

## Psalm 118 <sup>1</sup>

# "Festal Praise to Yahweh En Route to and Within the Temple"

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### **A1 FESTAL PRAISE TO YAHWEH EN ROUTE TO THE TEMPLE 118:1-18**

#### **B1 A Call to Thank Yahweh for His Eternal Loyal Love 118:1-4**

- C1 A Call to the People to Thank Yahweh 118:1
  - D1 Because of His goodness: *{1}* Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
  - D2 Because of His eternal loyal love: For His lovingkindness <sup>2</sup> is everlasting.
- C2 A Call to Israel to Declare Yahweh's Eternal Loyal Love 118:2
  - D1 *{2}* Oh let Israel say,
  - D2 "His lovingkindness is everlasting."
- C3 A Call to the Priests to Declare Yahweh's Eternal Loyal Love 118:3
  - D1 *{3}* Oh let the house of Aaron say,
  - D2 "His lovingkindness is everlasting."
- C4 A Call to All Who Fear Yahweh to Declare His Eternal Loyal Love 118:4
  - D1 *{4}* Oh let those who fear the LORD say,
  - D2 "His lovingkindness is everlasting."

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 118: This psalm is the last of the "Hallel" psalms (113-118). Most believe this psalm is post-exilic. Perhaps it was first used to celebrate the completion of the restored temple, as recorded in Ezra 6:15 (Franz Delitzsch, *Old Testament Commentary* (Keil and Delitzsch (*K & D*)).

<sup>2</sup> 118:1 - lovingkindness: *NASB* typically translates the Heb. *chesed* "lovingkindness." In class lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Bruce Waltke taught that the word should be translated "loyal love." I have routinely followed that protocol.

**B2 The Psalmist's Gratefulness that Yahweh, Who is For Him, Has Helped Him 118:5-7**

- C1 His Gratefulness for Yahweh's Deliverance 118:5
  - D1 His call upon Yahweh for help: {5} From *my* distress I called upon the LORD;
  - D2 Yahweh's deliverance: The LORD answered me *and set me* in a large place.
- C2 His Confidence in Yahweh and Freedom from Anxiety 118:6
  - D1 His assurance of Yahweh's support: {6} The LORD is for me;
  - D2 His choice, therefore, not to fear man
    - E1 I will not fear;
    - E2 What can man do to me?
- C3 His Confidence in Yahweh and Expectation of Triumph over His Enemies 118:7
  - D1 His assurance of the support of Yahweh among others: {7} The LORD is for me among those who help me;
  - D2 His expectation of triumph: Therefore I will look *with satisfaction* on those who hate me.

**B3 The Psalmist's Confidence That, Though Surrounded by the Nations, He Will Cut Them Off (lit. Circumcise Them) in the Name of Yahweh, in Whom he has Taken Refuge 118:8-12**

- C1 The Superiority of Seeking Refuge in Yahweh 118:8-9
  - D1 Rather than man 118:8
    - E1 {8} It is better to take refuge in the LORD
    - E2 Than to trust <sup>3</sup> in man.
  - D2 Rather than those noble in rank 118:9
    - E1 {9} It is better to take refuge in the LORD
    - E2 Than to trust in princes.

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<sup>3</sup> 118:8 - trust: Actually, the word does not appear in the Heb. text. It says simply, "It is better to seek refuge in Yahweh than it is good [supply 'to seek refuge'] in man." The same can be said in 118:9, where "princes" (i.e. nobility) is used.

C2 His Conviction That, Though Surrounded by All Nations, He Will Surely Cut Them Off in Yahweh's Name!

D1 His first statement

E1 Surrounded: {10} All nations surrounded me;

E2 Victorious: In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.<sup>4</sup>

D2 His second statement

E1 Doubly surrounded: {11} They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;

E2 Victorious: In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.

D3 His third statement

E1 Surrounded: {12} They surrounded me like bees;

E2 Extinguished: They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;

E3 Victorious: In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.

**B4 The Psalmist's Gratefulness That the Right Hand of Yahweh Has Brought Him Salvation 118:13-18**

C1 Yahweh's Salvation from the Violent Enemy 118:13-14

D1 Yahweh's Countering of the Violence of the Enemy 118:13

E1 The violence of the enemy: {13} You pushed me violently so that I was falling,

E2 The help of Yahweh: But the LORD helped me.

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<sup>4</sup> 118:10, 11, 12 - cut them off: The Heb. *muwl* (4135) occurs 36 times in 32 verses. In all but five verses (all in Psalms: these three plus 58:7 and 90:6) it is translated circumcise, Genesis 17 being the origin (and the chapter with the greatest number of occurrences).

Inasmuch as this is a psalm with Messianic implications, is it possible that, ultimately, Messiah is in view here? And is it possible there is a double-meaning? -- that He will destroy (cut off) all His enemies (Zech. 14:3 ff.), but ALSO that many amongst the Gentiles He will circumcise their heart and draw them to Himself? In my estimation this is not improbable.

- D2 His Declaration of Yahweh as His Strength, Song, and Salvation! <sup>5</sup>  
118:14
  - E1 His strength and song: {14} The LORD is my strength and song,
  - E2 His salvation: And He has become my salvation.
- C2 The Saving, Valiant Right Hand of Yahweh 118:15-16
  - D1 The salvation wrought by Yahweh's right hand 118:15
    - E1 The rejoicing of the saved righteous {15} The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;
    - E2 The valiant right hand of Yahweh: The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
  - D2 The exalted, valiant right hand of Yahweh 118:16
    - E1 Exalted: {16} The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
    - E2 Valiant: The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- C3 The Description of the Salvation 118:17-18
  - D1 Surviving to praise Yahweh 118:17
    - E1 Physically surviving: {17} I will not die, but live,
    - E2 To praise Yahweh's works: And tell of the works of the LORD.
  - D2 Surviving Yahweh's discipline 118:18
    - E1 Yahweh's severe discipline: {18} The LORD has disciplined me severely,
    - E2 Physically surviving: But He has not given me over to death.

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<sup>5</sup> 118:14 - strength, song, salvation: The Psalmist is quoting from Ex. 15:2, near the very beginning of the song of Moses and the sons of Israel after Yahweh's tremendous deliverance from Egypt at the Red Sea! So the archetype of the "enemy" in 118:13 who so violently thrust upon the psalmist (and thus upon Israel) was none other than Egypt! In the psalmist's day, the enemy is generic.

**A2 FESTAL PRAISE TO YAHWEH WITHIN THE TEMPLE 118:19-29**

**B1 Entering the Temple to Give Thanks 118:19-21**

C1 Request to Enter the Gates to Thank Yahweh

D1 Request of permission: {19} Open to me the gates of righteousness;  
I shall enter through them,

D2 Purpose of thanks: I shall give thanks to the LORD.

C2 Permission Granted to the Righteous to Enter 118:20

D1 {20} This is the gate of the LORD;

D2 The righteous will enter through it.

C3 Thankful Entrance 118:21

D1 Offering of thanks: {21} I shall give thanks to You,

D2 Reason for thanks

E1 for You have answered me,

E2 And You have become my salvation.

**B2 Joy over Yahweh's Engineering of the Reconstruction of the Temple 118:22-24**

- C1 The Ascendancy of the Chief Corner Stone 118:22
- D1 The past rejection by the builders: {22} The stone <sup>6</sup> which the builders rejected
- D2 The present honor: Has become the chief corner *stone*.
- C2 The Work of Yahweh 118:23
- D1 {23} This is the LORD'S doing;
- D2 It is marvelous in our eyes.
- C3 The Cause for Celebration 118:24
- D1 {24} This is the day which the LORD has made;
- D2 Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

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<sup>6</sup> 118:22 - stone: Four questions arise from this passage: To the psalmist and the people present in this celebration at the temple, (1) What was the stone? (2) Who are the builders? (3) In what sense did the builders reject the stone? (4) In what sense has it become the chief corner stone? and (5) In what sense is this whole affair such a marvelous work of the Lord (118:23) that a special day of celebration must be set aside (118:24)? To answer these questions we must look at them from two viewpoints: (A) The viewpoint of the people of that post-exilic day and (B) the viewpoint of Jesus in the gospels. This process will illustrate what is so often true in prophetic Scripture -- that there is a near and a far fulfillment.

(A) From the viewpoint of the post-exilic people literally speaking: (1) The stone was a literal stone originally a part of the first temple (Solomon's). (2) The builders were the leaders of the nation of Israel down through its history after the building of the first temple -- it's kings, priests, and elders. (3) The nation's leaders rejected that stone in the sense that they did not lead the nation to follow God, but worshiped false gods and idols and did not obey the Torah. In judgment, God sent Babylon to enslave the people and destroy the temple. (4) That stone now becomes the chief corner stone of the second temple. (5) This whole affair is a marvelous work of God in that He has allowed the Jewish people to return from exile and rebuild the temple and on this day with this psalm celebrate its rebuilding as a sign of God's renewed favor and blessing.

(A') From the viewpoint of the post-exilic people metaphorically speaking: (1) In view of Isaiah 28:16 (Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone *for* the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed."), written centuries earlier than presumably post-exilic Ps 118, the cornerstone is more than a physical stone, since faith is to be placed in it. It is at least an entity, such as true Judaism, the true worship of Yahweh, and perhaps more, faith in an ideal king (Messiah?). In this event, (2) the builders remain the same; (3) as does the rejection by the builders. (4) The true cornerstone would mean that true worship of Yahweh has been restored, complete with temple and human rulers, civic and spiritual; and (5) the festal rejoicing at the restoration of true worship would remain the same.

(B) From the viewpoint of Jesus in the gospels (Jesus applied this passage to himself, eg. Matthew 21:33-45): (1) He Himself is the stone. (2) The builders are the leaders of the nation (including the chief priests and Pharisees, Matt. 21:45). (3) The leaders of the nation rejected the stone by rejecting Jesus as their legitimate Messiah. (4) Jesus has already become the chief cornerstone of the temple of God because the Father has exalted Him on high and given Him a name above all names (Philippians 2:5-11). He will become the chief cornerstone of the nation of Israel and of the world when He returns and believing Israelis anoint Him as King. (5) This will become a marvelous work of God in that His Messiah will rule not only Israel, but the whole world in a marvelous Kingdom of Peace (Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Zech.14:9-11; Rev. 20:1-6, etc), an event truly worth celebrating (Rev. 19:4-9), a celebration that merges into the eternal future (Isaiah 25:6-10; Revelation 21:1-4 and following through most of ch. 22).

**B3 The Prayer of the Celebrants to Yahweh 118:25**

- C1 For National Salvation: {25} O LORD, do save, [repeated at Jesus' Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21:9)]<sup>7</sup> we beseech You;
- C2 For National Blessing: O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!

**B4 Reciprocal Blessings upon the Celebrants 118:26**

- C1 Blessings from Those Previously Gathered in the Temple Courtyard: {26} Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; [Repeated at Jesus' Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21:9).]
- C2 Reciprocal Blessings from Those who had Entered the Temple Courtyard: We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.

**B5 The Thankful Call to Sacrifice 118:27**

- C1 The Thanks to Yahweh Elohim for His Illumination: {27} The LORD is God, and He has given us light;
- C2 The Call to Sacrifice; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

**B6 The Concluding Thanksgiving and Praise 118:28-29**

- C1 Personal Thanksgiving to Elohim 118:28
- D1 {28} You are my God, and I give thanks to You;
- D2 *You are* my God, I extol You.
- C2 The Call for Corporate Thanksgiving to Yahweh 118:29
- D1 Because of His goodness: {29} Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
- D2 Because of His eternal loyal love: For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

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<sup>7</sup> 118:25 - do save: It is doubtful to the present writer that the post-exilic people who sang this psalm understood its Messianic import. The Jewish people who were present at Jesus' "Triumphal Entry" did, however. They applied the words "save us" (v. 25) and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD" (v. 26) to Him as the "Son of David" in Matt. 21:9. (The words "save us" are in Matt. 21:9 transliterated from this Hebrew text as "Hosanna".) The crowd perceived Jesus as a political Savior or Deliverer in the same vein as a Gideon or Jephthah or a Barak. That they understood His spiritual dimension is demonstrated by their terming Him a prophet (Matt. 21:11), but that same term demonstrated they stopped short of fully embracing Him as their King, even though they had identified Him as the Son of David. Jesus truly is God's anointed prophet par excellence (Deut. 18:15-19; John 1:1, 14), His eternally anointed priest (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:15 - 8:2), but above all His anointed King (2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:30-33; Rev. 19:16). A king, of course, possesses all three aspects of governance: legislative, executive, and judicial.

Expanded Analysis of Psalm 118

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April, 2006. Updated August 13, 2019

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Condensed Outline of Psalm 118  
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April, 2006. Updated August 13, 2019

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**Allen P. Ross, Outline of Psalm 118, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

- I. Praise for God's Loyal Love. 118:1-4
- II. Acknowledgment of Triumph. 118:5-21
  - A. 118:5-9. The Lord delivered him from distress; therefore no need for fear. He need not fear what man could do to him.
  - B. 118:10-13. The Lord gave him confidence in the midst of his adversaries.
  - C. 118:14-21. The effect of the Psalmist's triumph. The Lord is his Strength, Song, and Salvation.
- III. Significance of the Triumph. 118:22-29
  - A. 118:22-24
  - B. 118:25-29

**Franz Delitzsch (K&D), Psalms, *Commentary on the Old Testament***

## Outline of Psalm 118

## Festival Psalm at the Dedication of the New Temple.

- I. Sung by the Festive Procession Ascending to the Temple, Including Priests and Levites. 118:1-19
  - A. (At the setting out.) 118:1-4
  - B. (On the way.) 118:5-18
  - C. (At the going in.) 118:19
- II. Sung Inside the Temple Precincts. 118:20-29
  - A. (Those [Levites] who receive the festal procession.) 118:20-27
  - B. (Answer of those who have arrived.) 118:28
  - C. (All together.) 118:29

**Comments by Franz Delitzsch on Psalm 118 (K & D)**

- I. "The Psalm falls into two divisions. The first division (vers. 1-19) [yet further on he divides it into verses 1-18 = ?] is sung by the festive procession brought up by the priests and Levites, which is ascending to the Temple with the animals for sacrifice. With ver. 19 the procession stands at the entrance. The second part (vers. 20-27) is sung by the body of Levites who receive the festive procession. Then ver. 28 is the answer of those who have arrived, and ver. 29 the concluding song of all of them. This antiphonal arrangement is recognized even by the Talmud (*B. Pesachim* 119a) and Midrash. The whole Psalm, too, has moreover a peculiar formation. It resembles the *Mashal* Psalms, for each verse has of itself its completed sense, its own scent and hue; one thought is joined to another as branch to branch and flower to flower"
- II. The Occasion: Delitzsch opines, "It is without any doubt a post-exilic song." Delitzsch favors the occasion for this psalm as the "dedication of the completed Temple in the twelfth month of the sixth year of Darius, Ezra 6:15 sqq."