

The Gospel in the Psalms: Christ's Deliverance (Psalm 118)

It seems that Psalm 118 expresses the words of a Davidic King and God's people. The temptation to "trust in princes" and to look back and say "all the nations surrounded me" only makes sense for one who is a King.

The Psalm begins (1-4) and ends (29) with this King's exhortation for God's people to give thanks to the LORD for his goodness, most clearly shown in his steadfast love which endures forever.

The vast majority of Psalm 118 is about this King's experience of God's help and salvation. The King and his people have faced opposition and rejection, but God has become his and their salvation. The King of God's people had experienced deliverance from distress. His distress is described like this, "all the nations surrounded me...They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side...They surrounded me like bees...I was pushed hard, so that I was falling...The LORD has disciplined me severely". Deliverance is described as "the LORD answered me and set me free...in the name of the LORD I cut them off...in the name of the LORD I cut them off...they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off...the LORD helped me...he has not given me over to death". The fact that this 'Son of David' (Davidic King) points to the 'Son of David' (Jesus), is made explicit later in the Psalm, but begins to be relevant as we read these words, "Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous...he (the LORD) has not given me over to death". This King was rescued from death and joyful in this salvation. His subjects were joyful also because his salvation meant their salvation. Similarly, Christ the King was resurrected from death and his disciples rejoice in this because his resurrection means their salvation because of their union with him.

After this King relates his experience to his people, which they shared in, he celebrates his experience with his people. Beginning in verse 19, a processional is described in which the King is surrounded and followed by his people through the gates of Jerusalem and to the house of God to offer a sacrifice and give God thanks for their salvation.

In their celebration, these words are used "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone". This was initially a reference to the King, and possibly the nation also, rejected and opposed but in the end exalted. This rejection followed by exaltation foreshadowed Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus was rejected by the Jewish leaders and crucified, but raised from the dead by God and made the cornerstone of God's household. The cornerstone was the stone at the corner of the foundation of a building. It was the most important stone in the building. The whole thing was supported by the cornerstone. This means there is salvation in no other name but the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:8-12; Eph. 2:19-21)

In their celebration, the people also shouted, "Save us...Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD". These same words were used by the crowds on Palm Sunday about Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem where he would die and rise again. Jesus was the Savior who had come in the name of the LORD.

These words spoken on Palm Sunday "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" and these words fulfilled on Good Friday and Easter Sunday, "the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" come from this amazing Psalm. As believers think of those days they say from this Psalm and from their heart, "This is the LORD'S doing and it is marvelous in our sight."