

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAISE
LESSON TEN: PRAISE YE THE LORD

by Sandy Harber

"Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord." Psalm 113:1

Hallelujah. In our English Bibles the Hebrew word "Hallelujah" is translated "Praise ye the LORD." Literally, the translation should be "Praise ye Jah." "Jah," like Jehovah, is one of God's names that means "Self-existent One." It is God's name as revealed to Moses as "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Because of the third commandment, which warns against taking the Lord's name in vain, the Hebrew people did not speak His name. Perhaps for the same reason, the King James Version translators chose to substitute "LORD" (in all caps) for "Jehovah" (or "Yahweh") in the text.

Hallelujah is the key word in the book of Psalms. It occurs 23 times in Psalms 104 to 150 as short doxologies, usually at the beginning or the end (or both) of the psalm. Psalms 113 - 118 are known as the Common Hallel (praise) or Egyptian Hallel. The "Egyptian" label comes from Psalm 114 which describes Israel's exodus experience. Jewish families would sing the Egyptian Hallel at night in their homes as part of their Passover celebration. Psalms 113 and 114 were sung before the Pascal supper was eaten and, then, psalms 115 - 118 were sung after the meal had ended. Today, Jewish families continue to celebrate Passover in their homes much as they did in Jesus' day.

The Egyptian Hallel Psalms were sung in the Temple during the celebrations of Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and the Dedication of the Temple. The Levitical Singers would lead the worshippers in praising the Lord with these psalms. During Passover the Levitical Choir would lead the people in singing the Hallel while the blood of the slain lambs was poured out at the base of the Brazen Altar. Every first line of a psalm was sung by the Levitical Singers, then repeated by the worshippers. After the choir sang each subsequent verse the people respond "Hallelujah" or "Praise ye the Lord." When the last psalm (118) was sung, the worshippers repeated not only all of verse 1 but all of verses 25 and 26 as well.

"Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord."

Psalm 118 was the hymn that Jesus and His disciples sang before they went to the Garden of Gethsemane after their Passover supper was eaten (Mt. 26:30). It can be divided into four sections, each of which leaves us with beneficial instructions. Verses 1-4 tells us to give thanks to the Lord at all times: *"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever" (v. 1)*. Mercy is what happens when God does not give the sinner what he deserves. The punishment earned is not meted out. In its place God gives His grace - blessings the sinner does not deserve. How can we not give thanks for that?

Verses 5-14 instructs us to trust in the Lord in every circumstance: *"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man" (v. 8)*. If we believe that God is in control and whatever happens is His will, we can relax and be at peace. Even when the outcome is not what we hoped for. Even when we don't understand. Trust means relying on God's wisdom and goodness and accepting the outcome.

Verses 15-21 advises us to glorify God after every victory: *"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly" (v. 15)*. Praise the Lord and give Him honor when He works all things together for our good (Romans 8:28).

Finally, verses 22-29 encourages us to see the Lord's hand in every experience: *"This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (v. 23)*. God is working behind the scenes to bring about a beneficial outcome according to His will. We just need eyes that can see His work.

Read the six Egyptian Hallel, or Praise, Psalms. They will uplift you. You will want to "Praise the Lord."

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24