

PSALM 146

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 146

This psalm is entitled by the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions, “hallelujah”, of Haggai and Zechariah; and by Apollinarius, the common hymn of them: and the Syriac inscription is still more expressive,

“it was said by Haggai and Zechariah, prophets, who came up with the captivity out of Babylon.”

Theodoret says this title was in some Greek copies in his time; but was not in the Septuagint, in the Hexapla: nor is it in any other Greek interpreters, nor in the Hebrew text, nor in the Targum; though some Jewish commentators, as R. Obadiah, take it to be an exhortation to the captives in Babylon to praise the Lord: and Kimchi interprets it of their present captivity and deliverance from it; and observes, that the psalmist seeing, by the Holy Spirit, the gathering of the captives, said this with respect to Israel; and so refers it to the times of the Messiah, as does also Jarchi, especially the (~~1460~~ Psalm 146:10); and which, though they make it to serve an hypothesis of their own, concerning their vainly expected Messiah; yet it is most true, that the psalm is concerning the Messiah and his kingdom, to whom all the characters and descriptions given agree.

Ver. 1. *Praise ye the Lord*, etc.] Or, “hallelujah”; which, in the Greek and Vulgate Latin versions, is the title of the psalm; but is rather the beginning of it; and is an exhortation to men, especially to the saints, to praise the Lord, the Lord Christ, the Lord of the world, who has created it and upholds it; the Lord of lords, David’s Lord; and the Lord of all his people, by creation, redemption, and grace; and from whom they receive all blessings and mercies, temporal and spiritual, and are therefore under the highest obligations to praise him;

praise the Lord, O my soul; the psalmist does not put others upon that he does not choose to do himself; but, as the sweet psalmist of Israel, and prophet of the church, leads the way and sets an example; and not only strikes his harp and psaltery, and with his tongue, mouth, and lips, shows

forth the praise of the Lord; but engages his heart, his soul, in this work; which, as it was capable of it, so most agreeable to the Lord, who requires the heart in his service, and to be worshipped in spirit and in truth: and this being the better and more noble part of man, making melody in it to the Lord, and engaging all the powers and faculties of it in such an employment, must be acceptable to him.

Ver. 2. *While I live will I praise the Lord*, etc.] As he had good reason to do, since he had his life from him, and was upheld in it by him; who also favoured him with the mercies and comforts of life; and that every day, being renewed to him every morning, and continued all the days of his life; which determined him throughout the whole of it to praise the Lord: nay, he had his spiritual life from him, with all the blessings of it; which are lasting, everlasting ones, and had hope of eternal life with him;

I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being; or “while I am”^{f1950}; not only in this world, but in the world to come; for men have a being or existence after death, and the saints have a most comfortable and happy one then; and will be more capable of singing praises to their incarnate God, and which will be their work to all eternity; see (^{1943B}Psalm 104:33).

Ver. 3. *Put not your trust in princes*, etc.] Not in foreign princes, in alliances and confederacies with them; nor in any at home. David did not desire his people to put their trust in him, nor in his nobles and courtiers; but in the Lord Christ, who, as he is the object of praise, is also the proper object of trust. Princes, though ever so liberal and bountiful, as their name signifies, and therefore called benefactors, (^{1925B}Luke 22:25) or ever so mighty and powerful, wise and prudent, yet are not to be depended upon; they are changeable, fickle, and inconstant; and oftentimes not faithful to their word, but fallacious and deceitful; “men of high degree are a lie”, (^{1930B}Psalm 62:9); wherefore it is better to trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength; who gives all things richly to enjoy; who is unchangeable, and ever abides faithful; (see ^{1938B}Psalm 118:8,9);

[nor] in the son of man, in whom [there is] no help; or “salvation”^{f1951}: not in any mere man born of a woman; not in Abraham, the father of the faithful, of whom the Jews boasted, as the Midrash; nor in Moses, as Arama; nor in Cyrus, as R. Obadiah; no, nor in David himself, nor in any of the princes; for how great soever they look, or in whatsoever honour and esteem they may be, they are but sons of men; are frail mortal men, and die

like men, though they may be called gods, as they are by office: but no man or son of man, let him be what he will, is to be trusted in; there is a curse on him that does it, (^{<2476>}Jeremiah 17:5). There is indeed a Son of man that is to be trusted in, the Lord Jesus Christ; but then he is God as well as man, the true God, the great God, God over all, blessed for ever; were he not, he would not be the proper object of trust, for there is no “help” or “salvation” in a mere creature; even kings and princes cannot help and save themselves oftentimes, and much less their people; their salvation is of God, and not from themselves, or from their armies, (^{<1936>}Psalms 33:16 144:10 ^{<2131>}Proverbs 21:31). There is help in Christ, on whom it is laid, and where it is found; there is salvation in him, but in no other; he is the author and giver of it, and therefore he, and not another, is to be trusted in.

Ver. 4. *His breath goeth forth*, etc.] That is, the breath of a son of man, of any and everyone of the princes; it goes forth continually, and is drawn in again as long as a man lives; but at death it goes forth, and returns no more till the resurrection: the breath which the Lord breathed into man, and which is in his nostrils while he lives, and is very precarious. And when it is taken away, he dies, and

he returneth to his earth; from whence he was taken, and of which he was made; upon which he lived, where he dwelt, and in which he took delight and pleasure, minding earth and earthly things, and which is now all he has; who, though he may have had many large estates and possessions, nay, have ruled over many kingdoms and countries, yet his property of earth is now no more than the length and breadth of a grave; he returns to earth as soon as he dies, becoming a lump of clay; and particularly when he is interred in it, and when by corruption and worms he is turned into it;

in that very day his thoughts perish; in the day, hour, and moment he dies: not that the soul ceases, or ceases to think at death; it is immortal, and dies not; and, as it exists in a separate state after death, it retains all its powers and faculties, and, among the rest, its power of thinking; which it is capable of exercising, and does, as appears from the case of the souls under the altar, (^{<6119>}Revelation 6:9). But the meaning is, that at death all the purposes and designs of men are at an end; all their projects and schemes, which they had formed, and were pursuing, now come to nothing; whether to do good to others, or to aggrandize themselves and families; and therefore such mortal creatures are not to be depended upon, since all their promises may fail; nay, even their good designs may be frustrated; (see ^{<1872>}Job 17:12).

Ver. 5. *Happy [is he] that [hath] the God of Jacob for his help*, etc.] The God of the patriarch Jacob, the Messiah, who is that God that fed him all his life, the Angel that redeemed him from all evil, with whom in the form of a man he wrestled, when he had power over God, and saw him face to face; the God of the posterity of Jacob, the Angel of Jehovah's presence, who went before them by day and night in the wilderness, and saved and carried them all the days of old; the God of spiritual Jacob, or Israel, the church of the chosen, redeemed, and called ones; the God of every Israelite indeed, of every true believer, as he was Thomas's Lord and God: now happy is that man that has him for his help, who helps his servant Israel, all his people out of the sad estate of sin and misery into which they are brought; helps them to all the blessings of grace, and to all the supplies of it in their time of need; helps them under all their infirmities, temptations, and afflictions; helps them in all their way to heaven, and against every enemy of their souls; and at last helps them to everlasting glory and happiness;

whose hope [is] in the Lord his God; in Immanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh; Christ the hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof; who is our hope, and in all his people the hope of glory; not only the author and giver of the grace of hope, but the object, ground, and foundation of it: now happy is that man whose hope alone is in him; who hopes for salvation, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life, through him, and him only; such are safe and secure, who, as prisoners of hope, turn to him their strong hold; those shall want no good thing that hope and trust in him; they have peace now through his blood and righteousness, and shall be saved with an everlasting salvation; see (^{<2470>}Jeremiah 17:7,8).

Ver. 6. *Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein [is]*, etc.] This and the following verses are a description of that divine Person, even Christ, who is the help and hope of his people; and every character of him is a reason for faith and hope in him; all things are made by him, which are in the whole compass of creation, the heaven, earth, and sea, and all in them; the fowls of the airy heaven; the sun, moon, and stars, the hosts of the starry heavens; and the angels, the inhabitants of the third heaven; the beasts of the field, and cattle of a thousand hills; and man, the chief of God's works on earth; and the innumerable fishes of the sea, great and small; and he that made all these, what is it he cannot do? he must be the mighty God, and a mighty Saviour, and the proper object of trust and hope; see (^{<810>}John 1:1-3 ^{<5016>}Colossians 1:16 ^{<5010>}Hebrews 1:2,10);

which keepeth truth for ever; the truth of doctrine, who as Mediator is full of it, and by whom it came; and, as the Prophet of the church, concealed it not, from the great congregation, the law of truth being in his lips, as the antitype of Levi; the truth of the promises, which are all yea and amen in him; every promise being made to him, and being in him, as the promise of eternal life, with all others, which are safely kept by him, and he will see them performed; the truth of all his engagements with his Father, as the surety of his people; to take their nature, obey, suffer, and die for them, which he has truly and punctually made good, being faithful to him that appointed him; and the truth of all his sayings, concerning his presence with his church and ministers unto the end of the world, and of whatsoever should befall them, from his resurrection and ascension to his second coming.

Ver. 7. *Which executeth judgment for the oppressed*, etc.] All judgment being committed to Christ as Mediator, he executes it on the behalf of his oppressed ones, and breaks in pieces their oppressors; being oppressed with sin, and lying under the power of it, he condemned it in his flesh, wrought out a righteousness to justify from it, and redeemed them from all their iniquities; being oppressed by Satan, and led captive by him, he took them as a prey from the mighty, and led captivity captive; and, when oppressed by the world, he is on their side and takes their part, and thoroughly pleads their cause, and suffers no weapon formed against them to prosper; and will before long destroy antichrist and his followers, and bring down his judgments on them, so that men of the earth shall no more oppress; and especially at the last judgment, he, the righteous Judge, will render tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and set the crown of righteousness on their heads; (see ^{<908>}Psalm 10:18 72:4);

which giveth food to the hungry: in a literal sense he gave manna and quails to the hungry Israelites in the wilderness, fed five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes, and four thousand with seven loaves and a few fishes, when here on earth; and in a spiritual sense, to such as are in a starving and famishing condition, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, he gives himself, the bread of life, and his grace, the water of life; he gives them to eat of the hidden manna, and of the tree of life; he gives them his word, his Gospel, which is milk for babes and meat for strong men; he gives them his ordinances, which are a feast of fat things, and so he tills and satisfies their hungry souls;

the Lord looseth the prisoners: such as were bound by diseases and infirmities of body, he loosed in the days of his flesh here; and some that were held with the cords of death he raised from the dead, (^{<2131>}Luke 13:11,12 ^{<0115>}Matthew 11:5); and his people, who are in a spiritual sense prisoners of sin, Satan, and the law, being shut up and held under by them, he proclaims liberty to them, and the opening the prison to them that are bound; he opens the prison doors, and says to the prisoners, Go forth; he delivers them from the power of sin, the slavery of Satan, and the bondage of the law, and brings them into a state of liberty, (^{<2301>}Isaiah 61:1 49:9); yea, all the prisoners in the grave he will loose at the last day; he has the key of hell and death, and will open those prisons and set them free; they shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and others to the resurrection of damnation.

Ver. 8. *The Lord openeth [the eyes of] the blind*, etc.] Who are corporeally blind; the eyes of many such were opened by Christ when here on earth, and one who was born blind; and such who are spiritually blind as to any knowledge of divine things, of God in Christ, of the way of life and salvation by Christ, of the Spirit and his operations, of their state and condition by nature, or of the things of the Gospel; the eyes of many such he opens so as to see their sin and danger, their want of righteousness, and need of Christ, and salvation by him; this is usually done by means of the ministry of the word, which is as an eye salve; but the work is Christ's, and a work of almighty power it is; (see ^{<2304>}Isaiah 35:4,5);

the Lord raiseth [them that are] bowed down; as he did in a literal sense the poor woman that was bowed together, (^{<0131>}Luke 13:11,12), and as he does in a spiritual sense such as are heavy laden with sin, and pressed with the burden of it; that are depressed with Satan's temptations, and labour under sore afflictions and exercises; all which he supports his people under, and delivers them out of; and cheers and refreshes their souls with discoveries of his love and grace unto them; (see ^{<0154>}Psalm 145:14);

the Lord loveth the righteous; not self-righteous persons; these are not loved by God the Father, who preferred a publican to one of them; nor by Christ, who came not to call them to repentance; nor by the Spirit, who reproves and convinces men of self-righteousness; nor by angels, who rejoice at one sinner that repents more than over ninety and nine just persons who in their own opinion need no repentance: but such who are righteous through Christ's righteousness imputed to them, and there are

none righteous in any other way; and these Christ loves, not for any righteousness in them, or done by them; nor does his love flow from his own righteousness upon them, for he loved them from all eternity; and his engaging and undertaking to work out a righteousness for them, and the bringing in of that righteousness, were the fruits and effects of his love to them, and evidences of it; he suffered for them when they were in themselves unjust; he died for them when sinners, ungodly, and enemies; nevertheless, as they are clothed with his perfect righteousness, and are introduced unto him and presented before him in this raiment of needle work, this clothing of wrought gold, this fine linen clean and white; he takes delight and pleasure in them, and they appear a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Ver. 9. *The Lord preserveth the strangers*, etc.] The life of them, as he did the daughter of: the Greek, a Syrophenician woman, and a Samaritan, by healing them of their diseases, (~~4076~~ Mark 7:26-29 ~~4276~~ Luke 17:16-18); and in a spiritual sense he preserves the lives and saves the souls of his people among the Gentiles, who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; for these he laid down his life a ransom, and became the propitiation for their sins; to these he sends his Gospel, which is the power of God to salvation unto them;

he relieveth the fatherless and widow; in their distresses and troubles, who have no helper; a wonderful instance of his relieving a widow, in the most disconsolate circumstances, we have in raising the widow of Nain's son to life, and restoring him to his mother, (~~4072~~ Luke 7:12-15); in him "the fatherless", and all that in a spiritual sense are destitute of help in the creatures, and see they are so, "find mercy"; nor will he leave his people comfortless, or as orphans and fatherless ones, but will and does come and visit them, relieve and supply them with everything convenient for them; though his church here on earth may seem to be as a widow, he being in heaven at the right hand of God, yet he cares for her in the wilderness, and provides for her support, where she is nourished with the word and ordinances, and will be until he comes again; (see ~~2848~~ Hosea 14:3 ~~4348~~ John 14:18 ~~6124~~ Revelation 12:14);

but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down; so that they cannot find it; nor their hands perform their enterprise; their schemes and counsels are all confounded and blasted by him, and all their policy and power are not able to prevail against his church and people; see (~~3906~~ Psalm 1:6).

Ver. 10. *The Lord shall reign for ever*, etc.] The Messiah, who is King of kings and Lord of lords; and in this he is superior to, them, they reign but for a while, but he for evermore; the throne of majesty and glory on which he sits is for ever and ever; his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; of his government, and the peace of it, there will be no end; he is King of saints now, and reigns in their hearts, and in his churches, and in the world; and he will reign with his people, and they with him, a thousand years on earth; and then they will reign together to all eternity; (see ^{<3946>}Psalm 14:6 ^{<3907>}Isaiah 9:7 ^{<2024>}Daniel 2:44). Both Jarchi and Kimchi refer this to the Messiah and his kingdom; the note of the former is,

“he shall confirm his kingdom in the redemption or salvation of his children;”

and of the latter,

“it shall be said he is King over all, after he has executed judgment on the wicked in the valley of Jehoshaphat;”

[even] thy God, O Zion, unto, all generations; he who is Zion’s God is Zion’s King, head over all things to the church; and this is her joy and comfort in every age, that her God and her King reigns, and will reign for evermore; and especially in a glorious manner in the latter day; (see ^{<3907>}Isaiah 52:7); and as all this is a solid ground and foundation of truth in the Lord, and serves to encourage saints to make him their help and hope; and shows how happy they are that have him as such; so it is matter of praise and thanksgiving: hence it follows,

praise ye the Lord; or “hallelujah”; and so the psalm ends as it began.