

In this Psalm, David appears to be recalling the history of the nation as they passed through the wilderness and expecting God to be the same God as He was in day and circumstances. That is a good thing for us to do, because God never changes. His heart will forever be the same perfect heart of goodness, mercy, and righteousness (Malachi 3:6). Remind yourself what He has done in Scripture and in your own life.

¹ God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him! ² As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! Psalm 68:1-2 (ESV) The origin of this first verse of this psalm is [Numbers 10:35](#). When the cloud of the LORD lifted from the tabernacle in the wilderness, Moses would recite verse 1. It was God that enabled Israel to defeat their enemies ([Deuteronomy 9:3](#)). In Moses' final words to the nation, he told them that the other nations' rock was not like their Rock ([Deuteronomy 32:35](#)). In other words, Israel had Almighty God going before them. Their enemies could never prevail. The rock they lean on is an idol made of stone. The Rock of Israel is the Living God who is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is unchanging. He is their dwelling place forever and underneath are His everlasting arms ([Deuteronomy 33:27](#)). So David encourages himself with the words of Moses.

From verse 16 we see that David has moved the Tabernacle to Mount Zion. *¹⁶ Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the LORD will dwell forever? ^{17b} ...Sinai is now in the sanctuary.* Psalm 68:16,17b (ESV) The dwelling of God is now that innermost room of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies ([1Samuel 6:16](#)). That is the place from which David is pleading for God to arise and scatter his enemies. But as we'll see later in the Psalm, this also applies to the ascension of Jesus into heaven. Dare we call Him God? Absolutely and without hesitation!

The One that was in the cloud in the wilderness was referred to as God going before them ([Exodus 13:21](#)). That is what verse 7 is referring to. *⁷ O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah ⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.* Psalm 68:7-8 (ESV) The LORD appeared in the cloud ([Deuteronomy 31:15](#)). It was a sign of His presence returning to the Tabernacle. But God is a spirit, invisible, and whose glory alone we behold at the risk of our physical life ([Exodus 33:20](#)). The Jews call the manifestations of God in the Old Testament "the Prince of Countenances", but we call Him the pre-incarnate Christ. Jesus reminds us that He and the Father are one ([John 10:30](#)).

Commented [notes1]: Malachi 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed."

Commented [notes2]: Numbers 10:35 (ESV)

³⁵ And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you."

Commented [notes3]: Deuteronomy 9:3 (ESV)

³ Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

Commented [notes4]: Deuteronomy 32:31 (ESV)

³¹ For their rock is not as our Rock; our enemies are by themselves.

Commented [notes5]: Deuteronomy 33:27 (ESV)

²⁷ The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, Destroy.

Commented [notes6]: 2 Samuel 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.

Commented [notes7]: Exodus 13:21 (ESV)

²¹ And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Commented [notes8]: Deuteronomy 31:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And the LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud. And the pillar of cloud stood over the entrance of the tent.

Commented [notes9]: Exodus 33:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

Commented [notes10]: John 10:30 (ESV)

³⁰ I and the Father are one."

David describes God's heart as gracious and good in Psalm 68:5-6 (ESV) *⁵ Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. ⁶ God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.* Our prayers often speak of what God already knows to remind ourselves of His wonderful nature. God is for the weak, the orphan, the widow, the lonely, and the prisoner (James 1:27), but He will not bless those who rebel against His goodness. David is associating Himself with the needy as the reason for God to intervene.

Commented [notes11]: James 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Again in verse 8 through 10 he speaks of the goodness of Israel's God. *⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. ⁹ Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished; ¹⁰ your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.* Psalm 68:8-10 (ESV) The needy that were languishing found provision and a place to live in the goodness of God. Are you hearing this? You should be thinking of Jesus. Though we haven't yet arrived at the passage that is quoted in the New Testament, we so clearly see here the nature demonstrated in the life of Christ (Matthew 11:19). If you haven't experienced His provision, found refreshment for your languishing soul, and found Him to be your dwelling place, you can do so today. The Holy Spirit invites you to enter into Him (Revelation 22:17).

Commented [notes12]: Matthew 11:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

Clearly, David meant for God to act against his enemies when he asked God to arise. But we know God the Son, Jesus Christ, rose from the grave and conquering over our great enemy, death, causing His enemies to be scattered. I'm not speaking of the mere mortals that sent Him to the cross, but of the powers of hell that would doom our souls out of hatred for all that God is and does. Those are the powerful enemies He triumphed over as the next verses reveal (Colossians 2:15).

Commented [notes13]: Revelation 22:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

¹⁸ You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there. Psalm 68:18 (ESV) David is speaking of God ascending to Zion to dwell in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, as people bring offerings for the building of the Temple. But the Holy Spirit had something greater in mind as He inspired the words. Ascending on high was more than the little height of Zion, it was to heaven itself.

Commented [notes14]: Colossians 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Do you know which mountain is the tallest in the world? You may be thinking Everest, but it is actually Mauna Kea in the island of Hawaii. If you measure from its base at the ocean floor, it is twice the height of Everest. Jesus descended into the lower earthly regions and ascended to heaven. That is the greatest ascension! And as He did so, the spiritual powers opposed to Him were led as captives.

When a conquering general of Rome would return from a victory, he would be followed down the street with his bound captives and treasure (2Corinthians 2:14). Jesus defeated every force of evil. It was “no contest”. Remember on earth how they cowered before Him and pleaded for mercy (Matthew 8:29). They knew His authority. We need to realize it! You should never be afraid of spirits. Missionaries from lands where demonism is a part of daily life tell us that the shamens don’t even try to curse the Bible men. They know the curse will come back on them. They admit their power is useless against them. Jesus defeated them all! You don’t need to fear boogie man in the night. Just say the name of Jesus and remind them you belong to Jesus (1John 4:4).

Commented [notes15]: 2 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

Commented [notes16]: Matthew 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”

Commented [notes17]: 1 John 4:4 (ESV)

⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

We know this as a Messianic Psalm because the Apostle Paul quoted this portion of it in Ephesians 4:8(ESV). ⁸ *Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”* ⁹ *(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?* ¹⁰ *He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)* Paul was explaining that we are all one body with various gifts and need to be in unity. He went on to describe the gifts of ministry (Ephesians 4:11).

Commented [notes18]: Ephesians 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

Did you notice that Paul changed a portion of the quote? In David’s case, he was speaking of the presence of God moving up to Zion and receiving gifts *from* men. In reference to Jesus, Paul changes it to gifts being given from the Lord *to* men. Paul had already written about the Spirit giving various gifts in 1Corinthians 12 (1Corinthians 12:11).

Commented [notes19]: 1 Corinthians 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

The ascended and descended portion of Paul’s explanation has been interpreted in two different ways. One is that after death He descended into hell to preach to the spirits in prison (1Peter 3:19). The other is that this is referring to the incarnation. In other words that He descended from heaven to the womb of Mary. The important point is that He has now ascended to the right hand of the Father as other psalms predicted, interceding for us there. The purpose is that He might fill all things. It is that the glory of the Lord may fill the whole earth (Isaiah 6:3). His kingdom will come and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Commented [notes20]: 1 Peter 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,

Commented [notes21]: Isaiah 6:3 (ESV)

³ And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Commented [notes22]: Matthew 6:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

In the final portion of verse 18, we have the expression, *“that the LORD God may dwell there.”* I believe that is what Paul was saying when he wrote, *that he might fill all things.* Jesus said in John 14:23 (ESV) *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.* And that brings us back to the theme of the psalm, God coming forth from His dwelling place to work on the behalf of the needy, to be their provision. The big difference is that the tent is not the one on Mount Zion, but the tent of your body (2Corinthians 5:1).

Commented [notes23]: 2 Corinthians 5:1 (ESV)

¹ For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

¹⁹ *Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah* ²⁰ *Our God is a God of salvation, and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death.* Psalm 68:19-20 (ESV) Jesus' name means salvation. God is our salvation. He bears us up each and every day. Selah means just stop for a moment and meditate on that! How does the world get by without Him? Where do they turn? I don't understand how anyone gets by without the LORD to turn to, to feel the support of those everlasting arms underneath, bearing us up. He is our salvation! He has delivered us from death, the second death! Praise His name forever (Revelation 2:11)!

I know this doesn't mean much to a world that is insisting you die and that is it. But to us who know the holy God that we will stand before in judgment (Romans 14:12), to be recipients of the righteousness of Christ is wonderful relief. Justice was satisfied in His death in our place. He ascended to put His own atoning blood on the mercy seat in heaven, declaring our sin debt is forever paid. (Hebrews 9:24; 12-14) We experience verses 3 and 4 of this psalm. ³ *But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!* ⁴ *Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him!* Psalm 68:3-4 (ESV) To exult means to revel or rejoice or glory in something or someone. We exult because of Him, because of His gift of salvation and all He has done for us! He is the source of our joy. Exult before Him!

The psalm goes on to tell of the judgment of the wicked who reject Him. It then moves to the procession going to the Tabernacle and returns to the songs of God's people. The singers are in front, then the virgins with tambourines, followed by those who play on musical instruments. Our faith is a singing, joyful faith (Psalm 68:25).

²⁶ *"Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you who are of Israel's fountain!"* Psalm 68:26 (ESV) And who was it that said that if anyone was thirsty, they should come to Him and drink (John 7:37-38)? Yes, it was Jesus! I'm telling you, if you search the Scriptures you will have a very hard time distinguishing whether LORD (YHWH) is referring to God the Father or God the Son. But then again, they are one.

In Israel, a fountain was a place to build a city, for water that flows year round is a necessity for a village. Jesus is the believers' fountain. The NLT translates it, "the source of Israel's life". Truly Jesus declared Himself to be the source of life when He invited us to come to Him and drink of the water of life. Are you experiencing the living water He promised that would flow from within (John 7:38)?

²⁷ *There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in their throng, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.* Psalm 68:27 (ESV) Why are only these

Commented [notes24]: Revelation 2:11 (ESV)

¹¹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

Commented [notes25]: Romans 14:12 (ESV)

¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Commented [notes26]: Hebrews 9:24 (ESV)

²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Commented [notes27]: Hebrews 9:12-14 (ESV)

¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,

¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Commented [notes28]: Psalm 68:25 (ESV)

²⁵ the singers in front, the musicians last, between them virgins playing tambourines:

Commented [notes29]: John 7:37-38 (ESV)

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Commented [notes30]: John 7:38 (ESV)

³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

4 tribes mentioned? Those tribal areas are the place of the bulk of Jesus' earthly ministry. Amazing!

³¹ *Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.* ³² *O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah* Psalm 68:31-32 (ESV) The Ethiopian Eunuch took the Gospel to that region and today we have the Coptic Christians, the heirs of the faith that was sown there millennia past. (Acts 8:27) Nations have turned to the Lord and turned away from the Lord. Some are turning one way or the other even today. The praises of the Lord can be heard sung in every kingdom on earth. Recently believers in one of those North African nations that claim to be 100% Muslim asked for help developing praise music in their language and training on musical instruments so the 100,000 plus that have trusted Jesus could fulfill this verse. What an exciting time to be alive (Matthew 24:14)!

Commented [notes31]: Acts 8:27 (ESV)

²⁷ And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship

³³ *to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.* Psalm 68:33 (ESV) The world is hearing the Good News. And that takes us back to verse eleven. ¹¹ *The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host.* Psalm 68:11 (ESV) Announce it sisters!

Commented [notes32]: Matthew 24:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

In case we didn't understand exulting, David closes the psalm with a demonstration of it. ³⁴ *Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies.* ³⁵ *Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!* Psalm 68:34-35 (ESV) There was a hint right here at the end of the Psalm that the dwelling of God would be in the hearts of men. See how David says God is awesome from his sanctuary? But then He says God gives power and strength to His people. He is awesome in you, His sanctuary! When you let those gifts He has given us shine through you, when you let Him touch others through your words and example of His love and grace, He is awesome through you. Ascribe power to Him. Don't say I can't do it. Say, "He can do anything!" His majesty is over His people. If you are His, let Him rule your heart. (Philippians 2:13)

Commented [notes33]: Philippians 2:13 (ESV)

¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

He ascended into heaven to intercede for us and to send out His gifts that enable us to serve under His anointing. He lives in us to empower us and uphold us and provide the strength we need to serve Him. That is what it means to know He has ascended! Let God arise in your life today, and exult before Him! What a psalm! What depths of meaning! How wonderfully it was and is being fulfilled!

Questions

- 1 What was the first use of verse 1?
- 2 How did David apply it?
- 3 How does the Spirit apply it today?

- 4 How does David describe God? Why?
- 5 Which verse is quoted in the New?
- 6 How did Paul change it? Why did he?
- 7 Why is the end of verse 18 special?
- 8 Why do we exult before the LORD?
- 9 Who is our fountain?
- 10 How is verse 32 being fulfilled?