

PSALM 146

THE HELPER OF THE HELPLESS

This final group of psalms (146-150) have a common feature. They all commence and finish with the expression "praise the Lord" (Heb, Hallelujah). For this reason they were called the "Hallel" psalms. They bring the Psalter to a close on a note of triumphant praise. Psalm 146 is a typical hymn of praise, with opening and closing calls to praise enclosing a description of the ways in which the Creator and Redeemer helps the needy.

This theme is unfolded in four parts:

1. The alternative to help from the Lord v3,4
2. The kind of help that comes from the Lord v6-9
3. The way to get His help v5
4. The proper response to His help v1,2

1. The only alternative to help from the Lord v3,4

The Psalmist contrasts the help from the Lord with the help that is available through man. This is where most people look. We trust politicians, thinking that the prime-minister or mayor will be able to solve our problems, but they can't even solve their own. We trust science or education to be our ultimate saviour, but human leaders are only fallible mortals, and no salvation can be found in them. Their mortality is shown by the fact that when death comes they return to the earth and their plans never reach fruition.

2. The help that comes from the Lord v6-9

Eight different needs are listed to illustrate the help the Lord gives. The overriding point is just the opposite of the old adage: 'The Lord helps those who help themselves'. Indeed, the Lord helps those who cannot help themselves. He specializes in helping those with special needs. Who is this Lord? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we see the fulfilment of His Messianic ministry (Luke 4v16-21, Matt11v1-6).

3. The way to get His help v5

We must do two things: **We must know Him as the God of Jacob.** Jacob was a sinner and a cheat yet the Lord helped him and never gave up on him. We cannot limit ourselves to only calling on Him when we think we deserve His help. Instead we must call on Him as the God of Jacob, the one who helps sinners even when we create our own problems. **We must trust in Him and rely on Him.** We must roll our burden upon Him and leave it there.

4. The proper response to His help v1,2

After the initial communal call to praise, the Psalmist arouses himself to praise the Lord. He vows to do so continually. While he refers to God repeatedly, as the LORD, yet he also calls Him "my God". It is from personal faith that he commits himself to a life lived to praise his Creator and Redeemer.