

Psalm 68

Title: God Goes Forth in Victory

Author and Date: David

Key Verses: Psalm 68:1, 4, 7, 24, 33

Type: Historical

Outline

- A. God goes forth among the people (verses 1-6).
- B. God goes forth among the Israelites (verses 7-18).
- C. God goes forth among the enemies (verses 19-27).
- D. God goes forth among the kingdoms (verses 28-32).
- E. God goes forth among the heavens (verses 33-35).

Notes

Title: "For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, a Song." See the notes on the titles of Psalm 65 through 67.

Summary: Psalm 68 is a praise to God (verses 4 and 32) and a blessing to God (verses 19, 26, and 35) for his great deeds as he goes forth in victory (verses 1, 4, 7, 24, and 33). This psalm sounds like a battle march as it gives a brief history of some of God's conquests and victories for his people.

First, God goes forth to show his presence and deeds among the people (verses 1-6). God's enemies flee away (verse 1) and the wicked perish at his presence (verse 2). On the other hand, the righteous rejoice with gladness at God's presence (verse 3). God is to be praised (verse 4) because he cares for the downtrodden: the orphan, the widow, the lonely, and the prisoner (verses 5-6).

Second, God goes forth to show his presence and deeds among the Israelites (verses 7-18). He leads them out of Egypt (verse 7), gives them his law at Sinai (verse 8), sustains them in the wilderness (verses 9-11), and helps them to conquer the kings in and around Canaan (verses 12-14). God also dwells in mount Zion and protects it (verses 15-18).

Third, God goes forth to show his presence and deeds among the righteous and the enemies (verses 19-27). God supports and saves the righteous (verses 19-20), but he smites and crushes the enemies (verses 21-23). When God goes into his sanctuary, his enemies see it and his people sing and bless God (verses 24-27).

Fourth, God goes forth to show his presence and deeds among the kingdoms (verses 28-32). God is strong (verse 28). Foreign kings and kingdoms come to God to pay tribute to him (verses 29-30) and to praise him (verses 31-32).

Finally, God goes forth to show his presence and deeds among the heavens (verse 33) and the skies (verse 34). God is mighty (verse 33) and strong (verse 34) and he gives strength to his people (verse 35). Blessed be God!

Psalms 68 is known for its difficult Hebrew words (13 of the words are not found elsewhere in the OT) and for its lack of any apparent organization of thought making it one of the most difficult psalms to translate and interpret.

Verse 1: For “let God arise” (KJV) in verse 1, see Numbers 10:35 and 1 Samuel 4:5. The use of “let” in verses 1-3, shows the psalmist’s desire or wish.

Verse 4: The KJV reads “extol” in verse 4, whereas the ASV reads “cast up a highway”. To “lift up” is the basic idea of the Hebrew word. The KJV reads: “His name is JAH” in verse 4. This is a literal reading. The Hebrew *Jah* is a shortened form of *Yahweh* (YHWH) or *Jehovah* (like *Elijah* or *Hallelujah*). “Lord” (*Adonai*, verses 17 and 19), “Jehovah” (*Yahweh*, verse 20), “Almighty” (*shaddai*, verse 14), and “God” (*elohim*, verses 1-6, etc.) are also used in this psalm.

Verses 5-6: Note that God helps those who are downtrodden (verses 5-6), but the “rebellious” (KJV) do not receive his help.

Verse 8: The reference in verse 8 to the “earth trembled,” is most likely a reference to the quaking of Sinai in Exodus 19:18.

Verse 13: This verse may be a poetic description of the spoils of war, the silver and gold, left behind by the fleeing armies.

Verse 14: “Zalmon” is a mountain in northern Palestine (Judg. 9:48).

Verse 16: To look “askance” (ASV) is to look enviously.

Verse 17: The large number of “chariots of God” portray God as an advancing conqueror (Hab. 3:8). These “chariots” may be a reference to God’s angelic armies or Israel’s armies.

Verse 18: Paul quotes the first part of verse 18 in Ephesians 4:8 and changes “received gifts” to “gave gifts” to fit his purpose in the Ephesians context. Paul applies the thought to the resurrection of Jesus Christ who gave the gift of male leadership to the church before he ascended into heaven.

Verses 21-23: The wording of these verses is unpleasant, but it shows the divine vengeance and justice of God toward his enemies. Note that verse 22 is a direct quotation of what God

said. Verse 23 speaks of the habit of dogs licking the blood of dead bodies that have fallen on the battle field.

Verse 24: The “sanctuary” (KJV) is probably the tabernacle in David’s day before the “temple” (verse 29) was built in Jerusalem by Solomon (see 1 Chron. 15:16-28).

Verse 27: Four tribes are listed as joining the celebration of praise. Benjamin is a small tribe and Judah is a large tribe (both in the south). Zebulun and Naphtali are two distant tribes (both in the north).

Verse 29: The reference to the “temple” looks ahead to the time when the yet-to-be-built temple of Solomon will be present in Jerusalem. The “kings” in this verse, and the “kingdoms” in verse 32, represent the Gentiles who come to praise God in addition to the Israelites. In time, God’s kingdom will include the Gentiles.

Verse 30: These animals are symbolic of the earthly rulers whom God conquers.

Verses 31: For Egypt and Ethiopia praising God, see Isaiah 18:7 and 45:14.

Questions

1. What is the psalmist’s desire for God’s enemies and the wicked (68:1-2)?
2. What is the psalmist’s desire for the righteous (68:3)?
3. What does the psalmist call upon the righteous to do (68:4)?
4. What does God do for those who are downtrodden (68:5-6)?
5. What happens when God goes before his people in the wilderness (68:7-10)?
6. What do the women do (68:11)?
7. What does God do to kings (68:12-14)?

8. How is the mountain of Bashan described (68:15)?
9. What question is asked concerning God's dwelling place (68:16)?
10. What are numbered in the thousands (68:17)?
11. What does God do when he ascends on high (68:18)?
12. What does God do for his people (68:19-20)?
13. What does God do to his enemies (68:21-23)?
14. What do God's people do when he goes forth in the sanctuary (68:24-25)?
15. What four tribes of Israel bless God in the congregations (68:26-27)?
16. What request does the psalmist have for God (68:28)?
17. What do kings do and why (68:29)?
18. What does God do to those who delight in war (68:30)?
19. What do Egypt and Ethiopia do toward God (68:31-32)?

20. How is God described (68:33)?

21. What does God have and what does he give his people (68:34-35)?

Applications for Today

1. Rejoice, be glad, and sing praises unto God (verses 3, 4, and 32). Why praise God (Psa. 147:1)?

2. Jesus Christ gave gifts when he ascended on high (verse 18). What gifts did Jesus Christ give the church and for what purpose did he give them (Eph. 4:11-12)?

3. God daily bears our burdens and delivers us from death (verses 19-20). Who else helps to bear our burdens besides God (Gal. 6:2)? What did God do for Paul and the apostles (2 Cor. 1:10)?

4. God is strong and he gives strength to his people (verses 28, 34, and 35). What does God do for Christians (1 Pet. 4:11; 5:10)?

5. Blessed be God (verses 19, 26, and 35). What do the following bless God for: Zacharias (Lk. 1:68), Paul (2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3), and Peter (1 Pet. 1:3)?