

And After Singing A Hymn Part III

Christ's Mission to the World and How I Can Know

Psalm 117:1 Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!

² For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 118:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for **his steadfast love endures forever!**

² Let Israel say, "**His steadfast love endures forever.**"

³ Let the house of Aaron say, "**His steadfast love endures forever.**"

⁴ Let those who fear the LORD say, "**His steadfast love endures forever.**"

⁵ Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free.

⁶ The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?

⁷ The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

¹⁰ All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!

¹¹ They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!

¹² They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!

¹³ I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the LORD helped me.

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: "**The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,**

¹⁶ **the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!**"

¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD.

¹⁸ The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God; I will extol you.

²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for **his steadfast love endures forever!**

Psalms 117-118

A Practical Dispute

LIGON DUNCAN HAS US IMAGINE the following.¹ Let us go back nearly 2,000 years ago. Not quite, but close.

¹ Something along these lines anyway. It comes from his wonderful little sermon on Psalm 117 called "All Peoples," 10-22-2011,

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=102711110133937>

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It is the mid-first century A.D. The famous teacher whom you have never met has finally come to the Eternal City. You and the other members of the church go to him in his house where he begins to teach about something you've been wondering. It's almost like he read your mind.

You see, your entire congregation is wrestling with an important theological problem, a problem that is also extremely practical, but this is old news to our teacher who has had to face the same question everywhere he has travelled on his missionary journeys. What's the problem?

Our assembly of believers is made up of **Jewish** believers living in Rome and **non-Jewish** believers living in Rome who have come to faith through the teaching of this famous teacher. The Jewish believers are struggling, because though they believe in Jesus the Messiah, and that there is no other name under heaven by which a person can be saved, they come from a tradition which for well over 1,000 years has taught them that they have to strictly keep themselves distinct from the other nations. They even have a ceremonial law that makes it hard for them to even be

able to sit and have a meal with someone who isn't a Jew. Of course, the Gentiles are wrestling with how to relate to the Jewish believers, who are wary of even inviting them into their homes.

The teacher begins his sermon where he reinforces the point that the Jews need to accept Gentile believers as brothers and sisters. Even more, he says they are **equally heirs** to the promises God gave to Abraham 2,000 years ago. To demonstrate it, Paul then turns their attention to, of all places, Psalm 117.

Think this story is far-fetched? Not really. The Apostle does this very thing, quoting half of this psalm in Romans 15. To reinforce this point, the last few verses of Acts describe the house-arrest of Paul in Rome, whose last spoken words in the book are about Gentiles coming to salvation, with the promise that they will listen to the Gospel, while the Jews are disputing this very point (**Acts 28:28-31**).

I want to explain this to you today through Psalm 117. But my aim is higher than this. I want to add Psalm 118 into this mix. As I do this, I want to ask two questions which I believe these two songs answer.

The first is, [why did Jesus come?](#) The second is [how can I be sure?](#)

The Climax of the Hallel

Before delving into the songs, let's gain some context. Recall that Psalms 113-118 are six songs called the [Egyptian Hallel](#). In one way or another, they recount for the people the idea of Exodus out of slavery into the glorious freedom that God has chosen and given to them.

When the Psalter was organized, most likely after the return from Babylon, they did two things. They put these six songs together because of their overlapping ideas.² Then they decided that these six songs should

² I discovered a very interesting study of this in a dissertation that compared the overlapping themes of Psalms 107-118. As it regards the Hallel, he cites the following information: 18% (13 of 72) of the key words of Psalm 118 are found in 113; 10% (10 of 72) overlap with 114. 31% (22 of 72) with 115; 25% (18 of 72) with 116; and 7% (5 of 72) with 117. This last one is instructive, because this number is so low. But this is only because Psalm 117 is so short. If we reverse it, we find that an amazing 50% (5 of 10) of the keywords of Psalm 117 are found in Psalm 118. See [Barry Craig Davis](#), A Contextual Analysis of Psalms 107-118, Dissertation to the

be **sung regularly**, together, in several of the feasts of Israel. Most importantly, this included Passover.

As we have seen the previous two sermons, this means that Jesus and the Disciples were actually singing these songs during the events of the Last Supper. We've seen how **Psalms 113-114**, which were sung in **the earlier stages** of the feast, had direct bearing upon the events that would follow, even during the meal. We then discovered how **Psalms 115-116** prepared Jesus, and his disciples—in ways they could not then even understand, for the events of the next 24 hours. This gospel preparation would cause the disciples much later to undergo any kind of suffering God threw their way. It was imminently practical.

Now, we want to turn our attention to **the last pairing** of these Lord's Supper songs. And what an amazing pairing they are. In some ways, the contrasts could not be starker. Everything from their length to their content shows this. **Psalm 117 is the shortest psalm**, weighing in at only two verses, just sixteen

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1996),
https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/19-psalms/text/books/davis_ps107-118/davis_ps107_118.htm

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words (8 in the first verse, 8 in the second). Psalm 118 is quite long at 29 verses.

Psalm 117 raises **the question of the nations'** praising Yahweh. Ps 118 speaks of **Israel**. But the connection between them is stunning. Both songs display **the sovereign plan of God** before the foundation of the world. The longer song really answers for us how the shorter song can even be. Through them both, the climactic anticipation of that answer finds itself weaving its way through the entire NT. It is vital to see this, so that as we saw last time, the faith you place in Yahweh might be vindicated. May Jesus be glorified as we study these songs. For they are all about him.

Psalm 117 -- Why Did He Come?

The two short verses of Psalm 117 pack a serious punch. God can say something more meaningful in 16 words than you and I can say in a lifetime. As I suggested, at its heart the song is telling us why Jesus came.

Its first and last word is “**hallelujah.**” The first verse focuses on the “who” of the praise of the LORD. “**All nations ... all peoples**” (Ps 117:1). Now, many times in the Psalms, the nations are commanded to praise him. So, this is not a new thing. The new thing is that the Apostle quotes this verse and says **it is happening *now***. This was simply not true in the OT age. The nations did not praise the LORD. Rather, they were in darkness to the spiritual powers.

The verse is **Romans 15:11**. This appears after 11 chapters of theology followed by 3+ chapters of application. A lot of this application was focused on how the church was to “get along” with one another. This included ch. 14 which talked much about the **weak vs. strong Christian**.

Romans 15:5-6 kind of summarizes it. “**May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Did you hear that? Glorifying God **together**. Male and female, weak and strong, young and old, Jew and

Gentile. Glorifying God is what Psalm 117:1 is talking about.

He then tells them that “Christ became a servant to the circumcised [the Jews] to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (8-9). He narrows in on the Gentiles praising God, because of the mission of Jesus to the Jews.

He then quotes Scripture. He quotes 2 Samuel 22:50 (cf. Ps 18:49), then Deuteronomy 32:43; then Psalm 117:1, and finally Isaiah 11:10. In other words, this was God’s plan all along. Somehow, through Jesus coming to Jews, Gentiles would end up praising God together with them.

Of course, the promise goes back to at least Abraham, that he would be the “Father of many nations.” Not of Jews only, but of Gentiles too. This, as Psalm 117:2 tells us is because, “great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!”

What is this telling us? As Duncan puts it, all peoples will worship God for his love and faithfulness.

This is his covenant love, which now includes Gentiles!

But this means that the Gentiles will have to *experience his love and faithfulness for themselves*. One cannot worship what one does not know, understand, and believe. So, the verse presupposes that the Gentiles will come to know these things personally. Paul testifies (as the church at Rome proves) that this is exactly what has now happened, as does the presence of nearly all of us in this room. Thankfully, it isn't all of us, because this demonstrates that, along with the church at Rome, God still saves Jews too! We are all his people together.

Why? Because this was God's plan that they would experience his love and faithfulness. The setting in motion of these things is what we will look at in Psalm 118. But something else needs to be said here. How can someone living in darkness, who has never heard anything of the Gospel, be they in the jungles of Brazil or the suburbs of Denver, experience that which they have never heard? It is impossible. They can't.

Everyone worshiping God today does so because *someone told you these things*. Faith comes through

hearing, and hearing through the Word. But how can they hear unless someone tells them? Part of the purpose of me even telling you these things now is that some of you might come to life by the power of the word, so that you might know them experientially.

Who is it that is called to tell people? The Apostle immediately goes on to say that he was called “to be a minister [note that language of ‘ministry’] of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God” (Rom 15:16). Now, God has appointed some to very special tasks of ministry: Apostles, teachers, evangelist, and pastors. He has gifted some with these kinds of gifts and they are especially good at using these gifts. Not everyone has such gifts, nor did God want it that way.

Nevertheless, though not all are Apostles (there are none alive today and haven’t been for 1,900 years), we are a “priesthood” of believers. As this is true, the priestly ministry of sowing the word is our high calling. Maybe you heard the gospel from your pastor. But maybe you heard it from your mother, or your best friend, or someone who knocked on your door. Church, you need to be doing this work in order

to receive the blessing experiencing the joy of the steadfast love of God and his faithfulness which endures forever in the context of Psalm 117.

But maybe you first need to experience the joy of Christ, like the Gentiles who were living in darkness who then saw a great light and followed it all the way to Bethlehem where the King was born. That light is the King himself, and you need to understand that it is God's plan to get this message to you and all you know, for this is why Jesus was sent. You experience this for yourself by trusting in the things that we are now going to discover from Psalm 118. For this song answers the “**how can I know this is true**” question in a way that is rarely surpassed in the Bible.

Psalm 118 – How Can I Be Sure?

Psalm 118 is one of those songs **I'm fearful of even trying to preach**. It is that important and that spectacular. There are reasons that only God fully knows as to why it is the climactic song of the Egyptian Hallel, and most likely the last song Jesus ever sang on this earth (of course, he did quote more

psalms in the hours to come, but he wasn't singing them like this). So how do you do justice to something like that?

First, let's get a handle on its organization. It can possibly be seen as a chiasm:

- 1a) 118:1-4, Oh give thanks to the LORD for He is good! For His mercy endures forever!
- 1b) 118:5-13, I called on the LORD in my distress;
- 1c) 118:14a, The LORD is my strength and song;
- 1d) 118:14b-16, The LORD my salvation + voice of rejoicing/ salvation/ righteous + right hand exalted;
central axis) 118:17-18, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death;"
- 2d) 118:19-23, Praise/ gates of righteousness/ righteous + LORD my salvation + chief cornerstone;
- 2c) 118:24, This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it;
- 2b) 118:25-28, Save now, I pray, O LORD;
- 2a) 118:29, Oh give thanks to the LORD for He is good! For His mercy endures forever!

While there is **no "hallelujah" in a formal sense**, this first and last verse, which repeat exactly, are but a longer version of the same thing.

Vs. 1 - Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Vs. 29 - Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

There is a particularly close relationship to Psalm 115 in vv. 2-4. It gives the same Israel/Aaron/Those-Who-Fear which are identical to 115:9-11; 12-13. They are found again elsewhere in the Bible only in 135:19-20.

The focus is therefore not on the nations here, at least not to begin with; it is on the Jews. And yet, as we saw in Psalm 115, “Israel” and “priests” and “those who fear the Lord” are all terms that are applied to the Church in the NT. Thus, maybe there is a stronger connection to Psalm 117 that we at first might want to admit.

Indeed, what are Israel, Aaron, and Believers doing here? They are worshiping by singing, “His steadfast love endures forever.” This thus the refrain of the song:

- ¹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.
- ² Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."
- ³ Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

- ⁴ Let **those who fear** the LORD say, "**His steadfast love endures forever.**"³
- ²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for **his steadfast love endures forever.**

The song spends **the next nine verses** ruminating over some kind of distress the Psalmist is experiencing. "**Out of my distress I called on the LORD...**" (118:5). Its thoughts begin to read very much like 115's "**trust**" theme. "**The LORD is on my side**" becomes a **short mini-refrain** of trust:

- "**The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?**" (6)
- "**The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.**" (7)

"**It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in**" becomes a **second mini-refrain** in the next two verses:

- "**It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.**" (8)

³ This becomes the refrain of Psalm 136, which is clearly linked to this song with such a refrain, and its previous song (135) is linked to Psalm 134, again, through the Israel/Aaron/Fear triad. Meaning? As we will see, those songs are put together for a reason as well.

- “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.” (9)

The Gentiles show up explicitly in **vs. 10**, but not in a good way. “All nations surrounded me; in the Name of the LORD I cut them off.” “Surrounded me” and “in the Name of the LORD I cut them off” become **a third mini-refrain** (all of this is quite unusual in the Psalter):

- “All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!” (10)
- “They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!” (11)
- “They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!” (12)

It was not himself, but the LORD who did this. “I was pushed hard, so that I was falling, but the LORD helped me” (13).

Salvation and song become the transitional thoughts next, and it continues the **ever changing mini-refrains**:

- “The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become **my salvation**.” (14)
- “Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous.” (15a)

Next, a theme we’ve seen in the Hallel as well. This time it is the idea that “**The right hand of the LORD does valiantly**”:

- “The Right Hand of the LORD does valiantly,” (15b)
- “The Right Hand of the LORD exalts,” (16a)
- “The Right Hand of the LORD does valiantly.” (16b)

The **structural center** of the poem occurs in **vv. 17-18**. This time, like Psalm 116, a movement from death to life is its heart.

- A. I shall not **die** (17a)
- B. But I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD (17b)
- B¹. The LORD has disciplined me severely (18a)
- A¹. But he has not given me over to **death** (18b)

As with Psalm 116, so also we will soon see here. This death to life idea is critical the entire Hallel and what they point forward to.

The **gates of righteousness** now come into view as the **mini-refrains** return:

- “Open to me **the gates of righteousness**, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.” (19)
- “This is **the gate** of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.” (20)

Suddenly, **the mini-refrains come to an end**. A verse of **thanksgiving** begins this new and remarkable section. “I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation” (21). It is a perfect way to summarize what has just been said. But then ... then we come to **a string of one of the most remarkable series of verses in the entire Bible (22-26)**, before the song winds down, reminding us that it is, after all, a communal, festival song that concludes the Egyptian Hallel, the Exodus theme that Moses taught them to celebrate with a sacrifice. This concludes with **a mini-**

refrain that ends in the larger refrain. The mini-refrain is an affirmation of who God is:

- “The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us.” (27a)
“Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!” (27b)
- “You are my God, and I will give thanks you;” (28a)
- “You are my God; I will extol you.” (28b)

Up to this point, I strongly suspect that many of you have heard what we have said about Psalm 118 and thought this is a beautiful song, this is a happy song, this is a great song to end the Hallelujah set. But behold now. What manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the sons of God.

Psalm 118 has an unusual number of verses that are either exactly quoted or directly alluded to in the NT. **Of its 29 verses, 16 of them** (or a **55%**) find their way into the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles. This does not include the reference to the entire song found in the account of the Last Supper.

Among the places it is discussed we have the **Supper, Mary's Magnificat** (which we saw was closely related to another of the Hallel), **John the Baptist's** question, the **resurrection of Lazarus**, the **door of the sheep** teaching of Jesus, Jesus' reference to his **superiority over Abraham**, the coming **passion** of Christ, the parable of **the wicked tenants**, **Jesus at the temple**, the **triumphal entry**, his **lament over Jerusalem**, all of which are found in the Gospels and are on the lips of Jesus. Besides this, Paul and Peter and Hebrews and Revelation all use this song.⁴ We'll look at the Gospel references first, and use this to see how this influences the rest of the NT teaching. As we do this, you will see how **Christ-centered** this song is, but also how applicable it remains to his church.

Psalm 118 in the Gospels

The first verse from Psalm 118 that is used is **vs. 5** and it is combined by our Lord with **vs. 21**. It is not a

⁴ All of this difficult work was done by Hyukjung Kwon, "The Reception of Psalm 118 in the New Testament: Application of a 'New Exodus Motif/?" Dissertation to the University of Pretoria (2007).

<https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/28762/Complete.pdf?sequence=9>. I'll be using his findings, which are all meticulously supported in his dissertation as we go along.

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quote, but it is a direct allusion. The verses say, “... the LORD answered me ... I thank you that you have answered me.” The echo is found in the story of Lazarus. It says, “So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me...’” (John 11:41-42). Do you see what Jesus is doing here? He prays this, intentionally, in front of all the people so that they can hear him. And his prayer is very similar to these verses in the Psalm. While we do not know the time frame that Jesus raised his friend, it is more than interesting that at the end of the story, the Pharisees seek to kill him and then it says, “Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand” (John 11:55). At the very least, the very same chapter in which Lazarus’ raising and Jesus’s prayer appears puts the only known date at exactly the time that the Jews were singing Psalm 118.

Another time this song was sung was during the Feast of Dedication, also known as Hanukkah. Jesus was attending this celebration of God’s deliverance through Esther when we read, “The Jews gathered around him” and begin to question his authority. Jesus

responds, “The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me” (John 10:24-25). Scholars have seen a clear link here to Psalm 118:10-12 when it says, that they “surrounded” him but “in the name of the LORD” he cut them off. If this is a true link, then the “cutting off” would not be physical. Instead we read, “Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands” (John 10:39). And if this is right, then this is a second time that Jesus has seen himself at the center of this song.

Mary’s song, which was floating around when we looked at Psalm 113 seems to echo Psalm 118:15-16. She sings, “He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts” (Luke 1:51). This fits the “Right Arm” bringing salvation and doing so valiantly in Psalm 118.

Back in John 10 again, Jesus begins talking about the door. He says, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:9). This is so important it becomes one of the last things we read in the entire Bible, “Blessed are those who ... enter the city by the gates” (Rev 22:14). Have you ever wondered why he said this

or if it same from somewhere? Learn this lesson, friends. **There is virtually nothing in the NT that isn't coming from somewhere in the OT.** This is on purpose, so that you might know and believe that the things it says about Jesus and salvation are in fact true. **Psalm 118:20** says, “**This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.**” A man who did his dissertation on these Psalm 118/NT connections writes, “**The majority of scholars suggest that there is a possibility of Psalm 118 serving as the background to the door sayings**”⁵ because “door” (*thura*) and gate (*pule*) are often closely related (it is usually “the door of the gate”).

Finally, we come to the verses we have not yet looked at explicitly. The first is **Psalm 118:22**. It is very well known. “**The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.**” In all Mark and Luke, Jesus alludes to this verse as proof of his impending death. “**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised**” (**Luke 9:22**). You may have been thinking I was going to

⁵ Kwon, 226-27.

focus on the “cornerstone” part. No. Jesus is focusing on the “**rejected**” part (read it again).

This is where the center of the poem and the center of the entire Hallel as we saw last week becomes so important. The center of Psalm 18 reads, “I shall not **die**, but I shall live” (Ps 118:17). And don’t forget the context of this: “The LORD has disciplined me severely” (18) and “Out of my distress I called on the LORD” (2). The center of the entire six-song set the same, “I will walk before the LORD in the land of the **living**” (Ps 116:9). And again its context. “I believed, even when I spoke: ‘I am greatly afflicted ... all mankind are liars’ (10-11). Same thing in both places.

The “**cornerstone**” part, which is much more familiar, is found in the parable of **the wicked tenants**. “Have you not read this Scripture: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Mark 12:10-11; this also includes Psalm 118:23). What is this parable about? A man is leasing his vineyard to some tenants—the Jews. He then goes away. When the season is right, he sends a servant to get the fruit from the vineyard. But they beat him

mercilessly and sent him away empty-handed. So, he sent another servant; they did the same thing. He sent another, but they killed this one. Every time he sent a new servant, they either beat him or killed him.

Finally, he said, I'll sent **my beloved son**, thinking that they would respect him. But no. This only tempted them more, for they said, "**He is the heir. Let's kill him and we will get his inheritance.**" They did so, and this was to fulfill **Psalm 118:22-23**. Apparently, it was in fact being read as a Messianic prophecy by the Jews themselves.⁶

Next, we come to the very well known, "**This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it**" (**Ps 118:24**) verse. Many people have this verse as a plaque on their wall. But few know what it is actually talking about. It isn't any old day, as if the verse were simply acknowledging that today is a new day, and since God let the sun rise again, let's be thankful. That isn't a bad thing, of course. But it isn't what the verse is talking about.

⁶ Albeit through Solomon, the Son of David. See **Testament of Solomon 23:4**. Kwon has a chart depicting the Jewish "eschatological and messianic" interpretation of the entire Psalm on p. 70 (see 70-72).

The verse refers to **the stone that the builders rejected** becoming the cornerstone. And that refers to **Jesus' death, burial, and ascension**. What is the meaning of the cornerstone verse? Well, the cornerstone (or keystone) of a building is the one you lay down first, and it is by it that you measure and build all the others that go into creating the structure. If it is misaligned, everything else is catawampus.

We find this verse in three other places in the NT: **Romans 9, Eph 2, and 1 Peter 2**. The Romans citation comes at the end of the long discussion of predestination and election, where God is now bringing to faith Gentiles. But how was this possible? He says it was because the Jews “**have stumbled over the stumbling stone**” (**Rom 9:32**). This stumbling caused them to put the Lord Jesus to death. However, it was in putting him to death that he tore down the separation in the temple between Jew and Gentile, even as he ushered in the **new freedom Gentiles would receive** by the Gospel in making their supernatural captives—the heavenly sons of God—powerless. His death defeated the devil once-for-all. It subjected him to the authority of the Son of God, and in this way,

became the door through which Gentiles could now see the light of God in Christ, setting them free and ushering in the greater Exodus, our exodus from slavery to sin and Satan.

Ephesians 2:20 and **1 Peter 2:7** both use the verse to describe the building of **the church**, which they liken to a temple. Jesus is the cornerstone and now God is setting in place “**living stones**” that make up his eschatological temple—the NT temple, the church. All this is possible because Jesus has been put to death, but has now been raised from the dead and is therefore alive and able to be the foundation stone of this temple.

What then is the meaning of “**this is the day?**” It refers to **Christ’s Day**. Listen to the similarities. “**This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.**” “**Let us rejoice and exult and give glory, for the marriage [the Great Day] of the Lamb has come**” (**Rev 19:7**). But amazingly, this is something that Jesus himself says that even Abraham saw. This probably refers to the Isaac sacrifice story, which is such a close parallel to Jesus’ death and resurrection. “**Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my**

day. He saw it and was glad” (John 8:56). We are rejoicing this day because Jesus is alive, though dead and has conquered and made it possible for Gentiles to join Jews together in praising God for his love and faithfulness.

Psalm 118:25 finds itself being alluded to in a story with Jesus at the temple. “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they shouted. Now, **vs. 25** says, “Save us, we pray, O LORD.” You say, “What’s the parallel?” “Save now” is the word, *Hosiana* or Hosanna!

Along with this verse, the last verse to appear directly in the NT is **Psalm 118:26**. “Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the LORD!” This is what they sang when Jesus entered Jerusalem on the donkey, like his father David before him. “And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the LORD’” (**Mark 11:9**). This is what we call **Palm Sunday**, and its fulfillment is the exclamation point of Psalm 118 as one of the truly great psalms of Christ (the verse is also quoted in Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem and alluded to in John’s question of Jesus, see the chart at the end of the sermon).

What is the point? God, in his great sovereignty and omniscience put in writing multiple events in the life of Christ in rapid-fire succession in Psalm 118 **sure and certain proofs that Jesus is God**, because God's power made them come to fulfillment. They happened, and we are now sitting here in awe at it, praising God for it. This then is the reason why you can believe that Psalm 117 is true and certain.

As we conclude, I'll bring up two more NT passages that show that this isn't just about Jesus. It is about you and I and how we are to move forward from this incredible news. Back in **Psalm 118:6** it says, "**The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?**" This verse is quoted in the NT twice, **but not about Jesus**. Rather, **it is directed at you**.

Its second instance is found in **Hebrews 13:6** where the preacher is exhorting us to do things like "**let brotherly love continue**" (1) or **show hospitality to strangers** (2) or **visit those in prison** (3) or **honor your marriage vows** (4) or **keep yourself free from greed** (5). Why? Because "**we can confidently say that, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'**" Why? **Because Psalm 118 is true**, Jesus has

come, Jesus has died, Jesus has been raised, Jesus has ascended. God is true though every man is a liar. Gentiles are bring brought in. The church is being built. Everything has changed. And this is the power of God to your *sanctification!*

But one particular thing still plagues us, and that is our sin. Though we are told to obey and indeed have the power to obey, we often still fall short. This makes the first instance so special. And it is a great way to cap off the Egyptian Hallel even as we prepare ourselves to receive the Supper again this week.

It is found in the wonderful **Romans 8:31**, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” Or, as the Psalm puts it, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Notice what he says next. “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (**33**). Ah, this is the theme of Psalm 118 and the entire Passover Psalms-set.

If you struggle with assurance. “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect” (**33**). Who is to condemn? (**34**). No one, because Jesus “is the one who

died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who is indeed interceding for us.” He hears our prayers as the Psalm says.

What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger or sword? (35). No. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, no things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation [including yourself and your sin], will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:37-39).

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Praise the LORD.

Psalm 118 in the NT ⁷		
	PSALM 118	NEW TESTAMENT
118		THE LORD'S SUPPER Mk 14:26; Mt 26:30
5	Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free.	RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS Jn 11:41-42
21	I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.	
6	The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?	GOD'S LOVE IN CHRIST JESUS Rom 8:31 THE COMMUNAL OBLIGATIONS Heb 13:6
10-12	All nations surrounded me; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!	THE FEAST OF DEDICATION Jn 10:24-25

⁷ Hyukjung Kwon, “The Reception of Psalm 118 in the New Testament: Application of a ‘New Exodus Motif/?’” Dissertation to the University of Pretoria (2007). <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/28762/Complete.pdf?sequence=9>

	They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side; in the name of the LORD I cut them off! They surrounded me like bees; they went out like a fire among thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off!"	
15-16	Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly, the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!"	THE MAGNIFICAT Lk 1:51
17-18	I shall not die , but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. ¹⁸ The LORD has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death .	PAUL'S APPEAL FOR AN OPEN HEART 2Co 6:9
20	This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.	THE DOOR OF SHEEP Jn 10:9 THE LAST PARENESIS Rev 22:14
22	The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.	THE PASSION PREDICTION Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22; 17:25 ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF Rom 9:32-33 ONE IN CHRIST Eph 2:20 THE LIVING STONE AND A CHOSEN PEOPLE 1 Pet 2:7
22-23	The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.	THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED TENANTS Mk 12:10-11; Mt 21:42; Lk 20:17
24	This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it .	THE PRIORITY OF JESUS OVER ABRAHAM John 8:56 THE HEAVENLY THRONE-ROOM AUDITION Rev 19:7
25	Save us, we pray , ⁸ O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!	JESUS AT THE TEMPLE Matt 21:15
26	Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.	THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY Mk 11:9; Mt 21:9; Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13 THE LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM Mt 23:39; Lk 13:35 JOHN THE BAPTIST'S QUESTION Mt 11:3; Lk 7:19

⁸ "Hosanna," a transliteration of the Hebrew "save now" (*hôšî'â nâ*), reflects 118:25's "Please, Yahweh, save now; please, Yahweh, grant success now,"⁸