

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

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LESSON NINETEEN

MESSIANIC AND MILLENNIAL PSALMS

We closed our last study in the Psalms with an analysis of one of the Psalms of David - an instance in which the title indicated its occasion. But the question arises whether any of the other Davidic Psalms can be traced by their contents to their occasion in the same way? I think this is possible in many cases to those who make a careful study both of them and of the history of David, diligently comparing the two.

Take Psalm 31 as an illustration. This indeed is ascribed to David, but there is no intimation in the title as to when he wrote it. I have always thought, however, that it was penned with reference to his experience at Keilah, for which you are referred to I Samuel 23. Read the first half of that chapter carefully and then observe such likely references to it as are found in verses 4, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 21, of the Psalm. Such an exercise as this will be highly beneficial intellectually and spiritually.

We hasten on to consider the Psalms of prophecy and especially those described as the Messianic Psalms.

These latter are Psalms in which not only is the Messiah referred to, but in which He Himself in the Spirit is heard to speak. It is His feelings and experiences that are being expressed rather than those of the human author. We have said previously, that to know David it is necessary to study the Psalms as well as the historical books that refer to him, but this is even more necessary in the case of JESUS.

In the Gospels we read what He said and did and what was said and done to Him; in other words, we obtain a view of the outside of His life, but in the Psalms we see the inner side, and learn how He felt and how He lived in the presence of His GOD and Father.

To quote the language of M. E. Guers, a French writer on the subject: "Elsewhere the sacred authors speak to us of JESUS - of His vicarious sufferings and His bitter agony; but here it is Himself whom we hear. It is He who complains, who sighs and groans beneath the hand of the **'prince of the power of the air,'** and of his instruments; it is He who trembles beneath the weight of GOD's anger; it is He, Himself, who initiates us into all His fears, all His alarms, all His terrors, and all His moral and physical tortures. In the New Testament we see only glimpses of the terrible combats of His soul; in the Psalms we see all His anguish."

The Psalm of the Lord's Anointed

We begin with the second Psalm, which is shown to be Messianic by a reference to Acts 4:23-28. That reference might lead some to suppose that the Psalm found its complete fulfillment in the rejection and crucifixion of CHRIST at His first coming. But such is not the case. It belongs still more to His second coming, as a further consideration of its contents shows. The application to His first coming is a sort of adumbration of what will take place at His second coming. The prophets will teach us by and by that the nations will be gathered together against Jerusalem at that time and taking counsel against the Lord and His anointed (CHRIST) with the Antichrist at their head, and that the Lord will then **"vex them in his sore displeasure."** In fact, this Psalm is one of the many millennial Psalms spoken of at the beginning.

What does the Lord do in that day notwithstanding the tumult and opposition of the nations (v. 6)?

Observe now how the Messiah Himself speaks in the verses following.

What decree hath the Lord made unto Him (v. 7)? A reference to the New Testament passages indicated in the margin (Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5), will show the "begetting" of the Son herein mentioned to apply to His resurrection. **"He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead"** (Romans 1:4).

He was the Son of GOD eternally; He was the Son of GOD again as conceived by the HOLY GHOST of the virgin Mary, the Son incarnate and Saviour of the world; but in the resurrection from the dead He is set before us as the Son of GOD in a new light, and with reference to His mediatorial kingship, as the God-man. How is this thought expressed in verse 8 of the Psalm? The word "heathen," you will observe, means "*nations*", as meaning not only the heathen nations so-called, but the nations of Christendom as well if not especially. But how does the next verse show that the beginning of this reign at least will be signalized with awful judgment on those nations because of infidelity and sin? This agrees perfectly again with what the prophets will have to teach us later on, and shows that the ultimate fulfillment of the Psalm is neither past nor present, but future. With what advice to the kings and judges of the earth does the Psalm conclude?

The Psalm of the Resurrection

The next of the Messianic Psalms I will call your attention to is the sixteenth, sometimes called the Resurrection Psalm from the nature of a part of its contents. It will be found quite different in its analysis from the preceding one.

But first, how do we show its Messianic character?

By comparing verses 8-11 with the New Testament passages indicated in the margin, viz.: Acts 2:22-36, especially verses 25-28. Having established these last verses as the words of the Messiah rather than David, many expositors are of the opinion that we are justified in regarding the whole Psalm in that light. If so, then the Psalm presents itself to our understanding as one of the prayers of JESUS.

Often it is recorded of Him in the Gospels that He prayed to His Father - spent whole nights in prayer, but no intimation is given of the substance of His prayers. Here in the Psalms, however, some of these secret prayers are, as it were, published in advance!

The Psalms, indeed, have been called the prayer-book of JESUS.

This is deeply interesting surely, and full of spiritual suggestion and comfort for us.

Let us then, considering this Psalm as one of the prayers of the man CHRIST JESUS, observe:

- its spirit of confidence in GOD, verse 1.
- loyalty to GOD, verse 2.
- love toward the saints, verse 3.
- separation from the world, verse 4.
- contentment with His lot, verses 5, 6.
- obedience, verses 7, 8.
- hope, verses 9, 10.
- Expectation, verse 11.

Those who are on the lookout for themes for Bible readings will find such a Psalm as this prolific in suggestion.

The Psalm of the Cross

I feel a strong desire before leaving this branch of our subject to speak of Psalm 22, sometimes called the Psalm of the Cross or the Crucifixion Psalm.

That it is Messianic is not only assured by the first verse, whose words were repeated by CHRIST on the cross, but by the whole of its contents, which describe the experiences of no man on earth except JESUS CHRIST, and which perfectly describe His at Golgotha.

Looking at the Psalm in this light, we observe:

- (1) our Saviour's cry of distress (vv. 1, 2);
- (2) His trust and appeal to His Father's goodness (vv. 3-5);
- (3) His description of His tormentors as He hung upon the Cross (vv. 6-8);
- (4) His plea for help (vv. 9-11);
- (5) His renewed description of His persecution and sufferings (vv. 12-18);
- (6) His renewed plea for help (vv. 19-21);
- (7) the answer which has come to Him from His Father's throne, bringing hope (v. 21, last clause, and 22);
- (8) His testimony to all the saints of GOD as based on the experiences He has passed through (vv. 23, 24);
- (9) His prophecy concerning the future (vv. 25-31).

In this last division we behold His conviction of His resurrection from the dead (v. 25), the ultimate conversion of the world (v. 27), and the millennial kingdom (vv. 28-31).

The closing words of the last verse have a special interest attaching to them. The last word "this," being in italics, indicates that it is not in the Hebrew text, but added by the translators to better express the sense of the passage in English. If we omit it altogether everyone will be struck with the similarity of the ending with the words "**It is finished**," which were the last words heard from JESUS on the cross.

The thought goes to sustain the idea that the words of this Psalm throughout were repeated by JESUS during the agony of His crucifixion. It shows us His tried but trusting heart at that crisis, and comforts us very much in the conviction it begets that however the Father's face may have been averted from Him at the beginning, it shone upon Him again at the end, and that His life went out in victory.

The Millennial Psalms

Before concluding our consideration of the Psalms, I should like to speak further of their millennial character.

Take for example, the first Psalm: It announces judgment, a gathering together of the righteous in which no sinner shall be found. The reference is evidently to the resurrection, and to that called in Revelation 20, the first resurrection, the one which will take place when JESUS comes for His saints (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). Verse 5 of the Psalm tells us, for example, that the ungodly shall not 'rise' in the judgment. Moreover, the word "judgment" is emphatic in the Hebrew as if it were preceded by the definite article in capitals, "THE judgment," associating it with that period spoken of by all the prophets as the time of Messiah's manifested power.

We have already considered Psalm 2 from the millennial point of view, and may now pass to the eighth which from the use made of it by the HOLY SPIRIT in the New Testament we gather that "stupendous volumes of glory for CHRIST underlie its beautiful but simple language."

Verses 5 and 6, for example, are quoted three times in the New Testament and applied to CHRIST (Hebrews 2:6-8; Ephesians 1:22, and I Corinthians 15:24,25).

In these verses we may trace the four stages of our Lord's marvelous career as man:

- (1) "**Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels**," referring to His earthly birth and life of suffering.
- (2) "**Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour**," referring to His present personal exaltation.
- (3) "**Thou madst him to have dominion over the work of thy hands**," referring to His coming kingdom in Israel on the earth.
- (4) "**Thou hast put all things under his feet**," referring to His universal reign in the postmillennial new heavens and new earth," George F. Trench in *After the Thousand Years*.

The ninth Psalm is very suggestive along the lines of millennial interpretation.

It is a "Psalm of David," and yet the language fits perfectly only on the lips of the nation of Israel in the day when the words of the prophets that we shall soon study shall be fulfilled, and Israel shall be redeemed and have become the earthly center of the millennial power of CHRIST. The Psalm opens with rejoicing (vv. 1, 2); this rejoicing is for deliverance from enemies (3, 4); but these enemies are not individuals but nations, which are not only overcome for the time being, but practically for all time. Their name is blotted out forever (vv. 5, 6). The word "heathen" may be used interchangeably with that word "nations", or with the word "Gentiles." It does not always and necessarily mean the heathen, but as we shall discover later, it includes so-called Christian nations. These have persecuted Israel more or less for nineteen hundred years, and at the end will be gathered against her with more violence than ever before. These are the nations as well as the distinctively heathen that are to be overcome.

That the millennial period is meant seems clear from verse 7, which speaks of the Lord sitting as King, which He will never do in the case of this earth till then. The thought is corroborated by verses 9-14, where the Lord is seen judging and comforting the oppressed, and the latter putting their trust in Him and singing His praises.

I would suggest that a study be made of the following Psalms in this connection,- 46, 47, 52, 67, 72.

In the first mentioned Israel is seen to be in great trouble, but firmly trusting in GOD (vv.1-5). The cause of the trouble is the gathering of the nations against her (v. 6). But GOD is with her and overcomes the nations, visiting them with judgment (vv. 7, 8). Following these judgments there is peace over all the earth (vv.9-11). This is clearly millennial in its ultimate application.

Psalm 47 is of the same general character.

The fifty-second Psalm can hardly be read by anyone familiar with the later revelations of the Bible concerning the Antichrist without thinking of that arch-despot. He is seen to be overcome by the Lord (v. 3), and exalted over by the righteous (vv. 6, 7), whose trust in the mercy of GOD has not been in vain (vv.8, 9).

The sixty-seventh Psalm is exceptionally interesting as showing the time when the original promise to Abraham shall have been completely fulfilled, and through him all the nations of the

earth blessed.

- how is the faith of Israel expressed (v. 1)?
- why do they ask that GOD shall cause His face to shine upon them, (v. 2)?
- what will be the character and consequences of the "**saving health**" of GOD among the nations (v. 4)?
- what will be the extent of this blessing to the nations (v. 7)?

The seventy-second Psalm is very clearly and entirely millennial, showing the King reigning in His kingdom.

~ end of Lesson 19 ~
