

CHRIST In The Psalms

by

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*All things must be fulfilled, which were written . . .
in the Psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44)*

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The Sixty-Eighth Psalm

"When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto me" (Ephesians 4:8).

Psalms 68

1. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.
2. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
3. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.
4. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.
5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.
6. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.
7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:
8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.
10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.
11. The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.
12. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

13. **Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.**
14. **When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.**
15. **The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.**
16. **Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.**
17. **The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.**
18. **Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.**
19. **Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.**
20. **He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.**
21. **But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.**
22. **The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea:**
23. **That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.**
24. **They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.**
25. **The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.**
26. **Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.**
27. **There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.**
28. **Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.**
29. **Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.**
30. **Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war.**
31. **Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.**
32. **Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:**
33. **To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice.**
34. **Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds.**
35. **O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.**

The sixty-eighth Psalm is Messianic as is shown by the quotation of a portion of verse 18 in the 4th chapter of Ephesians.

And since it is evident that this 18th verse refers to CHRIST's ascension ministry, we conclude that the seventeen verses preceding it belong to the time preceding that ministry, and that the

verses following it belong to the time consequent to that ministry.

As indicated in our preceding studies, the superscription found at the top of this Psalm, "To the Chief Musician, a Psalm or song of David," is a link to the Sixty-seventh Psalm. And the superscription at the top of Psalm 69, "To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim (or, set to Shoshannim), A Psalm of David," links to the Sixty-Eighth Psalm. "Shoshannim," as we saw in connection with the Forty-fifth Psalm, is a Hebrew word meaning "lilies," and suggesting the spring. And it is evident that the Shoshannim Psalms related to the Passover season, and were written in celebration of Israel's redemption from bondage, and her establishment as a nation under her Redeemer's care.

All of which seems appropriate to the Sixty-eighth Psalm in which throughout the first seventeen verses, David, in the HOLY SPIRIT, is singing in joyous celebration of the wonderful works of GOD in redeeming His people Israel out of the hand of the enemy and dwelling among them as His sanctuary.

Verses 18-20 belong to the present age, beginning with the ascension of CHRIST, and going on to the time of our LORD's return in judgment. **"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death"** (Psalm 68:19-20).

The tense changes in verse 21 and points toward the future when our LORD shall come to subdue His enemies under His feet, to make bare His arm in behalf of His people Israel, and to fill the earth with the knowledge and the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

The Psalm closes with a wonderful paean of praise:

"Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God" (Psalm 68:32-35).

The teaching point of greatest importance for us in connection with this Psalm is the use made of the 18th verse by the HOLY SPIRIT of Truth through the Apostle Paul in the 4th chapter of Ephesians.

Let the reader turn to that chapter and notice the words of verses 7-8: **"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"** (Ephesians 4:7-8).

Observe that this is not an exact quotation; rather it is an adaptation of the language of Psalm 68:18. In the Psalm we read: **"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men."**

Thus we see that from the Psalm itself, and from the reference to it in Ephesians 4, we have both sides of the truth set before us. Before leaving His disciples our LORD commanded them to tarry

in Jerusalem until the arrival of the HOLY SPIRIT. The He ascended up on high and received gifts for men in the person of the HOLY SPIRIT, and then bestowed these gifts upon men in sending the HOLY SPIRIT down to them, with all the gifts required for the upbuilding and completion of the Church of GOD.

Notice, too, that in the Psalm we are informed that these gifts were for the rebellious. that is what we were by nature: **"yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."** We were rebels against GOD. But the gift of salvation and all the other gifts are for the rebellious. GOD laid all their rebellion and all their sins upon His blessed LAMB, and then having not withheld His only Son from us He gave us also with Him freely all things.

Notice also, GOD's purpose in it all. It was in order that He, the LORD GOD Himself, might dwell among men. This is GOD's ultimate program. He will dwell among His people for ever! What a wonderful prospect!

Now let us turn to the 4th chapter of Ephesians and study that chapter in the light of this quotation from our Psalm.

The chapter opens with an exhortation that we should work worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, **"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"** (Ephesians 4:1-3).

In verses 4-5 this unity of the SPIRIT is analyzed and set forth in its seven elements, one body, one SPIRIT, one hope, one LORD, one faith, one baptism, **"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"** (Ephesians 4:5). All Christians are members of this one body, for in the one SPIRIT they have all been baptized by the one baptism into the body of CHRIST, and CHRIST is alone their LORD, they share the faith which was once and for all delivered unto the saints, and they have one GOD and FATHER:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:12-13).

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9).

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

The English word "unity" appears twice in this chapter and never elsewhere in the New Testament. In this chapter we have, **"the unity of the Spirit"** (vs. 3), and **"the unity of the faith"** (v. 13). In the Old Testament the word occurs only once where we read, **"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"** (Psalm 133:1). In each of these three cases the unity is the same; it is the unity of the SPIRIT. And this is the only unity in which GOD is interested. Men talk about unity, and imagine that by combinations and

mergers they themselves are able to bring about unity, but this is impossible except as it is the work of GOD. It is for us to recognize the unity of the SPIRIT and the unity of faith, and do all we can to walk in it and preserve it for ourselves and our brethren.

Beginning at verse 7 of Ephesians 4 we have a most illuminating discussion of the Church which is the body of CHRIST, and of how this Church is to be built up and finally completed.

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7).

We are members of His body, and unto each member there is assigned a function. Just as in the human body there is something to be done in each part of the body, so in this mystical body of CHRIST every member has a certain place to occupy and a certain work to do. It is a mischievous notion that all the work of the Church is to be left to the preachers, evangelists and teachers. The man or woman in the pew has just as truly a work to do as has the man in the pulpit.

"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8).

Here is our quotation, or rather adaptation from the Sixty-eighth Psalm, as we have already seen. The risen LORD upon ascending into Heaven received the promise of the FATHER in the person of the HOLY SPIRIT, and sent Him forth unto the earth with all the necessary gifts for the building up and completion of the Church as CHRIST's body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:23).

"(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" (Ephesians 4:9-10).

What we have here is a reference of our LORD's descent into Hades from the Cross and His subsequent ascension into Heaven. "Hades," 'the unseen world,'" says Dr. Scofield, "is revealed as the place of departed human spirits between death and resurrection. The word occurs, Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; Acts 2:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14, and is the equivalent of the Old Testament *Sheol*.

"Hades before the ascension of CHRIST. The passages in which the word occurs makes it clear that Hades was formally in two divisions, the abodes respectively of the saved and of the lost. The former was called 'Paradise' and 'Abraham's bosom.' Both designations were Talmudic, but adopted by CHRIST in Luke 16:22; 23:43. The blessed dead were with Abraham, they were conscious and were 'comforted': **"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented"** (Luke 16:26). The representative man of the lost who are now in Hades is the rich man of Luke 16:19-31. He was alive, conscious, in the full exercise of his faculties, memory, etc., and in torment.

"Hades since the ascension of CHRIST. So far as the unsaved dead are concerned, no change of

their place or condition is revealed in Scripture. At the judgment of the great white throne, Hades will give them up, they will be judged, and will pass into the lake of fire:

'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death' (Revelation 20:13-13).

"But a change has taken place which affects Paradise. Paul was **'caught up to the third Heaven . . . into Paradise'** (II Corinthians 12:1-4). Paradise, therefore, is now in the immediate presence of GOD. It is believed that Ephesians 4:8-10 (above) indicates the time of the change. **'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive.'** It is immediately added that He had previously **'descended first into the lower parts of the earth,'** that is, the Paradise division of Hades. During the present church-age the saved who died are **'absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord'** (II Corinthians 5:8). The wicked dead in Hades, and the righteous dead **'at home with the Lord'** alike await the resurrection (Job 19:25; I Corinthians 15:52)" - *Scofield Reference Bible*.

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). There is a contrast between this passage and the passage on the gifts in I Corinthians 12. In the Corinthian passage the gifts are spiritual enablements bestowed upon certain men for certain services, but here in Ephesians the gifts are these Spirit-endued men themselves who are bestowed upon the Church by the risen Church of GOD may be built up.

The gifts in Ephesians are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The apostles, though they have gone to Heaven, have never ceased functioning as apostles, particularly those who wrote books of the New Testament. Here in Ephesians we have Paul ministering to us as an apostle through his writings, and in other parts of the New Testament we have Matthew, John, Peter, etc., so there is no need of "apostolic succession." The apostles have not abdicated, but are still at work, who **"being dead yet speaketh"** (Hebrews 11:4).

Prophets are those who are able to speak **"unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort]"** (I Corinthians 14:3).

Evangelists are those who preach the evangel, that is, the Gospel, and their ministry is principally to the unsaved that they may believe.

Pastors are shepherds whose business it is to guide and feed the flock.

And teachers are those whose work it is to expound the Word of GOD to their brethren. It is for them to read in the Book of GOD distinctly, and give the sense, and cause the people to understand the reading (Nehemiah 8:8). Sometimes these gifts are found combined in one person. Paul himself was a great apostle, a great pastor, and a great teacher. But this is not usually so. There are great evangelists who are not great pastors, and vice versa. The whole thing is arranged by the risen CHRIST through the HOLY SPIRIT according to the will of GOD.

Just what is the purpose of these gifts? It is **"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"** (Ephesians 4:12). The saints themselves

are to be trained by the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers so that they may intelligently do Christian service in order that the body of CHRIST might be built up. According to GOD's plan every local Church should be a Bible training school, and it is the business of the pastors and teachers in such a church to train their brethren in order that they might effectively perform the work necessary to the building up of the body of CHRIST.

And how long is this work to go on? Here is the answer: "**Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ**" (Ephesians 4:13). The doctrine of this verse is that GOD is now at work creating a body for CHRIST. This body is the Church of GOD. And when the body of CHRIST, which is the body of Church of GOD, is completed, then the full-grown Man here referred to will be perfected. It is then that the Man Child of Revelation 12:5 will be fully born and caught up unto GOD and His throne. It is then that the body will be united with its HEAD, caught up to meet the LORD in the air, and to be thereafter, and for ever, with the LORD (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In verses 14-16 the exhortation begun in verse 1 to 3 is taken up and completed. Here we are exhorted to "**be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.**"

Thus we have in these verses of Ephesians 4 the HOLY SPIRIT's own unfolding of the meaning of the mysterious word of Psalm 68:18: "**Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men.**"

May GOD help us to heed and profit by the exhortation!

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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