

ACTS – Adoration/Confession/Thanksgiving/Supplication

Incomparable in Greatness and Compassion

This is the first in a series of Psalms, 113-118, known in Jewish tradition as “the hallel.” The psalms in this series are associated with several of the major festivals and are called “the Egyptian hallel” in the context of Passover. These psalms praise God for His kindness. Psalms 113-114 are recited before the family Passover meal, and Psalms 115-118 at the conclusion of the meal.

Psalm 113 is a hymn of praise composed as a symmetric statement of the majesty and mercy of the Lord.

Psalm 113:1-3 – A call to praise

The people are being reminded that praise must be central in their worship.

The number of times “praise” is used in the first three verses.

What is the object of our praise? His name is the mode of God’s presence for the congregation. His name bears His identity and all that goes with it.

“You His servants” – the whole congregation. Those who are called by God and made a choice to follow Him. Our choice is that we call him “Our God”. Our chief service is to praise the Lord.

What are the parameters of our praise? Unlimited by space and time:

- A name to reverberate for all time to come (2)
- To embrace the whole world from east to west – the King of the Universe (3)
- Over all the nations, in Heaven and on earth (4)

Psalm 113:4-6 – the body of the hymn – the exaltation

These verses speak of the incomparable greatness of the Lord.

The focus is the rhetorical question in verse 5a – Who is like the Lord our God?

The answer:

A statement of faith that no other power ranks with the Lord.

- He is seated on high – the King of Kings
- He is the one who looks down – literally “who humbles Himself to look”.
- This is a look which leads to action and responds to human need.
- Isaiah 40:9-12

Psalm 113:7-9 – The God who cares and has compassion for us. He uses His superiority to help the inferior. He interferes in the settled circumstances of society and family to create new and surprising possibilities.

Two pictures:

- (1) The poor and needy which recalls the Israelites groaning in slavery in Egypt and raising to God their cry for help. Exodus 2:23 – they cried out, their cry for help went up to God; Isaiah 40
- (2) The miracle of the childless woman becoming unexpectedly the mother of a large family – the rebirth of Israel after the barren years of exile. Isaiah 54:1-3.

The psalm ends as it began – Praise the Lord

A psalm that would have been the first sung by Jesus and the disciples in the celebration of their last supper. The God who interfered to help us.

Praise the LORD.