

**THE MESSIANIC HOPE
OF ISRAEL**

Studies in Messianic Prophecy

by

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Chapter 8.

THE Messiah IN THE PSALMS

THE Psalms are the response of the inner Israel, the remnant loyal to JEHOVAH and His prophets, to the divine revelation, whether in Creation, History, Law or Prophecy. And as the history of the chosen people culminates in the Messiah as its divine goal; and as the prophetic word has for its objective the One who is to accomplish the purposes of GOD for the deliverance of man from the thralldom of evil; this Hope would naturally have a prominent place in the Psalms. And so we shall find that the Psalms are shot through and through with the expectation of the Coming One.

The inner Israel whose language we hear in the Psalms was a people with a threefold quest. There was the *mystical quest for the vision of the Face of GOD* (Psalm 27:4). There was the *ethical quest for righteousness* (Psalm 15 and 24). There was besides the *Messianic quest*: the cry for a Man, of whom Israel would be the mother, who should bring in the triumph of truth and righteousness and fill the earth with the glory of GOD (Psalm 130:17).

These longings, unsatisfied from century to century, are told out in the Psalms and are in themselves prophecies of our LORD, who is the Divine answer to the need of the human soul, as the light is adapted to the eye and the soundwaves in the ether to the ear.

In Him we see the FATHER. The glory of GOD shines in His face. (John 14:8, 9; II Corinthians 4:6). He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. We are made the righteousness of GOD in Him (Romans 10:4; II Corinthians 5:21). He is the man in whom GOD can rest, and in whom we can rest in undisturbed repose (Matthew 11:27-30).

The Messianic Hope celebrated in the Psalms is a diamond with many facets. He is not only prophetically foretold and spiritually longed for, He is also typically foreshadowed in the sufferings of the "Chassid," the ideal righteous man in the psalms, and already mystically experienced, for the spiritual experiences recorded in the psalms were foretastes of the blessings dispensed in the day of the Messiah, whose *SPIRIT* wrought in the psalmist, before His appearing in the *flesh*.

(1) The Introduction to the Psalms

The first and second Psalms, which originally formed one psalm in the Hebrew, are the introduction to the entire collection of psalms, and give us the history of the Messiah from His earthly experiences till He comes in manifested glory to enter into His kingdom rights.

If Psalm 1 describes the blessedness of the man who measures up to the Law of JEHOVAH, He alone fulfilled the contents of this psalm as "**made under the Law.**" The keynote of His human life was: "**That the Scripture might be fulfilled.**" Thus in His present heavenly life He has become "**the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God**" (Psalm 1:3). Then after a glance at the world and the saints in it (1:4-6), we have in Psalm 2:1-3, the world's antagonism to Him, which began to be fulfilled at His crucifixion (see Acts 4:24-28) and which still casts its shadow on the world, and which will culminate in the open apostasy of Christendom and the joint-worship by Jew and Gentile apostates of "**the Man of Sin,**" the glorification of the principle of human self-deification, fallen Adam fully developed.

In verses 2 to 6 we have heaven's view of this antagonism to the Anointed King, the One whom He calls His Son. Verses 7-9 declare the new dispensation, when the long silence of GOD will be broken in judgment, while verses 10-12 press home the present responsibility of man in the light of these coming events.

(2) The First Man and the Second

One of the outstanding features of the Messianic doctrine of the Psalms is the repeated contrast between two types of man, the first man who fell and the second Man who overcame. This contrast between Adam and CHRIST, the rejected man and the Man of JEHOVAH's choice, is very striking.

Thus Psalms 90 and 91 which open the fourth book of Psalms bring before us first, the tragic story of the defeated man, who is under sentence of death in Psalm 90 and the glad tidings of the triumphant Man, the Messiah, in Psalm 91.

Psalm 91 gives us the human rights of One, originally in the form of GOD (Philippians 2), which He surrendered in His obedience unto death. As GOD He "**made Himself of no reputation** (emptied Himself)"; as man "**He humbled Himself.**" He gave up His human rights, the experience of Psalm 91, when He stooped to the shame of the Cross.

As every human being is a reproduction of the defeated "first man," he repeats his history of failure and ruin. But "the Second Man" has taken up in His Manhood the cause of "His brethren," to whom He was in His incarnation made like in all things, except sin, and has glorified GOD in the scene of their failure. He goes into death for them; but, as Psalm 91 shows in the final passage, He is vindicated and rewarded in resurrection.

(3) The Psalm of the Inner Life of JESUS as a Man on Earth

The 16th Psalm shows us the ideal life lived by the Messiah as an answer to the challenge of the preceding psalm. (See also Rev. 5) "**Who is worthy?**" The answer is, the slain LAMB.

The 15th Psalm calls for the man who shall never be moved.

The 16th Psalm, for One who lives His life joyously, calmly, and unmoved, even though threatened with death. It is the inner life of the Man CHRIST JESUS. Neither poverty, rejection, loneliness, nor death could move Him.

verse 1: DEPENDENCE - Filial dependence. JEHOVAH His only asylum.

verse 2: HAPPINESS - JEHOVAH His only good. His fountain of happiness.

The opening clause reveals the "Michtam," or golden secret, of the psalm. It is the secret of contentment though bereft of outward good.

This is the Old Testament forecast of the Kenosis (Philippians 2). The LORD of glory takes the place of a man, of a servant, obedient and dependent every step of the way.

verse 3: COMPANIONSHIP - After thus describing the world of heavenly harmony and blessedness, the true country of the soul, the world of the beatitudes, he turns to earth. And what does he find there? The saints. They are all His delight. (See John 13.1)

verse 4: APOSTATES - The apostates are contrasted with the saints.

The saints are a poor people.

verse 5: HOLY POVERTY - The Psalmist will not hear of any other GOD. Why not? Because you cannot offer him anything better. He lives the Levite life of holy poverty (Numbers 18:20; Deuteronomy 10:9).

verse 6: PARADISE - "The measuring lines have fallen to him in a delightful district, viz., in the fellowship with GOD which is so rich in enjoyment; this most blessed domain of love has become his paradisaic possession" (Prof. F. Delitzsch).

verse 7: COUNSEL - GOD has counselled him thus to choose the good part, not the ephemeral and unsubstantial things of earth. Abraham had GOD for his adviser, and was thus kept out of the foolish speculations of his nephew Lot.

verse 8: PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE - The practice of the presence of GOD.

I Thessalonians 5.23. Heart, glory (soul), flesh.

verses 9, 10: HOPE IN DEATH - Such a life triumphs over death. GOD is trusted for the life to come as for this present life. In the days of the psalmist it was easy to trust GOD for the life that now is, and difficult to have faith for the life beyond the veil. Now it is the very opposite.

verse 10: THE HOPE NEGATIVELY PRESENTED - NOT sheol. NOT corruption.

verse 11: GOD'S RIGHT HAND - The positive side of the hope of the resurrection life. Life, joy, pleasure, and that for evermore, in Thy presence, that is to say, in the beholding of Thy face, and in Thy right hand. That hand has pleasures for ever more, and is never empty through giving.

Acts 2 and 13 point out the fact that David did not fully realize all that the psalmist hoped for.

The psalm was fulfilled in JESUS.

(4) The Psalm of the Cross

Psalm 22 is an inspired photograph and prophecy of our Lord's saddest hours. But glory as well as gloom are found there. It begins with a shriek of anguish; goes on to a cry for help, full of trust, and ends with thanksgiving and the vision of the world-wide kingdom of GOD, resulting from the sufferings of the One whose language is here heard. He believes that the story of His woes will provide a gospel to generations yet unborn.

The piety of this psalm is that of the meek and silent LAMB of GOD. He meets the accumulated griefs, mental, physical, and spiritual, of that hour without murmuring or reproaching the causers of His pain.

He looks beyond them to GOD, who brought Him into the dust of death, even though human hands crucified Him - dogs without shame and conscience; bulls of Bashan, without feeling, staring at Him in His nakedness. They cast dice over His garments. They laugh Him to scorn. But He looks to JEHOVAH.

At first all is dark. He is alone with GOD, personally sinless, but as One "**made... sin for us.**" He justifies the holiness that smites Him in that hour. Verse 21 is the turning point. He looks to be vindicated in resurrection. Then He will declare the Father's name to His brethren. This He did by means of Mary Magdalene (John 20) and when He came into the midst of their assembling themselves together, and sang the Father's praises, having proclaimed peace unto them. The godly remnant of Israel will come into view in the latter days; then the great millennial congregation; then "**all the ends of the world.**"

In the meantime "**a seed shall serve him,**" a people born out of His death, and marked by His features.

John 12:32 is the New Testament epitome of this psalm.

(5) The Priest-King at GOD's Right Hand

No psalm is oftener quoted in the New Testament than Psalm 110.

Our LORD used it to prove that Messiah, while human, is also superhuman and heavenly (Matthew 22:42, 43). The entire Epistle to the Hebrews is a commentary on this psalm.

Perhaps the historical occasion for the psalm was the taking of the ark by David to Zion. It meant that JEHOVAH's throne was now once more in the midst of Israel. David would, as king, sit at the right hand of GOD. But David looks beyond to One greater, whom he calls "**my Lord.**"

He lays his crown at the feet of a more glorious King, who is priest as well as king, which no earthly king could ever be under the old covenant.

The Structure of the Psalm

The psalm is divided into *seven stanzas*. In these the majestic name of JEHOVAH occurs three times (verses 1, 2, 4).

The subject is the *spiritual interpretation of history*. It begins with the session of the Messiah at GOD's right hand and ends with "**the day of the LORD**," when His enemies are made His footstool. (The Christian dispensation comes between these two events).

verse 1 *The humanity shares the Deity-glory*. All things must become the "**footstool**" of the divine-human CHRIST.

verse 2 *As Zion will be His earthly metropolis, so there is a spiritual Zion now* (see Hebrews 12:22). Pentecost was the first installment of the fulfillment of this verse. "**The rod of thy strength**" is "**the rod of his mouth**" (Isaiah 11:4).

verse 3 *The King's spiritual army*. They are all volunteers, not mercenaries or conscripts. They are priest-warriors. Their uniform is holiness. A youthful army - being constantly replenished by fresh recruits. They are as bright as the sparkling dew.

verse 4 *CHRIST is GOD's last word*. Our Melchizedek was before Aaron and lives on after him. And as Abraham paid the typical Melchizedek tithes, so must the children of Abraham recognize the greatness of this priest (see Hebrews 5:1-11).

verses 5, 6 *The day of wrath will end the day of grace*.

verse 7 *A review over the past*. His humiliation led to His exaltation. He has brought His glory out of the depths.

(6) Summary of the Messianic Hope in the Psalms

1. We see Him in connection with His sufferings and death.
2. We behold Him at the right hand of GOD.
3. We celebrate before-hand His coming in manifested glory to reign over a renovated earth.
4. We catch glimpses of His inner life in the days of His flesh.
5. We trace unfoldings of the mystery of His Person, both human and divine.

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