

Psalm 108: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Psalm 108, a song, a psalm of David. My heart is steadfast, O God. I will sing and make melody with all my being.

Awake, O harp and lyre. I will awake the dawn. I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples. I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great above the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth, that your beloved ones may be delivered.

Give salvation by your right hand and answer me. God has promised in his holiness. With exaltation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the valley of Succoth.

Gilead is mine. Manasseh is mine. Ephraim is my helmet. Judah my scepter. Moab is my washbasin. Upon Edom I cast my shoe. Over Philistia I shout in triumph.

[0 : 5 8] Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom? Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go out, O God, with our armies. O grant us help against the foe.

For vain is the salvation of man. With God we shall do valiantly. It is he who will tread down our foes. The opening five verses of Psalm 108 are almost taken verbatim from Psalm 57, verses 7 to 11.

Verses 6 to 13, the rest of the psalm, are taken almost verbatim from Psalm 60, verses 5 to 12. Nevertheless, while they both fit in their original context, they also fit here.

More surprisingly, here the psalm is naturally divided between verses 1 to 6 and verses 7 to 13, which doesn't correspond with the original division, as John Goldengay has remarked.

Also, the ordering of the psalm has changed, as it begins where Psalm 57 ended. It moves not from plea to praise, but more from praise to plea. It's likely a later remixing of material from earlier Davidic psalms.

[2 : 0 6] It begins with a statement of commitment to make praise to the Lord. This praise arises from the joy of the heart. The psalmist will be making melody with his entire being.

And he calls for the harp and the lyre to wake up. Perhaps he has in mind here the musicians playing these instruments. He also wants to wake up the dawn. While the dawn itself generally wakes people up, he wants to wake up the dawn because he can't wait to begin this praise of God.

His desire is to give thanks to the Lord among the peoples. This is going to be for a wider audience, singing praises among the nations, not just to the congregation of Israel to spur them to praise.

The declaration of the Lord here seems to be a more general statement of who God is. His steadfast love is great above the heavens. His faithfulness reaches to the clouds. And yet this is a basis for petition.

[3:13] In verse 7, there's a sudden change of the scene. God has promised in his holiness in the past a great and solemn oath by his very nature. And this is a promise concerning the land. He will divide up Shechem and portion out the Valley of Succoth.

Gilead is his. Manasseh is his. Gilead is in the Transjordan. And Manasseh was the greatest of the tribes within the Transjordan. Half of the tribe of Manasseh within that realm.

Both of these tribes are in the land across the Jordan, in the promised land proper. And the Lord achieves his victories by means of these instruments. He dresses and equips himself with these tribes, as it were, to achieve his conquest over his foes.

Moab is, as it were, God's wash basin. Once he has won his victory, he washes himself in Moab. Upon Edom, he casts his shoe as he takes it off after the battle. He stands over Philistia and shouts in triumph at his success.

God, this great warrior, has not actually accompanied his people in their fight. Judah may indeed be God's scepter and Ephraim may be his helmet, but they are only effective when God is wielding them.

[illegible]