

PSALM 115

Heathen Idols Contrasted with the LORD.

INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (6-19-96). "God's Infinite Excellence Above Heathen Idols."
- B. As noted in the introduction of Psa. 113, this is a part of the Hallel of Egypt. It was sung after the Passover meal, and other festival occasions. It is one of the likely choices that the Lord and His disciples sang after He instituted the Lord's Supper.
- C. The division headings were used by Rawlinson:
 - I. God's Aid Invoked (115:1-3).
 - II. God Contrasted with Idols (115:4-8).
 - III. Israel Entreated to Trust In the Lord (115:9-13).
 - IV. God's Blessing Invoked (115:14-18).

THE TEXT.

- 115:1** Not to us, O LORD, not to us,
But to Your name give glory
Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.
- 2** Why should the nations say,
"Where, now, is their God?"
- 3** But our God is in the heavens;
He does whatever He pleases.
- 4** Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of man's hands.
- 5** They have mouths, but they cannot speak;
They have eyes, but they cannot see;
- 6** They have ears, but they cannot hear;
They have noses, but they cannot smell;
- 7** They have hands, but they cannot feel;
They have feet, but they cannot walk;
They cannot make a sound with their throat.
- 8** Those who make them will become like them,
Everyone who trusts in them.
- 9** O Israel, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.
- 10** O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.
- 11** You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD;
He is their help and their shield.
- 12** The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless *us*;
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
- 13** He will bless those who fear the LORD,
The small together with the great.
- 14** May the LORD give you increase,
You and your children.
- 15** May you be blessed of the LORD,
Maker of heaven and earth.
- 16** The heavens are the heavens of the LORD,
But the earth He has given to the sons of men.
- 17** The dead do not praise the LORD,
Nor *do* any who go down into silence;
- 18** But as for us, we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and forever.
Praise the LORD!

COMMENTS.

A. God's Aid Invoked.

Whatever the occasion for writing this psalm, it seemed to have involved a shamefully humiliating defeat when the enemies taunted, "So, where is their God?" Maybe it was when king Josiah fell in battle (2Kgs. 23:28-30), or when Jerusalem first fell to Nebuchadnezzar (2Kgs. 24:10-17), or when Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple burned (2Kgs. 25:1-10). The psalmist describes the idols as lifeless and urges God to assert Himself to show the nations who taunted that He is alive and strong. **[v1-3]** It was not their honor, but God's name that the psalmist wants vindicated. He was in heaven and could do what He pleased, and did not need men to make Him, and serve Him, as was true of idols.

B. God Contrasted with Idols.

This description is almost identical to Psa. 135:15-18, and similar to descriptions by Isa. 40:18-20; 42:17; 44:9-20. Coffman gives a powerful denunciation of all religious images:

"The essential evil in all idols (and images) is that any symbolism ascribed to them is a falsehood. By its very nature, any religious image is false, being a lying presentation of what is allegedly represented. How can that which is material represent that which is spiritual? How can that which is helpless represent omnipotence? How can that which decays represent life eternal? How can that which is not intelligent represent omniscience? How can that which is dumb, blind, unfeeling, deaf and dead represent any of the vital realities of God and His holy religion?"

[v8] "Those who make them are like them; so is everyone who trusts in them." The principle of men becoming like what they truly worship, is a good illustration for idols. This may be why God made this so clear in the second commandment; Ex. 20:4-6.

C. Israel Entreated to Trust in the Lord.

[v9-11] "O Israel... O house of Aaron... You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord for He is their help and their shield." Dummelow suggests that "verses 9,10, and 11 here seem to have been written to be sung antiphonally," with the response, "He is their help and shield," to each exhortation being sung by a separate group of singers. The first admonition is to Israel, the Jewish nation. The second group are sons of Aaron, the priests. The third group is not as easily identified, "You who fear the Lord." In the NT, the "God fearers" were devout Gentiles who studied the Law and worshiped in the Synagogues. Coffman thinks they were the truly devout Jews who were deeply dedicated to God.

[v12,13] "The Lord has been mindful of us... He will bless... both small and great." This is the very thing that the idols could not do.

D. God's Blessings Invoked.

[v14,15] "May the Lord give you increase more and more...May you be blessed by the Lord..." Clyde M. Miller suggests that these were priestly benedictions on the nation.

[v16] "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth He has given to the children of men." There is frequent distinctions between "the heaven" or "heaven" and "the heavens." In the singular, heaven usually refers to the dwelling place of God. In the plural, it usually refers to the physical universe, from the atmosphere to outer space. In this verse, the psalmist attributes all of the heavens to God's realm and the earth to man (see Gen. 1:28,29).

[v17] "The dead do not praise the Lord..." This may be from the standpoint of man living on the earth.

[v18] "But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore." As noted on Psa. 113:2 this refers to the rest of one's life.