

Psalms 68:0 ¶ To the chief Musician, A Psalm or Song of David.

A beautiful praise song by David that he sent to the chief Musician for the priestly choir. Many commentators suggest that it was written especially for the time when David brought the ark to Mount Zion. I think this is probably because the first verse quotes the words of Moses that were used when breaking camp to follow the cloud.

*Numbers 10:34–36 “And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, **Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.** And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.”*

As I worked my way through the psalm, that seemed to be a logical conclusion.

Psalms 68:1 ¶ Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

Psalms 68:2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

David begins his song by warning all the enemies of the LORD to scatter before Him when He is on the move in judgment. He can scatter them as easily as blowing smoke away, as easily as wax melts in the heat of the fire. The wicked will perish in the presence of God.

Psalms 68:3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

Those that are righteous, however, can greatly rejoice in the presence of God. To be in His presence is to abound with blessing.

Psalms 68:4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

Psalms 68:5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

Psalms 68:6 God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

The psalmist urges the people to sing praises to God and glorify His name. He pictures God, the self-existent, eternal God, riding in majesty through the heavens as His people sing their praises of Him. He is known to be a father to the fatherless and an advocate and defender (from Hebrew for “judge”) for widows from His throne in heaven. God puts those that are orphaned or alone into families and sets prisoners free. In other words, God has great compassion for those that are helpless and in need. Those that rebel against Him, however, are made to dwell in a dry land void of His blessing.

It is true that we sometimes have a hard time seeing God’s hand at work when confronted with the needs of so many that are orphaned and alone, and it often seems as though those that reject God prosper. I think the key is perspective. God is looking more at spiritual provision. It has been proven that faith is often strengthened or even

birthed in the hard times. However, those that reject God will experience a future void of His blessing.

I liked this quote from Boice in Guzik's commentary: "The kings and other rulers of this world do not act like this. They surround themselves with the noblest and richest of their lands, those who can enhance their glory and strengthen their power. The highest glory of God is that he cares for the miserable and surrounds himself with them."

Psalms 68:7 ¶ O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

Psalms 68:8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*

David references how God led His people through the wilderness after delivering them from Egypt to picture how God takes care of His people.

This is one of the few times that the psalmist interrupts his thought with a pause, an opportunity to remember and reflect what they knew about those events.

He describes how the earth shook and the heavens appeared to drop at the presence of God, the God of Israel, when He met them on Sinai.

Exodus 19:16–18 "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

Psalms 68:9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

Psalms 68:10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

David goes on to relate how God sent a plentiful rain when needed once they reached the land promised to their fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The people made their homes there as they took possession of the land. God blessed them abundantly and supplied for the poor in the process.

*Genesis 13:12–15 "Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom....And the Lord said unto **Abram**, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For **all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.**"*

*Genesis 26:1–5 "And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And **Isaac** went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for **unto thee, and unto thy***

seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

Genesis 35:9–12 *"And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is **Jacob**: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; And **the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land."***

Psalms 68:11 The Lord gave the word: great *was* the company of those that published it.

Psalms 68:12 Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

As the LORD gave them victory and they conquered the land, the women left at home rejoiced as they divided the spoil among them. Implied in this statement is the fact that God was keeping them safe and supplying their needs even as their men were off fighting to take possession of the land.

Psalms 68:13 Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

Psalms 68:14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was *white* as snow in Salmon.

I think the NLT is on point and easier to understand: *"Though they lived among the sheepfolds, now they are covered with silver and gold, as a dove is covered by its wings. The Almighty scattered the enemy kings like a blowing snowstorm on Mount Zalmon."*

In other words, they had been a poor people in Egypt and were now experiencing the abundant blessings of God as He scattered the opposing kings before them like snow falling in Salmon (a mount south of Mount Gerizim).

Psalms 68:15 ¶ The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.

Psalms 68:16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.

David compares the hill of God, Mount Zion, to the high hill of Bashan (a mountain of Israel in the area of today's Golan Heights). After reading other translations, it appears that David is picturing the high hills of Bashan as standing in envy of Mount Zion because God had chosen it as His dwelling place on earth.

It makes me think of the saying that location is everything. And that is so true in this case. The place God chose as His dwelling place on earth is certainly the most prime real estate on planet. No other place has been so marked with dispute and war over ownership. And when the LORD comes to establish His throne in Jerusalem, that issue

will be settled once for all.

Psalms 68:17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*.

Psalms 68:18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among* them.

These verses are a bit harder. I think David is painting a word picture of the might of God by depicting His heavenly armies as innumerable.

God had led those held captive in Egypt to freedom as His own captives, His chosen people. He had made them benefactors of the gifts of men, even from those that had rebelled against God, to provide for their needs in their new land. I am reminded of how the Egyptians gave them many valuables to send them on their way.

Exodus 12:35–36 “And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.”

I believe this foreshadows the final restoration of the people of Israel to their land when Jesus comes as King of kings. The prophet Isaiah (chapter 60) tells us that the nations will bring them many gifts.

Isaiah 60:3–5 “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”

I cannot help but be reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians when I believe he was referencing taking those that had once been held captive by Satan home to heaven with Him as His willing captives to heaven.

Ephesians 4:7–8 “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

Spurgeon: “As great conquerors of old led whole nations into captivity, so Jesus leads forth from the territory of his foe a vast company as the trophies of his mighty grace. From the gracious character of his reign it comes to pass that to be led into captivity by him is for our captivity to cease, or to be itself led captive; a glorious result indeed.”

Psalms 68:19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with* benefits, *even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

I have always used this as a beautiful verse of thanksgiving and praise to God our Savior and the source of abundant blessing; and I think it is a true statement when

understood that way. However, when looking at the Hebrew for “loadeth,” the reference is to bearing a heavy burden. The added words in italics I believe have misled us as to David’s intent. He was giving thanks to the LORD for daily carrying the burdens of His people.

Selah – pause (maybe with an instrumental interlude), meditate on these truths

Psalms 68:20 *He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death.*

David notes that “our” God, the God of Israel, is the God of salvation, the one that delivers us from death.

Maybe David is speaking just of physical death, but I believe that God’s main reference is to spiritual death. He is the God of our salvation and has made a way to deliver us from death through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Psalms 68:21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies, *and* the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

Psalms 68:22 ¶ The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:

Psalms 68:23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, *and* the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

I think David is painting a word picture (a bit gory) of how God will destroy the enemies of His people. I am sure that his language is normal for that of a warrior king who had witnessed so much bloodshed.

Psalms 68:24 They have seen thy goings, O God; *even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

Psalms 68:25 The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.

Psalms 68:26 Bless ye God in the congregations, *even* the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

Psalms 68:27 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, the princes of Judah *and* their council, the princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.

Psalms 68:28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.

These verses could be describing the procession that accompanied the ark as it was being carried to Jerusalem. The mention of Benjamin and Judah in the south and Zebulun and Naphtali in the north seem to represent the whole of Israel.

2 Samuel 6:12–15 “So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all

his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet."

Psalms 68:29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

We know that David wasn't allowed to build the temple, but it seems that the seed of desire was already in his heart to do so. When Solomon finished building the temple, leaders came from far and wide to see its splendor, e.g., the Queen of Sheba.

Psalms 68:30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war.

Psalms 68:31 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

It seems that David is picturing a time when those that had fought against them will one day come with outstretched hands before God in Jerusalem, showing their submission to Him.

Psalms 68:32 ¶ Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

Psalms 68:33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice.

Psalms 68:34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds.

David calls for all people of the earth to sing praises to God.

Selah – another pause or interlude to allow time for reflection

David again pictures God riding through the heavens, the same heavens of old. He rules with His mighty voice (even when we cannot hear Him). We should acknowledge the mighty power of God. He reigns in majesty over Israel and His strength is in the heavens.

This truth has not changed one bit. Though we cannot understand His ways, we can know that He is ever Sovereign and in control over His creation. He has made an everlasting covenant with the people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that will be fulfilled in every detail. He has the mighty forces of heaven at His command and will ensure that His every purpose is accomplished.

Isaiah 55:8–9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 46:9–10 "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"

Isaiah 49:22–23 “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

I am always awed when I look at the heavens and am reminded that I am seeing the same skies that Adam and Eve, Abraham, David and Jesus saw. They testify to the glory and greatness of Almighty God that I am blessed to call my Father.

Psalm 68:35 O God, *thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.*

David closes his song with an exclamation point on the truth that the God of Israel that dwells in the holy sanctuary in heaven is awesome in might and power. It is He that strengthens and empowers His people (those that have accepted Him as their LORD and Savior. Blessed be God by our adoration and praise as we submit to Him in love and obedience.