

Psalms 68:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive:
thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also,
that the LORD God might dwell among them.

Analysis

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. This verse prophetically describes God's triumphant ascension after victory, leading captives in procession and receiving tribute. The imagery comes from ancient Near Eastern victory parades, where conquering kings would return to their capitals with prisoners and plunder. The phrase 'led captivity captive' means taking captors prisoner—a reversal where those who enslaved are now enslaved.

Paul quotes this verse in Ephesians 4:8-10 and applies it to Christ's ascension after His resurrection. Christ descended to earth, defeated sin and death, then ascended to heaven leading spiritual powers as captives (Colossians 2:15). The 'gifts for men' become the gifts of the Spirit distributed to the church—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). Christ's victory benefits humanity with spiritual empowerment.

The phrase 'for the rebellious also' is remarkable—God's dwelling extends even to former enemies. In Israel's history, this referred to incorporating conquered peoples into covenant community. Christologically, it points to redemption of sinners—all humans are 'rebellious,' yet through Christ's victory, God dwells among us by His Spirit (John 14:17, 1 Corinthians 3:16). The church, composed of

former rebels, becomes God's dwelling place because Christ ascended in triumph and distributed His spoils.

Historical Context

The historical context likely refers to David bringing the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6), which was understood as YHWH ascending to His throne. David defeated surrounding nations, led captives in procession, and received tribute from conquered peoples. The establishment of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the ark's installation there marked YHWH's enthronement over Israel and symbolically over all nations.

Ancient victory processions were elaborate public spectacles. When Roman generals conquered territories, they held 'triumphs'—parades through Rome with chained prisoners, captured treasures, and tribute from subjected peoples. The crowd would celebrate the general's gloria, and the Senate might award him special honors. Israel's theology transformed this military custom into worship—God's triumph over His enemies culminated in His dwelling among His people, not mere territorial expansion.

The intertestamental Jewish community read this verse messianically, expecting a future deliverer who would defeat Israel's enemies and reign from Jerusalem. The Targums (Aramaic translations) interpreted 'ascended on high' as Moses ascending Mount Sinai to receive Torah, showing the verse's multivalent meaning. The New Testament's application to Christ's ascension represents legitimate typological interpretation—Jesus fulfills what Davidic kings foreshadowed and what Moses mediated. His ascension completes what the ark's installation anticipated—God's permanent dwelling with redeemed humanity.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's ascension victory over spiritual powers give you confidence in daily spiritual battles?
2. What 'captivity' (sin, addiction, fear) has Christ led captive in your life, setting you free?
3. How have you experienced the 'gifts' Christ distributed after His ascension (spiritual gifts, ministry)?
4. How does God extending His dwelling to 'the rebellious' give you hope for evangelism and missions?
5. What would it look like to live daily with awareness that God dwells in you by His Spirit?

Interlinear Text

עָלִיתָ	לְמָרוֹם	שָׁבִי בִי			
Thou hast ascended	on high	captive	thou hast led captivity		
H5927	H4791	H7617	H7628		
לָקַחְתָּ	מִתְּנוּת	בְּאֵדָם	וְאֵת	סִי וְרֵבִי	לְשֹׁכְךָ
thou hast received	gifts	for men	H637	yea for the rebellious	might dwell
H3947	H4979	H120		H5637	H7931
יְהוָה	אֱלֹהִים:				
also that the LORD	God				
H3050	H430				

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:3 (References God): And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (References God): And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will

dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Judges 5:12 (Parallel theme): Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

Acts 2:4 (Parallel theme): And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Psalms 47:5 (References God): God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Psalms 24:3 (References Lord): Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

Psalms 110:1 (References Lord): The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

John 14:23 (Parallel theme): Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

John 16:7 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

1 Peter 3:22 (References God): Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.