

Psalms 149:1 (Edward Henry Chater) 52831

Christian Truth: Volume 17, Three Songs and Their Teaching: Israel Sang - O Well - New Song (149:1)

"I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." See Exod. 15:1-19.

This is the first time we read of singing in Scripture, and the mention of it is very significant. In bondage under Pharaoh, Israel groaned; but when delivered by the grace and power of Jehovah, Israel sang. There is no record of their singing in Egypt. But when sheltered by the blood and redeemed from the hand of the enemy, the people could sing with a loud voice the praises of the Lord. It was a great deliverance and a grand song in which they celebrate the glory of their Deliverer, the overthrow of their foes, the fear and dread that should overtake their enemies in the land of Canaan, the faithfulness of the Lord who would bring them in; and it closes with His sanctuary and everlasting reign.

As yet they knew nothing of the wilderness. Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt and had promised to bring them into the land of Canaan. Faith triumphed, and Israel sang:

"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O LORD, which Thy hands have established." v. 17.

Why should they not have always continued to sing? Why should they not have gone straight into the promised land? Alas! the people of God, full of triumph on the shores of the Red Sea, murmured at the very first difficulty that met them by the way. "They went three days in the wilderness, and found no water." v. 22. Then the triumphant notes died down, and the voice of praise gave place to murmuring and discontent.

Now, all these things are written for our admonition. The worldling has no true song for the Lord. The awakened sinner, under the hard bondage of Satan, groans for deliverance. It is the merry heart that sings. Sheltered by the precious blood of Christ, and redeemed by the power of God from the hand of the enemy, the believer is filled with praise which finds expression in song. Happy in the experience of grace and deliverance, he joys in the great Deliverer; and with a heart tuned by the Spirit he breaks forth in spiritual songs, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God!

But, alas! the history of Israel repeats itself in us. Is it not our privilege to continue to sing, and to enter at once into the promised land? May we not by faith and in the Spirit's power take possession of heavenly things? But how many of us do this?

Some of us remember the joy that filled us when we first tasted the great deliverance. Real and loud and oft-repeated were our songs of praise. But how long did it last? Must we not confess that a spirit of murmuring often filled our hearts, and the song of praise died upon our lips, or at most it has been but a formal utterance to please our own or other's ears, instead of the heart and the ear of God?

But, as Israel's journeyings drew to a close, they came to the place of "the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it." Numb. 21:16, 17.

Thus, after nearly forty years' wandering and murmuring, they were again led out in song. As they gaze upon the springing water from the well dug by the princes and nobles with their staves, according to the direction of Moses the lawgiver, their hearts were filled once more with joy, and their mouths with song. Then Israel sang, "Spring up [ascend], O well; sing ye [answer] unto it." How pleasing must that note of praise have been in the ear and to the heart of Jehovah! Afresh the people set forth in triumph on the King's highway, and ere long they clean passed over Jordan into the land of promise.

Now the springing well at Beer is a striking figure of the Holy Ghost in the Christian, the well of living water which springs up unto everlasting life. Often in the course of our experience, after the joys of deliverance and first love have been known, we have been guilty of murmuring and wandering. But when our souls are restored and invigorated, and we rise superior to all here in the power of an ungrieved Spirit, our hearts break forth in songs of praise. God would have us to be always a happy people. He has done everything to make us so. He is not content that we should go on blundering, murmuring, and wandering with lukewarm hearts through the wilderness. No; He would have us, in the Spirit's power, with songs and in simple faith to take possession of the land. He brought Israel out in order to bring them in. And He brought us out to bring us in also. May we be led from the heart to sing in the Spirit, "Ascend, O well; answer unto it." The Spirit came to us from an ascended Christ; and, as water finds its level, so does the ungrieved and unhindered Spirit lead our hearts to rise to Christ Himself in glory.

Now when Israel came into the land, from time to time in the course of their history, we read of the songs of different leaders, such as Deborah and David. No doubt many in Israel entered into the spirit of their leaders. It is also clear that they sang in connection with the temple service after the kingdom was established under Solomon. The psalmist too narrates that they hanged their harps on the willows in Babylon, for they could not sing the songs of Zion in a strange land; and this shows what their custom was when at home. But, as far as we are aware, there is no record of any other song of the people on any special occasion, as by the Red Sea, or at the springing well, in connection with their being brought out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan.

But in Psalm 149:1 there is a third song which the people are invited to sing, upon which we would like to say a few words.

"Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."

In this wonderful psalm we are carried on to the great day when Israel, no longer stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, will have the law of Jehovah written in their hearts, and be in full possession of all His precious promises to them in Emmanuel's land. Then will they sing a new song, giving all the praise and glory to Jehovah. In that day Israel shall no longer, as now, have Lo-ammi (not My people) written upon them; but they shall be owned by Him, and blessed as His own. Israel shall then be the head, and not the tail. Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the world with fruit. Israel shall enjoy the inheritance to the end of time. Brought through grace to repentance, they shall own the true Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God; and He shall be their King and their God.

Here again we may learn precious things. Ere the Messiah shall return to deliver and bless His earthly people, He, even Jesus, the Lord Himself, shall descend from heaven and call us home. At any moment we may be caught up to meet Him (1 Thess. 4:15-18), and find ourselves among the happy throng of glorified saints, a kingly priesthood around the throne of God. And there, as we gaze upon the Lamb in the midst of the throne, we shall sing the new song: "Thou art worthy... for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood," etc. Rev. 5:9. This song shall find its echo in the ends of God's creation (vv. 11-14). And when He shall appear in glory to deliver Israel, to judge His foes, and take the kingdom manifestly and reign, we shall appear with Him in that same bright glory. Already it is our privilege, as taught of God, to begin on earth the song of praise which is His due, and which, in a sense, shall have no end.

clickbible.org