

Psalm 118:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Analysis

This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. This verse stands as one of Scripture's most powerful declarations of joy rooted in divine sovereignty over time. The verse appears in the Hallel psalms (Psalms 113-118) sung during major Jewish festivals, particularly Passover, and found its ultimate fulfillment in Christ's resurrection.

"This is the day" (זֶה יֹום/zeh-hayyom) uses the demonstrative pronoun with definite article, pointing to a specific, particular day—not just any day but THIS day. While applicable to any day God gives, the phrase in its prophetic context points to a singular, climactic day of God's decisive action. Early Christians identified this as Easter Sunday, resurrection day, when God vindicated His Son and conquered death.

"Which the LORD hath made" (יְהוָה אָשָׁה/YHWH) employs the covenant name Yahweh and the verb אָשָׁה (asah), meaning to make, create, accomplish. God doesn't merely permit or observe days—He actively creates and ordains them. This echoes Genesis 1 where God made day and night, establishing time itself. Every day is God's creation, under His sovereign control and divine purpose.

The theological implication is profound: days don't happen by chance or emerge from impersonal fate. The LORD—personal, covenant-keeping, faithful—has made this day. Whatever it contains—joy or sorrow, triumph or trial—comes from His sovereign hand and serves His wise purposes. This demolishes anxiety, fatalism,

and randomness, grounding believers in confidence that God orchestrates history.

"We will rejoice" (נִגְלָה/nagilah) uses the cohortative mood, expressing determination and resolution. This is not passive observation but active, volitional response. The verb גִּיל (gil) means to spin around with joy, to dance, to exult—intense, demonstrative celebration. This is not quiet contentment but exuberant gladness.

"And be glad in it" (וִנְשַׁמְּךָ בָּה/venismechah bo) adds a second verb of rejoicing. שָׁמַח (samach) means to be glad, to delight, to experience deep satisfaction. The repetition intensifies the call to joy. The preposition "in it" (בָּה/bo) grounds joy specifically in THIS day—not in circumstances, possessions, or achievements, but in the day God has made.

This is radically counter-cultural. The world conditions joy on circumstances—good health, financial security, favorable outcomes. Biblical joy roots in God's sovereign lordship over time. Because the LORD made this day, we choose joy regardless of circumstances. This doesn't deny legitimate sorrow or pain but anchors ultimate joy in theological truth rather than temporal conditions.

The verse follows Psalm 118:22-23, which prophesies Messiah's rejection and vindication: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." The "day" God made is the day of Messiah's exaltation—supremely resurrection day. Jesus quoted verse 22 about Himself (Matthew 21:42), and Peter applied it to Christ's resurrection (Acts 4:10-11). Thus "the day the LORD has made" finds its ultimate fulfillment in Easter.

Historical Context

Psalm 118 belongs to the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118), sung during Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles—the three major pilgrimage festivals when Jews traveled to Jerusalem. This particular psalm concluded the Hallel sequence, making it the climactic celebratory hymn. Jewish tradition suggests it was sung responsively, with worship leaders and congregation alternating verses.

Historically, Psalm 118 may have originated during Israel's return from Babylonian exile (6th century BC) or possibly during the Maccabean period (2nd century BC) when Israel experienced deliverance from oppression. The psalm's themes—rejection turned to vindication, enemies defeated, entrance into God's courts—fit these contexts. However, its ultimate prophetic significance points beyond these historical situations to Messiah's coming.

The immediate context shows Israel's king (or representative figure) entering the temple in triumphal procession, having been delivered from enemies who surrounded him (vv. 10-13). The priests open the gates of righteousness (v. 19), and the worshiper enters with thanksgiving, acknowledging that what appeared as defeat (the rejected stone) has become God's means of victory (the cornerstone). Verse 24 responds to this divine reversal with joyful celebration.

In Jesus's time, Psalm 118 held particular messianic significance. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-11), crowds shouted Psalm 118:25-26: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" They recognized, however dimly, the psalm's messianic import. Jesus's entry occurred on Sunday—the first day of the week—the very day that would become supremely "the day the LORD has made" through His resurrection the following Sunday.

Early Christians worshiped on Sunday (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2) precisely because it was resurrection day—the day the LORD made by raising Jesus from death. Church fathers frequently cited Psalm 118:24 in Easter liturgies. The psalm's prophetic words about the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone (vv. 22-23) found literal fulfillment when religious leaders rejected Jesus, but God made Him the cornerstone of the new covenant community (Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:6-7).

Throughout church history, this verse has anchored Christian joy in objective theological reality rather than subjective feelings. Whether facing persecution under Rome, plague in medieval Europe, or modern suffering, believers have declared: "This is the day the LORD has made." The verse doesn't deny hardship but subordinates it to God's sovereignty and purposes.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God made this specific day change your perspective on difficult circumstances you're currently facing?
2. What is the relationship between joy as an emotion and rejoicing as a volitional choice, and how does this verse address both?
3. How does the resurrection context ("the day the LORD has made") transform this from generic optimism into specifically Christian joy?
4. In what practical ways can you cultivate deliberate rejoicing ("we will rejoice") even when emotions don't naturally incline toward joy?
5. How should the truth that every day is God's creation affect your daily routines, priorities, and responses to unexpected disruptions?

Interlinear Text

בָּזְבָּדְנָה יְהִי הַיּוֹם עַשׂ הַיְהֹוָה יְהִי לְהָרְגָּגָה וְנִשְׁמַחַת הַבָּזְבָּדְנָה
H2088 This is the day H3117 hath made H6213 which the LORD H3068 we will rejoice H1523 and be glad H8055 H0

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 84:10 (Parallel theme): For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Isaiah 58:13 (References Lord): If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

Nehemiah 8:10 (References Lord): Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Revelation 1:10 (References Lord): I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

1 Kings 8:66 (References Lord): On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

Acts 20:7 (Parallel theme): And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Zechariah 3:9 (References Lord): For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.