

Psalms 68:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

Analysis

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him. This opening verse quotes Moses' ancient battle cry from Numbers 10:35, when the ark of the covenant moved forward and Israel's enemies were scattered. The Hebrew imperative 'let God arise' (yaqum Elohim, יָקוּם אֱלֹהִים) pictures God standing from His throne to take action—a theophanic image of divine intervention. When God 'arises,' His mere presence causes enemies to flee; no battle is needed, only His manifestation.

The verse establishes God as a warrior-king who actively defeats His foes. 'Be scattered' (yaphutsu, יָפֻצּוּ) describes chaotic dispersion—enemies don't retreat in orderly fashion but flee in terror and disarray. The parallel 'let them flee before him' intensifies this image: those who hate God cannot stand in His presence but must run. This isn't merely military defeat but cosmic judgment—God's enemies are confronted by ultimate reality and found wanting.

For Christians, this verse anticipates both Christ's resurrection victory and His second coming. At the resurrection, God 'arose' by raising Jesus from death, scattering the powers of sin, death, and Satan (Colossians 2:15). At the final judgment, God will arise to vindicate His people and scatter all who opposed Him (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Believers can pray this psalm with confidence, knowing that in Christ, God has already arisen and won decisive victory. Every spiritual enemy must ultimately scatter before the risen Lord.

Historical Context

Psalms 68 is one of the most ancient and complex psalms, with linguistic features suggesting very early composition, possibly from the period of the Judges or early monarchy. The opening quote from Numbers 10:35 connects the psalm to Israel's wilderness wanderings, when the ark of the covenant led them into battle. The ark symbolized God's presence—where it went, YHWH went, and enemies could not stand.

The psalm likely served as a processional hymn for bringing the ark into Jerusalem, either David's original procession (2 Samuel 6) or subsequent festival reenactments. Ancient Near Eastern cultures commonly held religious processions where the deity's image or symbol was carried through the city while hymns celebrated the god's victories. Israel adapted this practice, but instead of a physical image of God (forbidden by the second commandment), they processed with the ark, which represented YHWH's throne.

The militaristic language reflects Israel's historical experience of divine deliverance. Israel defeated Canaanite kings, Philistine armies, and surrounding nations not through superior military might but through YHWH's intervention (Joshua 10:11, Judges 7:22, 1 Samuel 14:20). The scattering of enemies became a recurring pattern—when Israel trusted God, He fought for them. This psalm celebrates that pattern and invokes God to continue acting as Israel's divine warrior.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What 'enemies' (spiritual strongholds, temptations, fears) do you need God to arise and scatter in your life?

2. How does understanding Christ's resurrection as God 'arising' deepen your confidence in spiritual warfare?
3. In what areas of life do you need to remember that God's presence alone causes enemies to flee?
4. How can you cultivate awareness of God's presence as your primary defense against spiritual attack?
5. What would it look like to live with the confidence that God has already scattered your ultimate enemies?

Interlinear Text

אֲרִיזֵם יְקָ וּמִ	אֵל לֵהִים	יִפֹּס וְצוֹ	אֲוִיבֵי יוֹ	וְיָנֵס וְסוֹ	הֵם שִׂנְאָה יוֹ
arise	Let God	be scattered	let his enemies	him flee	let them also that hate
H6965	H430	H6327	H341	H5127	H8130
מִפְנֵי:					
before					
H6440					

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 10:35 (Resurrection): And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.

Psalms 44:26 (Resurrection): Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

Psalms 89:10 (Parallel theme): Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

Isaiah 33:3 (Parallel theme): At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

2 Chronicles 6:41 (Resurrection): Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

Psalms 68:30 (Parallel theme): Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war.

Psalms 59:11 (Parallel theme): Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

Deuteronomy 7:10 (Parallel theme): And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

Psalms 21:8 (Parallel theme): Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

Psalms 68:14 (Parallel theme): When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.