

4 Study of Historical Psalms

Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah

Psa. 135:1-4

Introduction:

1. This is the fourth of the historical Psalms (78, 105, 106, 135, 136), psalms reminding us of God's activity among our forefathers.
2. While this psalm does not rehearse a lot of individual events it does cover the entire period from Egypt to Israel's habitation in the land of Canaan.
3. It praises the Lord for having chosen Israel, blessing them with deliverance and then giving them the land of Canaan. God is contrasted with the idols of the nations. He acts for His people, whereas the idols do nothing. Therefore, Israel is to bless the Lord, to revere Him and to praise Him!
4. The Psalm begins and ends with an appeal to praise the Lord (vs. 1-3, 19-21).

Discussion:

- I. It is a call for the people of God to praise Him, not the nations.
 - A. The phrase *Praise the LORD* (and variations of the phrase) occurs some seventy-five times in the Psalter, with no less than fifty-four occurrences in Book Five. The word *praise* is derived from the Hebrew verbal root *hālal*, which has a range of basic meanings that include "shout, jubilation, rejoice," and "song of joy." The word may very likely be onomatopoeic, that is, a word formed "by imitation of a sound made by or associated with its referent." So, the word "hallelujah!" may be imitative of the shouted joy of a worshipper in the presence of the holy other.¹
 - B. The people of God have special reason to praise the Lord.
 1. The people of God are identified here as
 - a. "Servants of the Lord."
 - b. "Those who stand in the house of the Lord."
 - c. "Those who stand in the courts of the house of our God."
 2. The people have God have special reason to praise the Lord.
 - a. "The Lord is good."
 - b. "His name is lovely."
 - c. But more specifically—"He has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession." Jacob and Israel are synonymous terms. While the name Jacob refers to the individual by that name he is the head of the nation of Israel so the terms

¹ Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, "[The Songs of the Ascents: Psalms](#)," in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 944–945.

refer to all those descended from him. Do NOT exclude yourself from that number. Paul is very explicit in Rom. 9:6-8: "They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED. That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise who are regarded as descendants." Paul's point is that all people who place their trust in God's promises constitute the true Israel of God (Gal. 3:26-29; 6:15-16).

II. God has chosen us (v. 4).

- A. The concept of being the chosen of God is prominent throughout Scripture. There is even a popular TV series produced by Dallas Jenkins called "The Chosen" involving dramatic productions of events associated with the life of Jesus.
- B. Often when thinking about being chosen we think in terms of the Calvinistic interpretation of what it means to be chosen. In this theological strand it involves an unconditional election to salvation. In the stricter forms of Calvinism, faith is interpreted as something given by God apart from the will of the person and thus the conclusion is reached that it can never be lost.
 - 1. Sometimes in responding to this misperception it may be overlooked that there is a biblical doctrine of being chosen.
 - 2. This Psalm certainly identifies Jacob/Israel as "the chosen possession of God."
 - 3. This is the central reason why they are to praise God.
- C. We are to praise God as the chosen.
 - 1. Eph. 1:3-14, in what may be a song, praises God for choosing us, predestining us, and forgiving us in Jesus Christ and sealing us in Him with the Holy Spirit. It even identifies us as "God's own possession (v. 14). The choosing, the predestining, the forgiving and the sealing are all founded on "listening to the message of the truth, the gospel of your salvation and believing" (v. 13) and so, it is not unconditional, but conditioned on believing in what God has done.
 - 2. This dovetails perfectly with Psa. 135 that presents God as the one who acts for His people. Thus, trusting in Him and His actions motivate the praise.
 - 3. This is further confirmed by Paul's teaching in Romans.
 - a. His whole theme in Romans is about being the people of God through faith in what He has done in Christ (Read Rom. 9 with attention to vs. 30-33; 10:5-13; 11:17-24).
 - b. Faith in Jesus Christ is the means of being numbered among the people of God. Branches are broken off as a result of unbelief, but grafted in as a result of belief (This is the case for both Jews and Gentiles.).

III. It is God's action among His people that makes Him worthy of praise.

- A. He rules in heaven and in earth (5-7).
 - 1. He is great!
 - 2. Above all gods!

3. He does what pleases Him. In other words, He acts to accomplish His purpose. Everything is under His control. Even the sea and the weather (cf. Matt. 8:27; Mk. 4:41; Lk. 8:25).
- B. He rules in the kingdoms of men (8-14).
 1. He smote Egypt in delivering His chosen (Ex. 6-11).
 2. He smote many nations delivering His people.
 - a. Sihon (Num. 21:21-26).
 - b. Og (Num. 21:33-35).
 - c. All the kingdoms of Canaan (Josh. 12:7-24; A total of 31 kings defeated.).
 3. "The Lord will judge His people." This is not a condemnation on them, but He will "judge for" His people. He will vindicate them, as indicated by the next statement, "He will have compassion on His servants."
- C. He rules over the idols for He acts and they do not (15-18).
 1. There is no hope in trusting in idols.
 2. Idols do not act!
- D. Paul's emphasis in Eph. 1:3-14 is that God has acted for us in Jesus Christ and therefore, we should praise Him. See Rom. 8:31-39. Who will bring a charge against God's elect (chosen)?
- E. All the Bible is about what God has done for His people. It is not about what we have done but about what He has done and is doing (Eph. 2:1-10). Cf. Acts 2—You crucified. God raised up. Acts 4—Not by our own power that he walks, The God of Abraham. You disowned, asked for a murderer, put to death, BUT God raised Him from the dead.

IV. Therefore we should bless the Lord (19-21).

- A. Everyone should thank the Lord for His actions in our behalf.
 1. The house of Israel.
 2. The house of Aaron.
 3. The house of Levi.
- B. All those who revere the Lord.
- C. Blessed be the Lord! Hallelujah!!!

Conclusion:

1. Do you recognize what the Lord has done for you?
2. Then worship Him and sing His praises!!!!