



Pastor's Update

Psalm 136 "The Great Hallel!"

One of the distinguishing marks of God's people is their demonstration of an attitude of gratitude to God, expressed through hymns and prayer. This is true not only of Christians but of God's people throughout the ages. That is why the Bible, particularly the Book of Psalms is chockfull of Hallelujahs! The writer to the Hebrews cites Psalm 22:22 to show that Jesus Himself sang praises to God: "I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise" (Heb. 2:12). The apostle Paul urged the Colossians to "Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you will all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16).

Some of the hymns and psalms sung by the early Christians can be found in the Book of Psalms. Among these are the group of Psalms (113-118) known as the "Hallel" which means "praise." These psalms are still used today in the celebration of the Jewish feast of Passover. Most likely, Jesus and His disciples sang the Great Hallel" at the end of the Last Supper (Matt. 26:30). Note that the word "Hallelujah" means "praise the LORD." Let us now briefly consider one of the great Psalms of Thanksgiving.

Psalm 136 was known in the liturgical language of the Jews as "The Great Hallel." Psalm 136 ascribes no specific author. The Psalm consists of exhortation to praise Yahweh for His goodness demonstrated in His mercy in Creation, His dealings with Israel throughout her history and all humankind. The Psalm is arranged in well-marked groups of three verses to the end of v. 18, after which follow two groups of four verses.

Vv. 1-3 A Call to Thanksgiving

i) It is a general call to all

- "Give thanks" - The primary meaning of this root is to acknowledge God's character and works. Thanksgiving is a confession or declaration of who God is and what he does.

ii) The object of thanksgiving is "Yahweh." Throughout the Bible Praise normally has Yahweh, or His name as its object (Psa. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 1 Chron. 16:34; Jer. 33:11). Even the wrath of men praises God (Psa. 76:10). Yahweh is the personal name of Israel's God (Exod. 3:13ff.). This name signifies the sovereignty of Israel's God; The One who exists independently of all things and who is the source of blessings to Israel's and indeed all humankind. And if there are any other gods, then Yahweh is the "God of gods" (Ps. 136: 2).

iii) The reason given to "give thanks to Yahweh" is that He is "good" (v. 1). God is good (a) intrinsically (b) aesthetically (c) morally

iv) God's goodness is revealed through his mercy demonstrated in creation and in his dealings with Israel and all flesh as follows:

Vv. 4-9 Jehovah is the Creator (The Book of Genesis)

Vv. 10-15 Jehovah is the Deliverer of Israel (The Book of Exodus)

Vv. 16-22 Jehovah is the Giver of the Promised Land (The Books of Numbers and Joshua)

Vv. 23-26 Jehovah the Deliverer of Israel and the Supporter of all things living (The Prophets)

Lesson: Let us remember to give thanks to the LORD for His Creation, His Salvation, His Promises and for Jesus Christ the Son of God.

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis