

## **The bad building block**

How do you praise God?

Do you just say it out loud? Do you pray to Him about it? Do you dance around because it just makes you really happy? Do you write poetry? Do you sing?

For me, singing is a normal way for me to express happiness and praise to God.

Today I want to take a look at Psalm 118. We don't really know for sure who wrote this particular Psalm, but it seems to be about David, or at least for the most part the context fits David. So it's possible that David wrote Psalm 118 as a praise song to God. Let's take a look at the Psalm.

### ***Psalm 118***

- 1     *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
       His love endures forever.*
- 2     *Let Israel say:  
       "His love endures forever."*
- 3     *Let the house of Aaron say:  
       "His love endures forever."*
- 4     *Let those who fear the Lord say:  
       "His love endures forever."*
- 5     *When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord;  
       he brought me into a spacious place.*
- 6     *The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.  
       What can mere mortals do to me?*
- 7     *The Lord is with me; he is my helper.  
       I look in triumph on my enemies.*
- 8     *It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
       than to trust in humans.*
- 9     *It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
       than to trust in princes.*

10 *All the nations surrounded me,  
but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.*

11 *They surrounded me on every side,  
but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.*

12 *They swarmed around me like bees,  
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;  
in the name of the Lord I cut them down.*

13 *I was pushed back and about to fall,  
but the Lord helped me.*

14 *The Lord is my strength and my defense;  
he has become my salvation.*

15 *Shouts of joy and victory  
resound in the tents of the righteous:  
"The Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"*

16 *The Lord's right hand is lifted high;  
the Lord's right hand has done mighty things!"*

17 *I will not die but live,  
and will proclaim what the Lord has done.*

18 *The Lord has chastened me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.*

19 *Open for me the gates of the righteous;  
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.*

20 *This is the gate of the Lord  
through which the righteous may enter.*

21 *I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
you have become my salvation.*

22 *The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;*

23 *the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.*

24 *The Lord has done it this very day;  
let us rejoice today and be glad.*

25 *Lord, save us!  
Lord, grant us success!*

26 *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
From the house of the Lord we bless you.*

27 *The Lord is God,  
and he has made his light shine on us.  
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession  
up to the horns of the altar.*

28 *You are my God, and I will praise you;  
you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

29 *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.*

The word translated as “love” here is the word “kheh-sed” in Hebrew. The Greek word for “kheh-sed” is agape. Same thought, different language.

Three times in this Psalm, in verses 14, 15 and 21, the word translated as “salvation” is the Hebrew word ye-shu-ah` ; the English equivalent would be Joshua, or Jesus.

An alternate translation of verse 24 is “This is the day that the Lord has made. We shall rejoice and be glad in it!”

In verse 25, the phrase “Save us LORD” in Hebrew is Hosanna.

Now let’s look at some history with this particular Psalm of praise.

Psalm 118 was probably song during the laying of the new cornerstone of the temple after the Babylonian exile in Ezra 3.

### ***Ezra 3:10,11***

*10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David king of Israel. 11 With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord:*

*“He is good;  
his love toward Israel endures forever.”*

*And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.*

I looked in a few commentaries about Psalm 118 to try to get as much information about it as I could. In The New Interpreter's Bible, volume IV, it says this:

In its ancient Jewish context, Psalm 118 was most likely an entrance liturgy to the Temple, used at the festival of Passover. It proclaimed God's deliverance from Egypt and, later on, from the Exile. The Psalm was a liturgical script, complete with speaking parts for leaders and congregation. One can hear the jubilant call and response in 118:2-4: "Let Israel say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.' Let the house of Aaron say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.' Let those who fear the LORD say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.'"

With this Psalm on their lips, the priests and people processed into the Temple. The approach to the Temple culminates in verse 19, "Open to me the gates of righteousness..." and the condition for entrance is given in verse 20, "The righteous shall enter through it." Then the festival procession proceeds up to the altar, to adorn it with signs of victory (verse 27). The physical movement begins outside the Temple, progressing inside and all the way to the altar. The people express their faith that since God has saved them in the past, he can be trusted in the future (verse 25).

To this day, the Jews read (or actually, sing / chant) Psalm 118 at the Passover celebration.

But there's a more significant time, for us Christians, at least, that this Psalm was probably used. In Matthew, chapter 21, Jesus is getting ready to go into Jerusalem. He tells two of His disciples to go into the village and get a donkey's colt and bring it to Him to ride in to the city on. Then, beginning in verse 6, we read this:

**Matthew 21:6-9**

*<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*

*"Hosanna to the Son of David!"*

*"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"*

*"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

The crowd was quoting from Psalm 118:25 and 26 here.

And then, later that day, Jesus is talking to the chief priests and the elders in the temple courts. Picking up with Jesus talking in verse 33:

**Matthew 21:33-44**

*<sup>33</sup> "Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.*

*<sup>35</sup> "The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.*

<sup>38</sup> *“But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’* <sup>39</sup> *So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

<sup>40</sup> *“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”*

<sup>41</sup> *“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”*

<sup>42</sup> *Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”*

<sup>43</sup> *“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”*

Some manuscripts don’t have verse 44, but it goes very nicely with what Jesus is saying, quoting from Psalm 118. Paul follows along with this same thought in his first letter to the believers in Corinth.

### ***1 Corinthians 1:22-24***

<sup>22</sup> *Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

Paul says that “Christ crucified” is a stumbling block to the Jews, just as Jesus said that “Anyone who falls on this stone (the stone that was rejected) will be broken to pieces”.

This also ties back nicely with Isaiah 8:13-15

### ***Isaiah 8:13-15***

*13 The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy,  
he is the one you are to fear,  
he is the one you are to dread.*

*14 He will be a holy place;  
for both Israel and Judah he will be  
a stone that causes people to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall.  
And for the people of Jerusalem he will be  
a trap and a snare.*

*15 Many of them will stumble;  
they will fall and be broken,  
they will be snared and captured.”*

Isaiah warned the people of Israel and Judah that Jesus was going to cause many of them to stumble and fall, and many did, because they refused to believe in Jesus. They rejected Him, the cornerstone of our faith.

Peter summed it up for us quite well in Acts 4:8-12

### ***Acts 4:8-12***

*8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but*

*whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup> Jesus is*

*“the stone you builders rejected,  
which has become the cornerstone.”*

*<sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*

Opening scripture: Psalm 117

Closing scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21



Questions:

1. How does Psalm 118 relate to David? How does it relate to Jesus?  
Does it relate to you? If so, how?
2. Why is it so hard to explain Christianity to non-Christians?
3. Why is it so hard to explain Jesus as Messiah to non-Christians?