

**Sunday 23-Jan-22**

**The Cloud Rider**

**Psalm 68**

**For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. A song.**

- <sup>1</sup> May God arise, may his enemies be scattered;  
may his foes flee before him.
- <sup>2</sup> May you blow them away like smoke—  
as wax melts before the fire,  
may the wicked perish before God.
- <sup>3</sup> But may the righteous be glad  
and rejoice before God;  
may they be happy and joyful.
- <sup>4</sup> Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,  
extol him who rides on the clouds;  
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.
- <sup>5</sup> A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,  
is God in his holy dwelling.
- <sup>6</sup> God sets the lonely in families,  
he leads out the prisoners with singing;  
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
- <sup>7</sup> When you, God, went out before your people,  
when you marched through the wilderness,
- <sup>8</sup> the earth shook, the heavens poured down rain,  
before God, the One of Sinai,  
before God, the God of Israel.
- <sup>9</sup> You gave abundant showers, O God;  
you refreshed your weary inheritance.
- <sup>10</sup> Your people settled in it,  
and from your bounty, God, you provided for the poor.
- <sup>11</sup> The Lord announces the word,  
and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng:
- <sup>12</sup> "Kings and armies flee in haste;

the women at home divide the plunder.

<sup>13</sup> Even while you sleep among the sheep pens,  
the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,  
its feathers with shining gold.”

<sup>14</sup> When the Almighty scattered the kings in the land,  
it was like snow fallen on Mount Zalmon.

<sup>15</sup> Mount Bashan, majestic mountain,  
Mount Bashan, rugged mountain,

<sup>16</sup> why gaze in envy, you rugged mountain,  
at the mountain where God chooses to reign,  
where the LORD himself will dwell forever?

<sup>17</sup> The chariots of God are tens of thousands  
and thousands of thousands;  
the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.

<sup>18</sup> When you ascended on high,  
you took many captives;  
you received gifts from people,  
even from the rebellious—  
that you, LORD God, might dwell there.

<sup>19</sup> Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour,  
who daily bears our burdens.

<sup>20</sup> Our God is a God who saves;  
from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.

<sup>21</sup> Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies,  
the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord says, “I will bring them from Bashan;  
I will bring them from the depths of the sea,

<sup>23</sup> that your feet may wade in the blood of your foes,  
while the tongues of your dogs have their share.”

<sup>24</sup> Your procession, God, has come into view,  
the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary.

<sup>25</sup> In front are the singers, after them the musicians;  
with them are the young women playing the timbrels.

- <sup>26</sup> Praise God in the great congregation;  
praise the LORD in the assembly of Israel.
- <sup>27</sup> There is the little tribe of Benjamin, leading them,  
there the great throng of Judah's princes,  
and there the princes of Zebulun and of Naphtali.
- <sup>28</sup> Summon your power, God;  
show us your strength, our God, as you have done before.
- <sup>29</sup> Because of your temple at Jerusalem  
kings will bring you gifts.
- <sup>30</sup> Rebuke the beast among the reeds,  
the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations.  
Humbled, may the beast bring bars of silver.  
Scatter the nations who delight in war.
- <sup>31</sup> Envoys will come from Egypt;  
Cush will submit herself to God.
- <sup>32</sup> Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth,  
sing praise to the Lord,
- <sup>33</sup> to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens,  
who thunders with mighty voice.
- <sup>34</sup> Proclaim the power of God,  
whose majesty is over Israel,  
whose power is in the heavens.
- <sup>35</sup> You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary;  
the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.  
Praise be to God!

## **Ephesians 4:1-8**

### **Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ**

**4** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**7** But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. **8** This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”

## Sermon: The Cloud Rider

This is our final look at **Psalms** - that talk **about Jesus** – the **Messiah**.

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Psalm 68** –we'll be looking at the Psalm in some detail and we'll reference our NT Bible reading from **Ephesians chapter 4** also.

Let me pray for God's guidance and understanding

Let's pray...

## Intro

This **Psalm** – was **written** by King **David** - and **traditionally sung** in Jewish synagogue worship at **the Feast of Weeks** (50<sup>th</sup> day after Passover). And also - in Christian worship - it has **traditionally been sung** at **Pentecost** – we'll see why later.

I don't know about you – but **I'd love to be able to fly over and through clouds** – it would be **great** – wouldn't it?

In our **Psalm today** – we're going to talk about someone **who can ride clouds** – He's the **ultimate cloud rider**

But before we get there, we need the **context** of the Psalm

## [PowerPoint 1-Context]



## Context

There was a group of people called the **Philistines** who lived **by the sea** to the **west of Israel**. **David** was the **King of Israel**. The **Philistines** and the **Israelites** were **enemies**.

In one of their fights, the **Philistines stole** the **Ark of the Covenant** of God. The Ark was a special box made of wood. Inside the **Ark** was the **10 commandments (plus Aaron's budding staff and manna)**. This **Ark** was a **reminder** of the **agreement** that the people had made **to love, serve and obey God**. And in return **God agreed to give them help at all times**.

**Bad things happened** to the **Philistines** when they took the Ark. So, they **sent it back** to the Israelites.

For a long time, the **Ark** was **on a farm between Gath and Jerusalem**. Gath was a Philistine city. **Jerusalem** did not belong to the Israelites at this time, but David fought against it and won. He made it his **capital city**. Then he **decided to take** the **Ark** from where it was **into Jerusalem**. There was no temple in Jerusalem at that time, only a **tent (tabernacle)** where people met God.

So, **David** wrote **Psalms 68**. Everybody sang this **Psalms** while the Ark came into Jerusalem. The people all walked together in a **procession**. They started where the Ark was, and took it to its **new home in the tent tabernacle in Jerusalem**.

But **Psalms 68** starts long before that. It **starts in Egypt**, and **describes** the **Israelites** being **taken out of captivity and slavery in Egypt** – and **coming** to their new land. Because God had promised this land to them, we often call it the **Promised Land**. They **went through Sinai**, where they **built the Ark**. They **fought** against the **people that lived in their new land**. In the end they **lived at peace**, and brought the Ark into Jerusalem.

## [PowerPoint 2 – 4 Parts]

This is a long psalm, so we're going to **break it up** into **4 parts**:

**Verses 1 - 6** - which is a **call for God to act** and tells us what God does for His people

**Verses 7 - 18** - which tell us about **God leading his people from Egypt to the Promised Land**

**Verses 19 - 31** - which acknowledges how **God enabled His people to occupy the Promised Land**

**Verses 32 - 35** - which tell us to **praise God for what he has done**.

As we look at the Psalm, we'll see how it relates to us today

Then we'll finish up by seeing how this **Psalm relates to Jesus the Messiah** and then **what our response should be**.

## [PowerPoint 3-Part 1]

### 1. A call for God to act and what God does for His people (Psalm 68:1-6)

**First** then – let's look at **verses 1 to 6** – a **call for God to act** and what God does for His **people**

- In Verse 1, "*May God arise*" means that he will **start to do something** for His **people**.
- "*May God arise*" is something that was **said in Numbers 10:35** whenever the ark of the covenant was moved
- When God does rise up - it will make **His enemies and Israel's enemies run away** (V2) before He destroys them.
- And this will make the **righteous** (v3) – that's **God's people** – **very happy** – knowing that He is about to act

- **So happy** in fact that the **people will sing to God and extol Him** – which means praise Him enthusiastically (v4)
- Because – as it says in verse 4 - **God is the One who can ride clouds** – He is the ultimate Cloud Rider
- In the Bible - **clouds** are often linked with God's glory
  - Clouds covered **Mount Sinai** when God gave **Moses the 10 commandments** (Exodus 19:16)
  - **God went before the people** of Israel in a **cloud** when he led them through the **wilderness** (Exodus 13:21-22)
  - **God's presence in a cloud** stood before the **Tent of Moses** (Exodus 33:9-10)
  - **God's presence in a cloud** filled the **temple Solomon built** (2 Chronicles 7:2)
- Then in **verses 5 and 6** we see what God does for His people – as the MSG version puts it
- God is the Father of orphans – the **champion of widows** – He **makes homes for the homeless** – **leads prisoners to freedom** – but **leaves rebels to rot in Hell**
- Application for us: We too can join David (the writer of the Psalm) and **ask God to arise and act in our lives** – and with confidence we can say that **God will act for His people – anytime – anywhere**  
(pause)

[PowerPoint 4-Part 2]

## 2. How God leads His people from Egypt to Promised Land (Psalm 68:7-18)

**Second** – look at **verses 7 to 18** – **How God leads His people from Egypt to the Promised Land**

- We will see three **\*SELAHs** in this psalm (end of v7, v19, v32). They are after the first verse of each of the last three parts of the psalm. **\*SELAHs** are there to make people **stop, think, make music and pray** before reading the other verses in each part. We're meant to say to ourselves "***what do I think about these verses?***"
- These verses tell us that **God took His people out of Egypt** – and **led them through the wilderness (v7)** – **guiding them with His cloud**
- God **brought them to Sinai (v8)** – remember that's where He **gave them the 10 commandments** – remember that's **where the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle (mobile Temple) were made**
- Then God **brought them into the Promised Land (v9)** and God sent **abundant showers of rain (v9)** to make the land **productive for growing food**
- Then **verses 11 to 14** – describe how God **helped the people occupy the Promised Land**
  - God **announced what would happen** – and the women spread the news of what God would do (v11)
  - **Kings and armies** of other nations **ran away from Israel's army** – meanwhile the **housewives** at home **divided the plunder (v12)**
  - Even whilst God's people were asleep – He **made them prosperous and adorned** His people **with silver and gold (v13)**
  - God's **victory over the Kings of surrounding nations** – is **described like** the wonderful sight of the **dark and shady Mount Zalmon with snow falling on it** (v14) – or perhaps it's not **real snow** but the **white on the mountain is actually the bones of the dead enemy!**
- Then **verses 15 to 18** tell us of the **end of the journey from the wilderness to the Promised Land**

- **God chose to live on the mountain or hill of Jerusalem – called Zion – and higher and grander mountains like Bashan – may be jealous and sulk – but God chooses where He will dwell**
- **And so finally God comes to His sanctuary – initially the tent tabernacle - until the Temple is built**
- **And the people sing this Psalm in praise**
- **Application for us: It's helpful for us to look back and see the wonderful things God has done for us and draw confidence from this.**
- **Also, God has led us out of our captivity (the **captivity of sin**) – that's our Egypt – and He **offers us forgiveness for our sins** – in and through Jesus**

[PowerPoint 5-Part 3]

### **3. Acknowledges how God enabled His people to occupy the Promised Land (Psalm 68:19-31)**

**Third** – in verses 19 to 31 – the Psalm acknowledges how God enabled His people to occupy the Promised Land

- **Verse 18 describes** how when God finally ascended to the mount Zion to dwell there – He had His people – the rescued captives from Egypt in tow – and with them were lots of gifts – all the **plunder** from those **enemies** who'd tried to kill God's people on the way
- **And so, David acknowledges that God is to be praised – He is their ultimate Saviour (v19) and He is a God who saves people from death (v20)**
- **He is a God who bears their daily burdens** (v19)
- **He is a God who will crush His people's enemies** (vv21-23)
- **And so, they will be able to march in procession up the mountain of Zion to God's Temple – singing this Psalm and praising God** (vv24-27)

- This section finishes – in **vv28-31** – acknowledging how powerful and mighty God is – and **how great is His name and His temple** – and **how great God has made Israel** – so much so that kings from other nations will come to Jerusalem and bring gifts. We saw this in Solomon’s time.

- **Application for us: God crushes our enemy** – Satan – who introduced sin and death as our enemies – **God defeats sin and death through His Son – Jesus – through His death & resurrection** - and God enables us to go into our Promised Land (which is Heaven)

[PowerPoint 6-Part 4]

#### **4. Praise God for what He has done (Psalm 68:32-35)**

Which brings us to the **fourth** part of the Psalm – verses 32 to 35

- The **psalm ends by telling everyone to praise God.**
- **Why wouldn’t we praise God** – after all He has done!
- Again, God is described as the **Cloud Rider in verse 33** – **the one who rides across the highest heavens** – **who thunders with a mighty voice!**
- And it finishes in **verse 35** with **God in His true “sanctuary”** which is actually Heaven – **where He reigns - sovereign over all things** – and gives power and strength to His people!
- **Application for us: Are we praising God for all He has done and continues to do?**  
Or do we forget? Or even take it all for granted?

(pause)

- **Application for us:** God gives us His power and strength – through His Son, through His Word and through His Spirit.

(pause)

[PowerPoint 7-What Jesus does]

## What Jesus, The Messiah, does for His People (Psalm 68, Ephesians 4:7-8)

But remember the **Psalm is also about Jesus – The Messiah.**

- If we look at Psalm 68 **verse 18** again – which says:

*When you ascended on high, you took many captives; you received gifts from people, even from the rebellious—that you, LORD God, might dwell there.*

- That verse is **quoted by the Apostle Paul** in our NT reading from Ephesians 4 **verses 7-8** which say:

*<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”*

- You see the **Apostle Paul understands the whole story of Psalm 68** from Egypt to Zion – as being a picture of the grace of our Lord Jesus and His saving work.
- Paul sees Jesus as the one bringing people out of captivity of their sin and sees Jesus as being their Saviour – He is the One who saves people from death for their sin
- And, Paul sees God - represented by the Ark - going up to the Hill of Zion in Jerusalem - as **foreshadowing another great going up** – and **that great going up** - is the **Ascension of Jesus** – after His victory on the cross - and after His victory of resurrection – **Jesus went up** – He **Ascended to Heaven** into His sanctuary – And made all those who were captive of sin - free and forgiven
- And how did Jesus go up?
- Yes, **you’ve guessed it** – He went up in a **cloud!** (Acts 1:9) – **Jesus is the Cloud Rider!**
- And Paul says **Jesus gave gifts to His people** through His ascension
- Clearly all who believe in Jesus **receive the gift of grace and salvation** – and receive the gift of forgiveness and eternal life
- But Paul has another gift in mind here - the **gift of the Holy Spirit**

- Jesus sent the **Holy Spirit** - **poured out at Pentecost** [that's why this Psalm is sung at Pentecost]
- At Pentecost - **The Holy Spirit was poured out** - first on all the apostles and then on the people as they believed – in fact 3000 people believed in one day (Acts 2:38-41)
- **Application for us: We too have that gift of the Holy Spirit** – poured out on each one of us - as we believe in Jesus. It's the **Holy Spirit** – that **shows** us the truth – that **teaches us all things** about God and His Son – that **reminds us of what Jesus taught** – and **guides us in right living**. We **must walk and live by the Spirit** – **listen to the Spirit's prompting and leading and correction!**

### **Our Response (Ephesians 4:1-6)**

#### **[PowerPoint 8-Our Response]**

So how should we respond to this grace from Jesus – **the Cloud Rider** – this morning

- The **Apostle Paul tells us in our NT Reading – Ephesians 4:1-6**
  - **Live a life worthy of the gift of grace** - we have been given by Jesus
  - We are to **be humble and gentle** – not proud and arrogant and aggressive
  - We are to **be patient with one another** – showing love as we bear each other's struggles
  - We are to **keep unity and peace** – not disunity and conflict
  - Why?
  - Because we are all part of one spiritual body of Jesus – and have the same Holy Spirit working in each one of us – and we share the same faith in Jesus – **the Cloud Rider**
- That is why David can say in his psalm (vv32-33)  
*Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord, to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens, who thunders with mighty voice.*

Let's pray...

*Father God, we thank and praise you for all you have done and continue to do in our lives.*

*We look forward with confidence to what you will do in the future.*

*Thank you for sending Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, to lead us out of the captivity of our sin – and in His grace to grant us forgiveness and eternal life.*

*Help us to respond this morning in constant praise of you – and live a life worthy of the calling we have received as one of Jesus' followers. In His precious name, we pray. Amen.*

### **Benediction (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)**

Let's finish with these wonderful words from the Apostle Paul from 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

Remember I said – I'd love to be able to ride/fly through the clouds.

Well one day I will.

*<sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And so, we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words. AMEN.*