

Deuteronomy 33:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Analysis

Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD—the Hebrew *ashrecha* (אַשְׁרֵיךָ) means blessed, fortunate, happy. Israel's unique privilege: salvation by Yahweh Himself, not mere human deliverance. **The shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!**—military metaphors depicting God as both defensive protector and offensive warrior ensuring victory. **And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee**—hostile nations' boasts would prove empty. **And thou shalt tread upon their high places**—conquering enemies' fortified positions and pagan shrines.

This beatitude climaxes Deuteronomy, celebrating Israel's incomparable status as God's redeemed people. The rhetorical question 'Who is like thee?' echoes Moses's earlier song: 'Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods?' (Exodus 15:11). Israel's uniqueness derived from their God's uniqueness. Peter applies this to the church: 'You are a chosen people... that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light' (1 Peter 2:9). Both Israel and church are 'peoples saved by the LORD,' objects of divine election and redemption.

Historical Context

Spoken circa 1406 BC as Moses's final word to Israel before his death. The promise of treading on high places anticipated conquest of Canaanite fortresses and destruction of idolatrous shrines. Joshua partially fulfilled this, destroying cities and eliminating Canaanite worship centers. Yet complete fulfillment eluded Israel due to incomplete obedience (Judges 1 catalogs numerous failures to drive out inhabitants). The blessing's ultimate realization awaits Christ's return, when enemies become His footstool (Psalm 110:1, 1 Corinthians 15:25) and God's people reign with Him (Revelation 5:10, 20:4-6).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What makes Israel (and by extension, the church) uniquely blessed among all peoples? How should this create gratitude?
2. How do the metaphors of God as shield and sword inform Christian spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18)?
3. In what ways does the church fulfill the promises given to Israel, and in what ways does ethnic Israel retain distinct promises?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר יְיָ	יִשְׂרָאֵל ל	מִי	כִּמּוֹךְ	עַם	נוֹשֵׁעַ
Happy	art thou O Israel	H4310	H3644	who is like unto thee O people	saved
H835	H3478			H5971	H3467
בְּיְהוָה ה	מָגֵן	עֲזָרָה	וְאֲשֶׁר	חֶרֶב	גְּאֻלָּתְךָ
by the LORD	the shield	of thy help	H834	and who is the sword	of thy excellency
H3068	H4043	H5828		H2719	H1346
וַיִּכָּשֹׁשׁ ו	אֹיְבֵי יְיָ	לָךְ	וְאַתָּה ה	עַל	בְּמֹתֵי יִמּוֹ
shall be found liars	and thine enemies	H0	H859	H5921	upon their high places
H3584	H341				H1116
תִּדְרֹךְ:					
unto thee and thou shalt tread					
H1869					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 45:17 (Salvation): But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

Isaiah 12:2 (Salvation): Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

2 Samuel 7:23 (References Israel): And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

Psalms 33:20 (References Lord): Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.

Psalms 66:3 (Parallel theme): Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

Psalms 84:11 (References Lord): For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Psalms 18:44 (Parallel theme): As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

Genesis 15:1 (Word): After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Deuteronomy 32:13 (Parallel theme): He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;

Habakkuk 3:19 (References Lord): The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.