



*A Meditation on*  
*Psalm 35*

Written by Keith Parker

Produced by  
Prayer for Israel.



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This psalm has been called a wonderful mosaic, for it is composed of references to many other places in scripture. But I am not going into all that. I want to point out the reasons why Israel (and by extension the true church) ought to praise the eternal God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do not know who the human writer of this song was, but he was truly a student of Scripture. However, the true Author is the Spirit of God himself, and he certainly knows all that he has inspired to be written down for our learning.

The human writer, the servant of the LORD in the first verse of this psalm calls upon his fellow servants three times to praise God: *"Praise ye the Lord praise ye the name of the Lord, Praise him of ye servants of the Lord"*. The word, three times repeated is 'hallelu'. First of all, , praise. There is something special about the shortened divine name, "Yah"; some believe it points to the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus. And he is surely our Mediator and the only way we have of coming to the Father. We should be always blessing him! Secondly, praise the name of the LORD, extol his character and attributes.

We are to make all he has revealed concerning himself to be the subject of our songs. C. H. Spurgeon comments: 'Let his holy and incommunicable name of "Jehovah" be the object of your adoration. By that name he sets forth his self-existence and his immutability; let these arouse

your praises of his Godhead. Think of him with love and admire him with heartiness, and then extol him with ardour. Do not only magnify the LORD because he is God; but study his character and his doings, and thus render intelligent appreciative praise'.

Thirdly, it is the servants of the LORD, who are called upon to praise him and bless his name. Part of our service is his worship. We ought to be eager to sing his praises in songs worthy of him. If others are silent, we ought not to be. His grace has made us his servants. Our hearts should lead us to be his court-musicians! Then we have reasons to praise the LORD: firstly, *"For the Lord is good"* (v3); secondly, *"For the Lord is great"* (v5). Notice that it is the of the LORD, which comes first, and after that his greatness.

**But let us look closer at the character of God revealed in this song of praise.** *"For the LORD (Yah) hath chosen Jacob for himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure"* (v4).

Some believe that the name Jacob represents what is fleshly in the Hebrew people, and that Israel points to their spiritual calling. Well, if that is so, then God chose Jacob, that is he elected the Jewish people not because of the perfection of their character. We see here a God who chooses sinners to become saints. Israel constitutes the crown jewels of our sovereign God: *"his peculiar treasure"*. If he so esteems them, then who are we to speak ill of them? In the same way God chose to save his church, not because they were virtuous, but because he is a gracious Creator, who saves sinners. *"I know that the LORD is*

*great ...whatsoever the LORD pleased that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places”* (v 5/6). The following verses (7-12) show God’s greatness in creation, but also in redemption. His creative and redemptive power is seen in his judgments on Egypt and Pharaoh, on the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and how he sovereignly gave their lands to his own people Israel. God is the Creator, owner and proprietor of the world, so he is quite entitled to hand overland to those whom he chooses.

Genesis 15 tells us how he covenanted to give the land to Abraham and his descendants. The Canaanite people were suffered to remain until their wickedness had reached a point of no return, when God activated the promise he had given so long before to his chosen servant Abraham. It is a puzzle to me that one hears and reads of Christian believers, who rubbish Israel’s right to be a nation in its God-given country, and believe that somehow another people has inherited Israel’s original right to dwell there.

*“The LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants”* (v14). The Hebrew word translated ‘judge’ is ‘din’, meaning to rule and give justice. He is the ruler and protector of his people Israel. “He will repent”: the word is an emotional one, and can indicate pity or revenge. In this case it means he will have pity on his people Israel, suffering under his wrath, and will restore them to his favour. Of course he will do this because he has in any case chosen them as his possession. The Apostle

Paul clearly affirms this by saying that in the end times *“all Israel shall be saved”* (Romans 11:26). For us Gentiles, who are ‘grafted in’ to Israel’s olive tree of faith, God’s grace equally guarantees our access to his favour, since he has *“chosen us in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”* (Ephesians 1:4). If God breaks such a solemn undertaking to favour Israel then what hope have we that he will honour his promises to us his church.

*“The idols of the heathen are ... the work of men’s hands”* (verse 15). God compares the man-made gods of the nations to his own glorious self, and concludes that they are useless. You don’t have to worship an icon or a statue to have an idol. It is religious ideas and notions, which come out of man’s imagination that are so repulsive to God. Because of the sin-nature inherited from Adam even our concepts of the divine are unreliable. This is why God gave us his written word. It is not only the heathen, but Jews and Christians who are in constant danger of drifting away from God’s standards and truth.

You have only to consult the history books to see the truth of what I have said. Read through the book of Judges to see how quickly Israel went into idolatry and unprincipled living after the amazing conquest of Canaan under Joshua, and the miraculous intervention of God on their behalf. The grandchildren descended from the Joshua generation went into fellowship with the Canaanites and fell into their religious practices & their

immoral living. You have only to read Kings and Chronicles to see how God finally had to judge a later generation of Israelites for their disobedience by casting them out of their promised land, only to promise the restoration of their descendants, not only from the Babylonian exile, but from the second exile. This is the restoration which we now see in progress before our very eyes. Just in case you are tempted to *"boast against the natural branches"* (regard the Jews as incorrigible rebels and the Christians as wonderful examples of goodness and virtue), then read church history and see how within 300 years of the Day of Pentecost the church had fallen into idolatry, the worship of saints and angels and a hatred towards God's chosen nation Israel; and all that in the name of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah!

This is why we need the scriptures to keep us on that *"straight and narrow way"*! It is within what professes to be the Evangelical Church that we see false prophets bringing in notions that our forefathers would have shuddered at. Such doctrines as 'the emerging church' and all the ecumenical compromise that goes with it; over-the-top charismatic excesses; teachings that deny the Atonement wrought by Jesus at Calvary: I don't want to 'bang on' about all these rebellions against our heavenly Father, just to say that we need to be the people of the Bible if we are to resist the devil's wiles.

This psalm finishes with a flourish of trumpets, calling on the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, the house of Levi and *'ye that fear the Lord'*

to bless his holy name. is the Jewish people; were the priestly servants of the LORD. They are represented today by those who are reconciled to God in Christ. As Peter, the chosen apostle to the Jews, said to the Diaspora Jewish believers of his day, *"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"* (1 Peter 2:9). Israel had fallen far from that heavenly calling, but the many Jews who turned to Jesus the Messiah in New Testament times were restored to that wonderful calling, for God had originally called Israel to be *"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"* (Exodus 19:6).

We who are 'grafted in' share that calling and are called to "Bless the Lord" also, for we are those who 'fear the LORD'. We ought to bless and praise him for his salvation freely given us in Jesus the Saviour of the world and the Messiah of Israel.