

June 5

Scriptures: Read Psalms 116, 117 & 118

Key Verse: “You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You.”
(Psalm 118:28)

Overview

Although Psalm 116 is read in the first person singular, it was most likely a song used for corporate worship in connection with the Hebrew feasts when individuals would come before the Lord at the sanctuary to pay their vows (116:14, 17-18). This included thanksgiving and praise to God for all His benefits bestowed upon them. The psalm begins with a single worshipper’s expression of love to the Lord for His goodness, lovingkindness, and mercy shown in hearing and answering prayers. Since the Lord had proved Himself faithful in hearing his supplications, the worshipper resolved to call upon Him for the rest of his life (116:2).

The Lord’s grace and compassion were bountiful to the grateful servant of God with his simple, child-like faith (116:6, 16). God delivered him in the fullest sense of the word. He preserved and saved his life, gave him rest (a term implying comfort, peace of heart and circumstance), brought joy to his heart, put his feet upon solid ground so that he might not stumble (116:8), and God delivered his soul from death. This is exactly what redemption through the blood of Jesus does. He has saved us from the death we deserved because of our sin, and has given us eternal life. Since God had given the worshipper of life, he knew that God was the only one in whom there was truth and in whom he could put his trust. He came to understand that it was vain to trust in men, since all men were false (116:11; 118:8; Rom.3:4).

The worshipper understands that there is nothing he can give God in return for all He has done for him (Micah 6:6-8), except to be faithful in paying his vows of offering unto Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. God’s cup of salvation had been graciously offered to him, just as it is to all people. All we have to do is reach out and receive it with a humble heart of gratitude and love for God (116:13).

Although Psalm 117 is the shortest in the Psalter, with only sixteen words in the Hebrew, it is pregnant with insight and meaning, and comes in the very middle point of the Bible. It is a missionary-minded psalm which shows the purpose and plan of God that includes all people from every nation. The Gentiles are called upon to join in manifold praises to God, for they too can enjoy all His benefits (cf. Rom. 15:9-11). In the second clause, an uncommon word is used in the call to praise God; it has been translated as “laud” (NKJV), or “extol” (NIV). Actually it is implied in the meaning a joyous celebration of God with a high voice. At wedding celebrations today in the Middle East, an ancient celebration sound of a high pitched shrill sounded by women can be heard. This might be the very form of praise intended in the word. Truly, the Lord who is full of mercy and truth deserves all our praise and shouts of joy in every form possible.

Psalm 118 is a hymn of thanksgiving for the wonderful deliverance that God gave His people and as such it is a fitting conclusion to the “Hallel Psalms”. Probably written in response to a battle won because God enabled His people to be strengthened, it was then adapted for

congregational use. It appears to have been a processional and responsive hymn that was sung by many people as they entered the courts of the house of the Lord to worship Him (118:19-20). Since it is a celebration song, the tone is joyous.

The psalmist expresses utter confidence in God alone. When insurmountable odds were against him, he claimed the victory in the name of the Lord and received His help. The “right hand of the Lord”, which represents strength and power, is praised for valiantly giving the victory. The enemies were overcome through the strength of “the stone which the builders rejected”. The psalmist was likely referring to the small nation of Israel which had been despised and rejected, but with the victory in battle had become the chief power, which was “the Lord’s doing” (118:23). The New Testament explains this prophetically: for the righteous, this chief cornerstone is the precious living stone chosen by God (1 Peter 2:4,5), the foundation of salvation (Acts 4:11,12) and the chief foundational stone that holds together the household of God (the Church) that it may be strong and inhabited by His Spirit (Eph.2:20-22). It can never be put to shame (1 Peter 2:6; Isa. 28:16). This stone is none other than our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, who came in the name of the Lord and who was given by God as the Light (118:26,27; John 12:13). He was rejected by His own nation, but one day all will know that He is the King who will rule on the throne of David. To those who are unrighteous and disobedient to God, however, this Stone will fall and crush them with the wrath of God (Matthew 21:42-44; 1 Peter 2:7,8; Isaiah 8:14).

Prayer

Father, we present our hearts to You this day, eager to declare Your works. We proclaim with the psalmist that “You are good and Your lovingkindness is everlasting.” Grant that we, Your servants, may speak Your word with all confidence and see Your hand extended to perform signs and wonders in Jesus’ name.