

Psalm 68:18

A Giving Savior

Text: Psalm 68

Introduction:

1. God had promised that the seed of woman would crush the head of the serpent and the enemy of man would be defeated (Genesis 3:15).
2. He showed that this victory would include blessedness for all through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).
3. This Victor would be a mediator (Job 19:23-27), a ruler (Genesis 49:10), a star (Numbers 24:17), a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), a priest (1 Samuel 2:35), and a king (1 Samuel 2:10) - ruling from the throne of David (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).
4. During the time of David, the “sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1) recorded many prophecies of Jesus in the Psalms.
5. Psalm 68:18 reveals the Messiah as a giving Savior...

I. THE SETTING OF THE PSALM

- A. This psalm was written by David.
- B. It seems to be a processional psalm, possibly written for the journey of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (see quote from Spurgeon at the end of the outline).
- C. In fact, the psalm pictures God’s march to victory!
- D. While this applies to the return of the Ark to Jerusalem, it is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus and His kingdom.
- E. This psalm was sung during Synagogue service on the Day of Pentecost (cf. vs. 7-8).
- F. Thus, it came to be used by some Christian groups in celebration of the church’s birth on the Day of Pentecost.
- G. Crusaders sang this psalm when they set out to retake the “Holy Land.”
- H. Savonarola and his followers are said to have sung this psalm on their way to the “trial by fire” in 1498.
- I. The Huguenots, a French Calvinist Protestant group, called this psalm the “song of battles” and sang it during their persecution in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- J. Yet, it is a challenging and difficult psalm...
 1. Adam Clarke wrote: “I know not how to undertake a comment on this Psalm: it is the most difficult in the whole Psalter...”
 2. “In this Psalm there are as many precipices and labyrinths as there are verses or words. It may not be improperly termed, the torture of critics, and the reproach of commentators” (Simon De Muis, quoted by Clarke).

II. THE STUDY OF THE PSALM (PSALM 68)

- A. 68:1-6 - Prelude: The Joy of the Godly
- B. 68:7-18 - The March of God in Israel’s History
 1. In the wilderness (7-10)
 2. In conquest (11-14)
 3. In the choice and claiming of Zion (15-18)
- C. 68:19-23 - The Hymn of the Priests

Prophecy of Jesus

- D. 68:24-27 - The Procession of Victory
- E. 68:28-35 - The Exaltation of God

III. THE SAVIOR IN THE PSALM (PSALM 68:18)

- A. The ultimate fulfillment of this psalm is found in Jesus.
- B. Verse 18 is quoted by Paul in Ephesians 4:8 and applied to Jesus.
- C. The greater context teaches important lessons (Ephesians 4:7-16).
 - 1. Gifts of grace were given to the Christians at Ephesus in order to accomplish the will of Christ; thus, these were miraculous abilities (vs. 7).
 - 2. To verify this, Paul quoted Psalm 68:18 (vs. 8).
 - a. This action was prophesied by David.
 - b. It would not happen until Jesus was victoriously ascended to the Father.
 - c. As a conquering King, Jesus received gifts and bestowed gifts.
 - d. These gifts were given to those He liberated from the bondage of sin and who became captives of His will (cf. Luke 5:10; Acts 2:33, 38-39).
 - 3. To further prove this, Paul emphasized that Jesus could not ascend unless He has first descended (vs. 9-10).
 - a. Think of how low He descended only to give gifts to men!
 - b. This descension was both physical (John 3:13; Philippians 2:6-8) and spiritual (Matthew 12:40; Acts 2:27; Romans 10:7).
 - 4. Paul then listed several spiritual gifts (miraculous abilities) (vs. 11).
 - 5. He then explained the purpose of these gifts - the maturing of the church (vs. 12-16).
- D. The message of the psalm is that God would march forth to victory, ascending to the greatest of heights.
- E. Jesus fulfilled this by descending to Earth and then ascending above all others in His return to Heaven!
- F. Yet, in all this, He gave gifts to men, seeking what was best for those who needed Him most.

Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*

“Division. - With the words of the [Psa 68:1-2](#) the ark is uplifted, and the procession begins to move. In [Psa 68:3-6](#), the godly in the assembly are exhorted to commence their joyous songs, and arguments are adduced to help their joy. Then the glorious march of Jehovah in the wilderness is sung: [Psa 68:7-10](#), and his victories in war are celebrated in [Psa 68:11-14](#). The joyous shouts are louder as Zion Comes in sight, and the ark is borne up the hill: [Psa 68:15-19](#). On the summit of the mount the priests sing a hymn concerning the Lord's goodness and justice; the safety of his friends, and ruin of his foes; [Psa 68:20-23](#). Meanwhile the procession is described as it winds up the hill; [Psa 68:24-27](#). The poet anticipates a time of wider conquest, [Psa 68:28-31](#) : and concludes with a noble burst of song unto Jehovah.”