

May 23 Answers

- 1) This is the first of three groupings of psalms called the **Hallel** psalms. The word is Hebrew for “**praise**,” and it’s the first part of the word “**Hallelujah**” (lit. “praise YAH” or “praise the LORD”). The first group, Psalms 113–118, is called the “**Egyptian Hallel**” because of the emphasis on the exodus from Egypt in Psalm 114. The Egyptian Hallel played an important role in the liturgy of the **Passover**. By custom, the first two psalms were sung before the meal and the remaining four afterwards, so these were probably the last psalms **Jesus** sang before his passion (cf. Mark 14:26). Psalm 118 was especially significant to him, for the ring of **enemies** spoken of in Ps 118:10–13 had indeed surrounded him and a cruel death lay in store for him. Yet he encouraged himself with a verse from the victory song at the **Red Sea**: “The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation” (Ps 118:14; cf. Exod 15:2). Jesus knew that God would not give him over to death, for even though he died, the grave could not **hold** him! (Ps 118:17–18). God threw wide the gates of righteousness, and Jesus entered through them with thanksgiving. Truly, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118:22–24). What is the day that the LORD has made? The day of the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ, and that is indeed a day for rejoicing! Let’s join with the psalmist and sing, “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!” (Ps 118:29). Praise the LORD!