

But we see JESUS

Hebrews 2:9a

The Unsearchable Riches of
Christ in Psalm 8.

The Authentic Interpretations of
Psalm 8 particularly in the light
of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

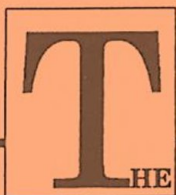


- ✧ *A case of how New Testament Scripture directs and unveils the meaning of the Old Testament.*
- ✧ *A pertinent point on eschatology, concerning the issue of millennium, noted.*
- ✧ *A clarion call to the worship of the Most High with understanding.*



HEBREWS 2:6-9

⁶But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? ⁷Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands: ⁸Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. ⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.



THE reference to Psalm 8 in Hebrews chapter 2 underlines and unfolds the possibility of the varied interpretations of the remarkably exquisite psalm of David.

FIRSTLY, it is axiomatic that the psalm brings to remembrance the special place of man at the very outset of creation. This was the eminent disposition of Adam prior to his fall. For though created a little lower than angels, in terms of strength and ability, man was God's most endeared and unique creature, as God had made him after "Our (His own) image, after Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). The Lord God had appointed, for His own pleasure, that man should have absolute dominion over all living creatures upon the earth. Wherefore Adam, before suffering the consequences of his first transgression, had all things

PSALM 8

To the chief Musician upon Gittith,
A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. ²Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. ³When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; ⁴What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? ⁵For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. ⁶Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all *things* under his feet: ⁷All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; ⁸The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas. ⁹O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* Thy name in all the earth!

subordinate unto him for his enjoyment and pleasure. It is apparent that in such an exposition neither the full beauty nor the full richness of the psalm is displayed.

SECONDLY, the psalm could be applied to fallen man. This may be the natural exegesis of this psalm. Howbeit, in this sense, the interpretation thereof, would inevitably pose some difficult problems. The psalm's relevance to our own day could be either limited or dimmed. Man's dominion over earth and its other occupants can only be procured by assertion, sometimes in a perilous and undignified manner. It is also evident that history constantly bears record that both the elements of the world (for example, natural calamities like storms and earthquakes) and living creatures (like wild beasts and marauding locusts) have often turned the tables on man. Nevertheless, this psalm can be appropriately applied to Christians by virtue of their spiritual bond to Christ. For they share His glory in the dominion of all things. As Paul says to the Corinthians, ". . . For all things are yours; Whether . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; And ye are Christ's . . ." (I Corinthians 3:21-23). However for the moment, while they are on earth, the redeemed cannot see nor enjoy this privilege openly. They only perceive it by faith. This is why the writer of Hebrews wrote "But now we see not yet all things put under him" (Hebrews 2:8b). Still such an exegesis needs to be subjected to a considerable measure of qualifications.

THIRDLY, we consider the interpretation for which this psalm is introduced at this juncture in the epistle to the Hebrews. It is to prove the dominion of redeemed man in "the world to come" (Hebrews 2:5). The privilege is not conferred upon angels, those excellent creatures that comprise the glorious hosts of heaven, but rather to believers. In the next world, which will be inaugurated when all things present will be dissolved (II Peter 3:10-13), man would be crowned "with glory and honour". The magnitude of man's

dominion will be such that there would be “nothing that is not put under him” (Hebrews 2:8b). But this honour and glory, we reiterate, is yet to be bestowed openly on man. For “we see not yet all things put under him” (Hebrews 2:8b). Without doubt, this line of interpretation has a streak of prophetic character about it. It bespeaks something of the world to come (Hebrews 2:5). It is good to note that the passage does not limit the world to come to a thousand years. Man’s coming glory and dominion would not be restricted to a span of time. It will be perpetual and sweep across eternity. The world to come is the world without end! Such is the blessing conferred on the redeemed because of the imputed merits of the atoning work of Christ. It is significant to note that this passage in Hebrews rules out the possibility of a millennium, whether post- or pre-. (*What the word “little” (v. 5) denotes in this psalm, which is explained in the next interpretation, further confirms our view of eschatology.*)

FINALLY, we see the messianic interpretation of this psalm. It is this explanation that the author of Hebrews had particularly intended to unveil. “But now we see not yet all things put under him” (Hebrews 2:8b), referring to the latter interpretation of the rule of redeemed man in the world to come. “But we see Jesus” (Hebrews 2:9a). Indeed we see Jesus our Lord so intricately and so indelibly woven and enshrined into the fabric of this psalm. We see, herein, the effulgence of His great redemptive work; it is in the messianic interpretation that the full splendour and richness of the psalm is established. How do we see Jesus? We see Him “made a little lower than angels”: the actual implication of “little” in the original manuscript may not necessarily connote the demotion of Christ in the rank and file of the spiritual hierarchy, particularly with respect to the angels; in fact it could well denote the epiphany of Christ upon earth (meaning His brief appearance on earth). Hence “little” is very likely installed in the said sentence to mention the short season during which our Lord Jesus Christ,

God the very God, was divested of His own divine glory and incarnated through the virgin birth to suffer and die. The subsequent ascension and exaltation of Christ is what is meant by the phrase "hast crowned Him with glory and honour" (v. 5b). This aptly renders the full interpretation of the psalm. The exaltation of Christ is both predicted by the Old Testament and confirmed by the attested events of Christ's resurrection and ascension. The apostles and disciples faithfully bore witness to these events despite the fact they had to suffer grievous persecutions and even martyrdom in doing so. The messianic interpretation also affords a better understanding of the phrase "and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Now we may be able to appreciate the fact that the word "visitest" encapsulates all those things pertaining to the incarnation, the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. That this psalm has the messianic strain in it is mercifully alluded to by our Lord (Matthew 21:16) when He cited a verse from this psalm (v. 2), namely, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." Our Lord did this to rebuff the Pharisees and high priests, who being blinded by their own raging pride became oblivious to His true identity and Godhead and required Him to halt the common unlearned folks' jubilant acclaim of Himself as the Messiah.

From a certain perspective, the psalm itself extols God's Name for His greatness and majesty as reflected in His creation. Man, as God's unique creation, ought to have special reasons to give thanks to God and to declare the excellency of His Name, Which is distinctively stamped upon all creation, the very handiwork of the LORD.

Most of all, Christians as the blessed beneficiaries of the atoning work of Christ have far nobler reasons to ascribe worship to the LORD's Name because the excellency of His Name is particularly borne by its redeeming connotations; Jesus, Whose Name is above every name, — for He shall save His people from their

sins — is JEHOVAH JIREH! Yea, by faith, the redeemed's gaze surpasses beyond the glory of creation and beholds the glorious reconciliatory effects of the redemption which is in Jesus Christ — even the restoration of all things in a creation, marred and groaning because of the repercussions following the fall of man (Romans 8:21,22).

CONCLUSION

It could be that while the praise summoned at the outset of the psalm is to ascribe worship to the LORD's Name for the glory of creation, the self-same praise orchestrated at the conclusion of the psalm is to magnify the self-same Name for the work of redemption. All the earth is waiting for the consummate effects of the work of redemption which will be established at His second coming. But the blessed prospect of redemption is endorsed by the seal bearing the Name of Christ. Historically this is ratified by the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. All things are now "under His feet". For this is what Christ's ascension implies. As Peter puts it in his first epistle, when he speaks of Christ, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him" (I Peter 3:22). But the people who are owned of Christ share (in a sense, by proxy) His glory of having dominion of all things. This constitutes their blessedness, which ought to be employed as a platform to magnify and hallow God's sacred Name. Their blessedness will be further enlarged when all things will be visibly subjected to them in the world to come after a comparatively short or "little" time here in this world. This privilege is to be enjoyed by Christians without cessation, yea, for all eternity! Wherefore when we anticipate the glorious advent of Christ and its blessed consequences upon the redeemed and the rest of His handiwork, let us join the psalmist in the majestic final holy strain:

"O LORD our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth!" Amen.



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