

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

A general exhortation to praise God for his mercy, Psalm 118:1-4. The psalmist, by his own experience, encourages the people to trust in God, and shows them the advantage of it, Psalm 118:5-9; then describes his enemies, and shows how God enabled him to destroy them, Psalm 118:10-13. The people rejoice on the account, Psalm 118:15, Psalm 118:16. He speaks again of the help he received from the Lord; and desires admission into the temple, that he may enter and praise the Lord, Psalm 118:17-19. The gate is opened, Psalm 118:20. He offers praise, 21. The priests, etc., acknowledge the hand of the Lord in the deliverance wrought, Psalm 118:22-24. The psalmist prays for prosperity, Psalm 118:25. The priest performs his office, blesses the people, and all join in praise, Psalm 118:26, Psalm 118:27. The psalmist expresses his confidence, Psalm 118:28. The general doxology, or chorus, Psalm 118:29.

Most probably David was the author of this Psalm, though many think it was written after the captivity. It partakes of David's spirit, and every where shows the hand of a master. The style is grand and noble; the subject, majestic.

Dr. Kennicott, who joins this and the hundred and seventeenth Psalm together, considers the whole as a dialogue, and divides it accordingly. The whole of the hundred and seventeenth he gives to the psalmist as part the first, with the first four verses of the hundred and eighteenth. The second part, which is from the fifth verse to the twenty-first inclusive, he gives to the Messiah. The third part, from the twenty-second verse to the twenty-seventh, he gives to the chorus. And the fourth part, the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses, he gives to the psalmist. Of the whole he has given an improved version.

Bishop Horsley is still different. He considers the hundred and seventeenth Psalm as only the exordium of this. The whole poem, he states, is a triumphant processional song. The scene passes at the front gate of the temple. A conqueror with his train appears before it; he demands admittance to return thanks for his deliverance and final success, in an expedition of great difficulty and danger. The conqueror and his train sing the hundred and seventeenth Psalm, and the first four verses of the hundred and eighteenth, as they advance to the gate of the temple, in this manner - The hundred and seventeenth Psalm, Chorus of the whole procession. The first verse of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm, A single voice. The second, Another single voice. The third, A third single voice. The fourth, Chorus of the whole procession. Arrived at the temple gate, the conqueror alone sings the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses. The eighth and ninth are sung by his train in chorus. The conqueror, again alone, sings the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses. His train, in chorus, sing the fifteenth and sixteenth. The conqueror alone sings the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth verses. The twentieth is sung by the priests and Levites within, in chorus. The twenty-fifth by the conqueror alone within the gates. The twenty-sixth, by the priests and Levites in chorus. The twenty-seventh, by the conqueror's train in chorus. The twenty-eighth, by the conqueror alone. The twenty-ninth, by the united chorus of priests and Levites, and the conqueror's train, all within the gates. "Now," the learned bishop adds, "the Jewish temple was a type of heaven; the priests within represent the angelic host attending round the throne of God in heaven; the Conqueror is Messiah; and his train, the redeemed." On this distribution the bishop has given a new version. The simple distribution into parts, which I have given in the contents, is, in my opinion, the best. Ingenious as Dr. Kennicott and Bishop Horsley are, they seem to me too mechanical. This is the last of those Psalms which form the great hallel, which the Jews sung at the end of the passover.

Verse 2

Let Israel now say - Seeing the hand of the Lord so visibly, and the deliverance gained, that God's mercy endureth for ever.

Verse 3

The house of Aaron - The priesthood is still preserved, and the temple worship restored.

Verse 4

That fear the Lord - All sincere penitents and genuine believers. See the notes on Psalm 115:9-11 (note).

Verse 5

I called upon the Lord - I am a standing proof and living witness of God's mercy. Take encouragement from me.

Verse 7

The Lord taketh my part with them that help me - Literally, The Lord is to me among my helpers. Therefore shall

Page 2/4

In this sense the Vulgate and Septuagint understood the passage. David in this entry into the temple was a type of our blessed Lord, who made a similar entry, as related Matthew 21:8-10.

Verse 29

O give thanks unto the Lord - This is the general doxology or chorus. All join in thanksgiving, and they end as they began: "His mercy endureth for ever." It began at the creation of man; it will continue till the earth is burnt up.