They have mouths, but they speak not*, etc.] Return no answer to the request and petition of their votaries; (see Gill on “~~115:5~~ Psalm 115:5”);

eyes have they, but they see not; the same is observed in the above place, which see.

Ver. 17. *They have ears, but they hear not*, etc.] (See Gill on “~~115:6~~ Psalm 115:6”);

neither is there [any] breath in their mouths; they are lifeless statues, they have not so much as what the brute creatures have, breath; our Jehovah, as the living God, is rightly opposed to them, who gives life, and breath, and all things, unto man; and yet what amazing stupidity is it, that any of them should worship such as gods, who have not what they themselves have.

Ver. 18. *They that make them are like unto them*, etc.] Are as blind, stupid, and senseless as they; or “let them that make them”, etc. ^{f1812}; so some versions and interpreters; (see Gill on “~~488~~ Psalm 115:8”);

[so is] everyone that trusteth in them; alike ignorant and sottish: and so are all such that set up idols and lusts in their own hearts, and serve them; or trust to their own righteousness; even all unregenerate and self-righteous persons: they cannot speak a word for God and his grace, for Christ and his righteousness, for the Spirit of God, and his work upon their hearts, of all which they are ignorant; they are blind and have no sight and sense of their sin and misery, and of their need of Christ and his righteousness; they are deaf to his Gospel, and the charming voice of it; they are lifeless and breathless, are dead in trespasses and sins, and have no pantings and desires after spiritual things.

Ver. 19. *Bless the Lord, O house of Israel*, etc.] Who are chosen by the Lord to be a special people to him above all others; redeemed from Egyptian bondage; through a variety of surprising providences brought into and settled in the land of Canaan; distinguished by various blessings, favoured with the word, worship, and ordinances of God, and not left to worship idols of gold and silver, as other nations; and therefore had great reason to bless the Lord: as also the spiritual Israel, or the household of God and of faith, the family of Christ; and that because they are of his family, because of the love of God to them, his choice of them, his covenant with them, their redemption by Christ, their effectual calling; or for being made Israelites indeed, and the provisions made for them in the house of God for their spiritual welfare;

bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: who were separated from their brethren to minister in the priest’s office; to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, and to bless them, (⁴²⁰¹Exodus 28:1 ⁴⁰⁶²Numbers 6:23-27); which was a very sacred and honourable employment, and they were under obligation to bless the Lord, who had called them to it, and put this honour on them; as are the ministers of the Gospel, who have received gifts from Christ; whom he has counted faithful, and put into the ministry; made stewards of the mysteries of his grace, and ambassadors in his stead; and especially if made useful for edification and conversion: and indeed all the Lord’s people, who are all made priests unto God, and have nearness unto him, liberty and boldness to enter into the holiest of all, as Aaron once a year into the most holy place; and who have better sacrifices to offer than he, the living

sacrifices of their own bodies and souls, and not slain beasts; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise; and, above all, the sweet smelling sacrifice of Christ they bring in the arms of faith, and so enter into the courts of God.

Ver. 20. *Bless the Lord, O house of Levi*, etc.] These were of the same tribe with the house of Aaron, but inferior ministers; they ministered to the priests, and had the charge of things in the tabernacle and temple; many of them were porters in the latter, and others were singers, and of these Kimchi interprets the words; whose work it was to give thanks morning and evening, and so are with great propriety called upon to bless the Lord, (⁻⁰⁴¹⁶Numbers 3:6-8 ⁻¹²¹⁶1 Chronicles 23:5,30); and may mystically design inferior officers in the church, who are helps and assistants to ministers in the government and discipline of it, and have the care of its secular affairs; and who, when they behave well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and boldness in the faith; and even doorkeepers in the house of the Lord have reason to bless his name for a place there; and all the saints are the sweet singers of Israel, have the new song of electing, redeeming, and calling grace, put into their mouths, and therefore should bless the Lord;

ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord; these are distinct from the Israelites, priests, and Levites, and design the proselytes among them of other nations that truly feared God, as Jarchi notes; and all such persons, whoever and wherever they are, have reason to bless the Lord for the fear of him they have, which is not from nature, but from grace; and for the layouts shown them, the blessings bestowed upon them, the good things laid up for them, and the guard that is about them, which the Scriptures abundantly declare, and experience confirms.

Ver. 21. *Blessed be the Lord out of Zion*, etc.] This, according to Aben Ezra, was the formula of blessing to be used by the houses of Israel, Aaron, and Levi, and all that feared God; or a direction to them in what manner they should bless him; and may both point out the persons that were to bless, and the place where; those that were inhabitants of Zion, where praise waited for the Lord, and was his due; and the blessings and benefits he was to be praised for, such as came out of Zion, strength from the Lord there, the rod of his strength, the word of the Gospel, and the Saviour himself;

which dwelleth at Jerusalem; in the temple there; and which distinguishes him from the idols of the Heathens before mentioned; and who dwells in

the heavenly Jerusalem, in Gospel churches; and will dwell in the New Jerusalem, where his tabernacle will be with men, (~~62~~ Revelation 21:3);

praise ye the Lord; or “hallelujah”; and so the psalm ends as it begun, being from first to last an exhortation to praise.