

Fragmentary Thoughts and Reflections (Volume 1)

P.B. (March 2023)

- 1. Glimpses Of Christ As Seen Through The 'Song of Degrees' (Psalm 120 – Psalm 134)**
 - 2. A Sample Thought About The Jewish Remnant Discussed In A Meeting**
 - 3. The Duality Of Divine Purposes In History: Psalm 135 and Psalm 136**
 - 4. How Do You Proceed To The 'Hallelujah Psalms'?**
 - 5. Thoughts Reflected In Worship On The Lord's Day Morning**
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1. Glimpses Of Christ As Seen Through The 'Song of Degrees' (Psalm 120 – Psalm 134)

P.B. (03/23)

The 'Song of Degrees' is a collection of 15 Psalms, from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134. Let us briefly study glimpses of Christ's work and glory through these Psalms prayerfully.

Firstly, Psalm 120 to Psalm 125, presents to us, the divine dealings of God with Israel, on the ground of promises. But these promises are not to be confused with blessings under the law, but promises with respect to a situation that already has assumed disobedience under the law – since it was a promise of restoration from captivity. Captivity was the curse for disobedience under the law, but here, we have divine activity elevating man to the comprehension of divine counsels, that are affected when man has failed under the law. It is the promises under grace against man's hopelessness. In a corporate sense, Israel lost all favour under the law, and were taken captive, but now they are shown promises that can answer to them in this situation of failure under the law. It is the foresight of dispensational grace. The blessed vessel by which, this grace is to be pronounced is still undisclosed. We proceed ahead.

Secondly, Psalm 126 presents the medium of this whole dialogue on the gospel of grace - 'the precious seed' as it is referred to in verse 6.

The message of grace (precious seed) through Christ is sown in the hearts of men, by those who laboured in great tumultuous times: 'they that sow in tears...'. This is true of our Christian age in principle, where evangelists are met with great carnal opposition, although this in antitype, refers to the proclamation of Christ's gospel and the kingdom gospel during the apocalypse, where after the rapture, the Jewish remnant is actively associated with their dealings on earth.

Thirdly, Psalm 127 and 128 – kingdom blessings are enjoyed by faith. Children become an heritage of the Lord's testimony in His Kingdom. This would have become true had the nation of Israel accepted the Lord's testimony at His first coming, but instead they pronounced the curse on themselves: 'His blood be on us, and on our children'.

Fourthly - here, we enter the sublime depths of this spiritual undertaking. Christ - the blessed vessel of all blessings and promises to man (and nation) is revealed. Let us attentively discern this

manifest glory of the Lord's entry.

In Psalm 129, the Lord Jesus is revealed – but (bear in mind), He is revealed as having identified Himself with the sufferings of the nation of Israel for their disobedience under the law.

The first verse: 'many a time have they afflicted me from my youth' was indicative about Christ' as the Man of Sorrows. But we are measuring His suffering, here, through the lens of the nation's sufferings, and therefore we have in the next verse: 'may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth'.

The Lord's identification of Himself with the judgment on a disobedient nation, all through becomes a spectacle of great astonishment. The inspired word goes on: 'the plowers plowed upon my back'. Christ is seen bearing the judgment along with the nation. (His redemptive sufferings are still not disclosed yet, it is rather, the glory of His love to suffer alongside the nation in her deepest trials, but in one sense, Christ partook of humanity – as Soon born to a woman, and born under the law – He shared in the sufferings of humanity, and shared with the sufferings of a nation that was under the law and judged by it. Christ was revealed to be perfect under the law, but He identified Himself with the judgment that fell on the nation according to their disobedience under the law: 'for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' (Luke 23:31).

Then immediately, the inspired theme brings in the question of absolute judgment according to divine righteousness – not merely, governmental righteousness under the law. It is man before God with respect to God's absolute claims – not just claims under the covenant of the law. This brings in the next Psalm – Psalm 130. Here the question is solemnly haunting: 'if thou LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' (v3). Here, man's sin becomes even more horrendous – as we now measuring man not merely by the rule of law given on Mt Sinai, but according to the divine majesty of God's righteousness. Nobody is ever perfect – that is concluded. But it is revealed that there is a ground of forgiveness: 'but there is forgiveness with thee'

Immediately, just before the scenes open up to the glory of Christ's unique sufferings, we have an inspired prelude – Psalm 131, in which, there is an intentional self-arrest of all other thoughts and pride, so as to accommodate the mind for the most glorified spectacle that is to unfold – the unique sufferings of Christ, which will be unfolded in the next Psalm i.e. Psalm 132.

The next Psalm – Psalm 132 is fundamental in two ways:

1. It lays the foundation of man's forgiveness before the claims of God in His absolute righteousness (not merely governmental righteousness under the law). It is the cross – and Christ's sufferings are distinguished to be unique. Observe: 'Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions' (verse 1). Observe. This is not about Christ partaking of the nation's sufferings as with Psalm 129, but here – Christ's (prefigured by David) is alone in His sufferings. It is the Davidic covenant – it is on the basis of Christ's obedience to suffer, that blessing of forgiveness is given to man (nation). As far as merit in the flesh was concerned, the nation lost it under the law. In David's line, God brings in the Lord Jesus Christ – and it is the Lord who established this ground of man's recovery and national recovery on the merit of His obedience to suffer for God's will.
2. It reveals the blessings of the Davidic covenant – Christ not only brought in the foundation of our forgiveness on the cross, but this also proved to become the foundation for God to reside with His people – the temple was built: 'until I find out a place for the LORD'. Christ by His perfect sacrifice - with infinite obedience fulfilled God's will, and this opened the ground for man's forgiveness, as well as for God to dwell with men. This is a greater truth realised with us (as church, being the 'habitation of God through the Spirit' Ephesians 2:22) as a principle, although it's practical

implications would be reflected with Jehovah's presence with His earthly people (Israel) in the millennium on the finished work of Christ.

The next Psalm i.e. Psalm 133 immediately brings in the blessings of Christ's work – redemptive work. That is the presence of the Spirit of God (symbolised by oil), through the exalted Man (prefigured here, by Aaron, with Christ ascended into the heavenly sanctuary, to send the gift of the Spirit unto His people). The presence of the Spirit brings in eternal life - which, though in its application with Israel is yet to happen, collectively as a nation, but with us, in spirit we enjoy as partakers of the new covenant.

The whole scenes end with Psalm 134 – priests and Levites guarding the sanctuary – a priesthood is in view. It is the blessed privilege of the church, of each one of us, to be a priesthood for our God because of the redemptive work of the Lord on the cross (1 Peter). But then, again, this will be made applicable to the nation in its God's appointed time.

2. A Sample Thought About The Jewish Remnant Discussed In A Meeting

P.B (03/23)

The figures of the Jewish remnant – the apocalyptic Jewish remnant are pictured in the Gospel of John in several instances, but two of such references shall indicate to us, a meticulous dialogue on this subject.

One of the two references is found early on – John 1. The account of Nathaniel refers to the figure of the Jewish remnant, but the remnant in connection with the fruitfulness of the fig tree – the symbolic expression of Israel according to divine counsels. But Nathaniel – the type of the remnant was according to foreknowledge and election: '...before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee'.

Nathaniel is then, directed to see Christ under two titles – as Son of God (v49), and then as Son of Man (v51). The remnant shall incorporate these two titles under the office of the same Person – Christ.

But Philip refers to the active testimony of the Gospel – the agent and vessel of testimony towards the remnant, and in this capacity, he features as a prototype, the call of testimony among the Jews in the end times, brought about by the Spirit of God during the apocalypse. This is one category of Jewish remnant believers during the apocalypse, who are drawn to believe in Christ – much before the Lord returns in open kingdom manifestation.

The other category – that indicates the Jewish remnant are represented in a figure by Thomas, but this towards the end of this Gospel. It was eight days after the Lord's resurrection – a whole week had passed by and then Thomas enters the scenes (John 20:26). The church age had passed by – and in a dispensational sense, a new turn is precipitated on earth, and this signals the entry of the Jewish remnant during the apocalypse. But, here the remnant under the figure of Thomas, is presented with saving faith only in connection with the Lord's open manifestation. The pierced side and the print of the nails – the tokens of Jewish faith in connection with the last days (Zechariah 12:10) gets to be experienced with solemnity.

But unlike in Nathaniel's case where Philip had the measure of testimony exercised before Jewish conscience: 'we have found Him, of whom Moses the law, and the prophets, did write' - here, in Thomas' case, there is nothing short of an open manifestation of Christ, necessary for saving faith.

In short, we are dealing with two sets of Jewish remnant during the apocalypse – a remnant that turns to saving faith before the Lord's open manifestation (but after the rapture of the church, as Jewish saints of the present church age are part of the organic Body of Christ). However, a nation – the remnant Jewish nation is also saved according to grace, but are led to saving faith at the instance of the open manifestation of Christ, of which Thomas became the leading prototype figure.

3. The Duality of Divine Purposes In History: Psalm 135 and Psalm 136

P.B (03/23)

The counsels of Jehovah are revealed in these two Psalms – Psalm 135 and 136.

Both these Psalms deal with the same framework of subjects: creation and government. In fact, the identification of these subjects in both these Psalms are to a large extent similar. But there is a major difference – and this difference, when appreciated, reveals the duality of divine purposes in history.

Psalm 135 reveals God's glory and power in creation and in government over the world – but there is no 'mercy that endures for ever' (as it is otherwise with the other Psalm i.e. Psalm 136).

Psalm 135 reveals the majesty of divine counsels in creation and government, where His glory and power is revealed in wisdom and in judicial retribution over the world. Yes. There is the election – for Israel is visible in the scenes, but it is the power of Jehovah revealed through the agency of Israel in the world of gentiles. This is one of the cornerstones of divine propose in history – it is God's wisdom and power revealed to the world of intelligence. And if election is involved – it is that, the elect become vessels of the demonstration of divine power against the world in judgment.

But Psalm 136 is different – it is about God's glory in creation and government, no doubt, but what is revealed is God's enduring mercy - 'for His mercy endureth for ever'. Every verse in this Psalm ends by this reverberation: 'for His mercy endureth for ever'.

Psalm 136 reveals the other side of divine purposes in creation and government. It is to showcase mercy – the foundation of this mercy is the cross, no doubt, but we are here, addressing the matters from the point of its effects. The source of mercy is the cross, but it's effects takes us to the very core of how history' - creation and government is itself viewed. 1 Chronicles 16:34 brings this chorus, of enduring mercy in connection with the ark's return to the city of David. This in a way: showcases the harmony of divine counsels with respect to restitution of all things under David – the figure of Christ in grace.

In conclusion: Psalm 135 reveals the majesty and glory of God in creation and government. But Psalm 136 showcases the whole framework of history, that of creation and government – to be unfolded for the ultimate purpose of proving the infinite counsels of God's grace and mercy in Christ. '... all are yours. And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's' (1 Corinthians 3:22,23).

4. How do you proceed to the 'Hallelujah Psalms'?

P.B (03/23)

The doxological Hallelujah Psalms (146-150) deal with themes relating to the future millennial kingdom of Jehovah. These Psalms maintain the solemnity of the anticipated kingdom in its fullest

bearing of Messianic glory. But before, we proceed to these Psalms that capture the millennial hopes of an earthly kingdom – we have to first inspect the gateway to these doxological Psalms. This study illuminates itself into a wonderful point of contemplation. Let us briefly study the gateway to these Psalms – and the gateway is served by two Psalms and they are: Psalm 144 and Psalm 145.

Let us consider the first – Psalm 144. In Psalm 144, we have the Jewish ground of promises borne out very distinctly: ‘that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, our daughters as corner-columns...our granaries full...our kine laden with young’ (v12-14). Here, we have the special hopes of Jewish restoration and redemption disclosed. Moreover, the gentiles are reflected under the banner of transgression and revolt – ‘hand of aliens’ (verse 7 and 11). Also, David is brought to remembrance before God (v10), and this reflects the essential properties of the Davidic covenant in motion. This Psalm discloses to us the fulcrum of dispensational glory in the millennium, which is to do with Jewish hopes (not gentiles, rather gentile subjugation).

The next Psalm – Psalm 145 reveals the other side of millennial kingdom glory which is that gentiles are also welcomed into the brightness of God’s kingdom. Jehovah is seen in His compassion over all His works, and He is near to all those who call upon Him – this is irrespective of tribe or race distinctions. Here, we do not find the exclusive Jewish ground of promise being considered for focal attention, rather, what we have here, is the inclusive dominion of Jehovah over the redeemed earth in grace. The millennial world will also bear its brilliant glory of God’s redemption on the gentiles universally, although in the present age, we have this as a prototypical illustration (Galatians). The church age is hidden and not revealed here in this Psalm. However, certain attributes of universal grace are hinted.

This, then is the gateway of proceeding to the doxological Psalms of the millennial kingdom – to be reminded of Jewish restoration and Gentile subjugation (Psalm 144) and to be reflective about the universal grace that will reap rich testimony in the millennial world that includes the gentiles as well (Psalm 145). Once this gateway of intellectual assertion is appreciated with regards to the dual faceted nature of kingdom hopes – we then, enter the jubilation of the kingdom glory itself, and that brings us into the Hallelujah Psalms itself (Psalm 146-150).

5. Thoughts reflected in worship on the Lord's day Morning

P.B (03/23)

1) The High Priest rent his clothes – a sign of failure under the law and its end. But man had no power to close a dispensation that God had begun.

God therefore, Himself formally closes the dispensation of the law by the splitting of the veil in the temple from top to bottom. But when He closes it – He opens a new dispensation, where the way into the holiest is opened by the blood of Jesus. This is divine grace and wisdom. Infinite.

2) The first time the High Priest asked the Lord, the Lord was silent. The second time when the High Priest places the Lord under the oath, the Lord speaks and asserts His Messianic title (Matt 26).

When the first time, He remains silent – it reflects His perfect humanity, that remains composed in Jehovah's trust, even under bitter trial and persecution.

When the second time, He speaks when under the oath – it reflects His perfection under the law.