

No. 1

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CHRIST IN THE PSALMS

Outline:-

1. The glory of Christ and His Central Position.
2. The appointed limitations of types.
3. Passages that plainly apply to Him.
4. Difficult contexts.
5. A solemn contrast, - Antichrist in the Psalms.
6. An affectionate warning and exhortation.

Our subject, dear friends, is headed "Christ in the Psalms". I hope that every subject, whatever it be headed, will have Christ as the Subject. The Subject of the subject, if I might so put it. The central part of all our meditations, sanctifying every portion of them. This evening we are limited particularly to one book, but that is a lengthy book, and a wondrously full book, for every Word of God is pure, and perfect. The subject is encouraging, instructive, humbling, but (need I add?) peculiarly solemn and dangerous, not in itself, but in the way it is likely to be handled, - but then we cannot get away from the fact that every subject is dangerous because we are apt to be led astray, but the HOLY SPIRIT is ^{not} merely a thing or a theory. If we have been gathered by the Lord, there is a confidence spiritually possible, spiritually desirable, and spiritually necessary, a confidence in the Lord, that He may control us, in increasing measure, that speakers and hearers alike may have subject minds, opened hearts, and longing desires that all Truth may be applied. Truth that is not applied is actually unlearned. Truth is that which God uses to draw His people away from evil and draw them unto Himself, and Satan knowing this seeks to mingle error with the truth, but the ear should try words even as our palate perceives food. Oh that we may have the hearing ear for the Lord and the ear that hears not the instruction which causeth to err. Christ is the absolutely glorious One, He is always Central. His glory is eternal, it embraces both eternities, for was He not Central when the Only Begotten Son in the bosom of the Father? Will He not be Central in that future Day, when God will bring the First Begotten again into the world and all the angels will worship Him, when He Himself shall be the Firstborn among many brethren, and shall reign in Mount Zion before His ancients gloriously? And now among His redeemed He is Central! The One Who was marked as Central upon the cross erected on Calvary, marked by men as if the worst of the three, That One was before the Father, a perfectly spotless One, and That One is now in the midst of disciplelike believers

as the Central One, - not as He was among Israel, for John said in that connection, "There standeth One in the midst of you Whom ye know not", but Christ in the midst of an assembly of saved ones is the One Who is known, realised, and recognized; for an assembly without Christ in the centre is only Laodicea. In accord with the fact that God has always been pleased to put His beloved Son in the position of exaltation, we find that He is the Centre of Scripture. Scripture not only illustrates this, indirectly; but very definitely, for how many prophecies point to Christ; How many varied types tell of Him, types in nature, tabernacle types, types in the history of Israel, all bring their contribution to His exaltation. If the sun shines, it speaks of the Sun of Righteousness, and the rain that waters the grass, tells of His wondrous workings. In the tabernacle, - curtains, altar, table, ark, mercy seat, sockets, all things - speak of Him. Priests, sacrifices, arrangements of every kind pointed to Him. In the coming out of Egypt, did manna descend? It pictured Him. Was a Rock smitten that waters might come out? This told of Him. Was a brazen serpent lifted on a pole? It meant something in connection with Him: Indeed Christ is so Central throughout types of Scripture that if anyone speaks of types it is well known, among believers who have any measure of instruction, that the thought is not types of the saints, or types of the wicked one, but types of Christ. Furthermore, there are typical characters, and their experiences and their histories are brought before us to give us suggestions concerning Himself. Isaac, the beloved one, offered, and raised up. Joseph, the hated one, brought to lowest depth, and then exalted to highest heights. David the shepherd king; Solomon, the prince of peace; and various other Scripture characters, are not only men who lived, but men whose lives were moulded or overruled by God to give hints of Him Who is so unutterably glorious. Indeed there are some expressions used of typical characters that are hardly to be interpreted primarily of them. We have a good illustration in connection with Joseph, and the chief butler and the chief baker. The chief butler said "Me he restored to my office, but him he hanged". Not that Joseph actually did those things, he declared them, but the Greater than Joseph, typified by Joseph is the One Who brings His people into the King's palace, not only declares it, but does it, and Who is also the One to Whom all judgment has been committed. I call your attention to that passage the more, because we shall find parts of the Psalms which cannot be explained of David, but must be taken primarily of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this connection, one further word of warning. Everything that is deep is apt to be put on one side, but if it is taken up, and there is delight

in it, Satan will seek to cause a fascination in finding out things that other people have not seen, and pride of knowledge of Truth, is perhaps more dangerous than pride of knowledge of error. Furthermore, fascination always leads to speculation. Speculation entwined with Truth may even bring Truth into disrepute. And, beloved friends, I feel we are responsible for God's Truth, of which we are trustees, not to wrap it up in our own theories, lest people on receiving Truth, imagine it has an unholy relationship because of the mark on the outside of the wrapping. Let us be very careful that we keep to the Truth, and if we are uncertain, it is often better to keep our uncertainties to ourselves, not with a reserve that is untruthful, not with a wish to hold back from private conversation with brethren who can help, but to avoid proclaiming our uncertainties as if they were fixed facts, and so misleading younger believers.

We come now to consider generally the appointed limitations of types. Limitations are necessary. Blessed be God they are also arranged so that there are limitations to the limitations. They are necessary, for a type without limitations would be a reality. A type must be imperfect that it may be perfect as a type. Imperfect with regard to the antitype, so that it may be a type of divine appointment and so perfect, in the Divine arrangement, in its right position. We all understand what this means. The law was holy and just and good, and right for the purpose for which it was given. But the law could not give life, it must be incomplete in that connection, otherwise it would cease to be law. We realize there are different spheres. The sphere of the type and the sphere of the antitype must be distinct, and there must be limitations in the type. Furthermore, apart from the necessary limitations in perfect types, typical characters are not only incomplete with the right incompleteness of types, but typical characters are incomplete because of their sins. There is a double incompleteness in a typical character, as every believer can at once see. David, though a man after God's Own heart was compelled to acknowledge that he had sinned, more than once, and all such types of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only fall short, with an appointed incompleteness, but fall short by a sinful contrast. Furthermore in connection with appointed limitations may I remind you that the Book of Psalms is a feeling Book. I do not mean sentimental. Sentiment is very dangerous, in the present day use of the word. In fact one might almost say, judging by PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH that feeling is excellent, but feelings are very dangerous. I am only now taking the present day employment of the words in common language. You will follow just what I mean. We are not to be led by our

feelings, and impulses and sentimentality. Spirituality is a deep thing, but on that very account, it does have an intense feeling, and the Book of Psalms is a feeling Book. Now no servant of God could have the fullness of feeling of our beloved Lord, hence it was necessary that the Psalmist should either write above his own experience, even as we read through Peter that the divine writers hardly realized what they were writing at times, it is necessary either that the Psalmist should write above his experience, or that his recorded experience should fall short of the experience of Christ. Therefore the Psalms that bring before us the psalmist's own feelings, more emphatically, have often only a secondary relation to our Lord. These which rather bring before us the Lord Jesus Christ have only a secondary relation to His people. There is a measure of parallel, for we have been brought into that position of nearness to God, and the psalmist had something of the same blessedness, though he was dispensationally without the fulness that we have received. On this account there is a certain parallel between the feelings but inasmuch as God desired to give us a view of His beloved Son in the Psalms many portions go beyond human entering into them. Inasmuch as God did not want the Book to be simply a Book of prophecy, but a Book into which His people could enter, with feeling, and express their condition of soul, on THAT account God arranged that certain portions of the Psalms deal specially with His people. Sometimes there is the two-fold interpretation. He was the reproached One, we are the reproached ones. As He walked, so should we walk; as He was rejected, so should we be rejected. It is not always easy to separate the two aspects. You will recollect how the woman of Tekoa, with her imagined history, on presenting it to the king, in one sentence spoke as if it was real. The next sentence dealt with the case of Absalom and then passed back to her own assumed family again, and you find it hard to sort out her statements. Now in a far more wondrous way because inspired and perfect, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the statements of the Psalms, and to see which refer to our beloved Lord, and which refer rather to His erring people. Yet if any of us have a gracious affection toward Him, I am sure that any knowledge we have of the Psalms would lead us to feel Christ is largely to be seen there, even as for example, in the Song of Solomon. It was said by one of the more earnest (perhaps I should say most earnest) of rather popular preachers of the last century, Mr. Spurgeon, that a certain commentator saw the Lord Jesus everywhere, and his words upon this are somewhat as follows, - "Seeing the Lord Jesus is a precious gift, although it must be confessed that this writer sees Him where He is sometimes not legitimately to be seen". I think that we realize that to see the Lord in Scripture IS a precious gift, and

though we must be careful lest we make a mistake, I think, though not desiring of two evils to chose the less, I think I would have more hope of the spiritual progress of one who made the mistake of seeing the Lord too often, than I would have hope of the spritual progress of one who saw Him too rarely.

We pass next to consider passages that plainly apply to the Lord. The Book of Psalms is a well-known book. I suppose everyone present has read it through. I was talking to an aged believer today, and he was telling me that in a country meeting where he believed there were about 90 to 100 professing believers present, the question was asked, How many have read the Bible though? - And not one could say, Yes. He himself had been preaching for many years and the question was put to him, and he could not say he had done so. But the question had its affect. Within six months he had the joy of realizing he had gone straight through his Father's word. But whatever other books are omitted in Scripture, I think nearly every believer has read the Book of Psalms through. I hope we may just ponder in our hearts whether we have been onesided in our study of Scripture. We cannot study any book too much, but we can study it too much proportionately. We need to have an allround knowledge of God's Truth. The Holy Spirit has laid a stress on quotations. Before coming out today I looked up a collection of about 258 quotations from the Earlier Scriptures and I counted through, and found 66 of them were from the Psalms, practically a quarter of them, and it was remarkable furthermore to find that a long way toward half of them were applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, in their quotation, and several of them two or three times over. We are on safe ground when we deal with that which the Holy Spirit saith. If we ask generally, Does such and such a Psalm apply to the Lord Jesus, I think the answer should be first that the Psalm cannot be viewed simply as one whole. It may have divisions. To take a very striking case, Psalm 50 brings before us the heavenly saints, then Israel, and lastly the wicked one and his followers. It is important therefore to know when we are dealing with a Psalm, what its divisions are. And secondarily if we are asked if a Psalm applies to Christ, our first thought may be, Has the Holy Spirit indicated by quoting thus from it? Perhaps we feel at times like the Ethiopian eunuch, "Of whom speaketh the prophet, of himself, or of some Other"? Then we may find the direct testimony of God, that David spoke with a view to Him. You know how Peter in Acts 2 distinctly shows that Psalm 16 WAS NOT TRUE OF DAVID, and therefore was direct prophecy. That is perhaps an extreme case but it brings before us how prominent Christ is in the Psalms, Not

only as an after-thought, not only as an application, but as the Intended One of the Holy Spirit. The following Psalms are definitely applied to the Lord Jesus in the later Scriptures. Some of them, as for example Psalm 2, are applied in different passages, and different verses are taken. You know how that verse 1 is used "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing", then again, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" is taken, and again "Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron" is found. Three verses are taken showing that the Psalm applies to the Lord Jesus. The following Psalms are said by the Holy Spirit to contain references to the Lord. Psalm 2, 8, 16, 22, 31, 35, 40, 41, 45, 68, 78, (probably 97), 102, 110, 118. Here then we have a goodly collection of Psalms that are definitely applied to the Lord Jesus, but beloved friends, we are perfectly sure that they are not given as the only ones. They are samples, if I might so put it. Very prominent ones, but not a complete list. Take for example Psalm 1. Who is the wondrous Man of that Psalm? Take Psalm 15, Who is the Obedient One there, marked by perfect obedience? Psalm 24, - Who is the One of clean hands and of a pure heart? Psalm 18, ? Who is the One rewarded according to His perfectness? Psalm 72, - Who is the King Who will reign in righteousness? Psalm 80 tells of the Man of God's right hand, Psalm 89 refers to the One on Whom help is laid, a Mighty One. Psalm 12 moreover MAY be taken to refer to the Lord, "The wicked flee on every side, when He, Who is the loathed of the sons of men shall be exalted". That is not the common translation, but it has been viewed as a possible translation for a number of years, and I am inclined to think the Holy Spirit intends we should include these thoughts there. The One Who is the loathed and outcast of the sons of men will be exalted, and the wicked will flee on every side when He shall be honoured. Then Psalm 34, speaking of the righteousness of the One Whose bones are not broken, surely refers to Christ. Psalm 116 says "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is THE death that belongs to His saints". What death? One death belongs to His saints, the death of the Lord Jesus. The emphatic THE is blotted out in our translation: - necessarily in a translation that does not have special printing for emphasis, and one feels the need for underlining words or printing them in capitals at times to bring out the Divine emphasis. But to return, dear friends, to direct quotation: we feel that if these passages are said by the Holy Spirit to apply to our beloved Lord, we are safe and right in so applying them. Indeed we may go a step further, it would be serious not to apply them so. We need to acknowledge God's wisdom. He has picked out certain passages, and it is for us to rejoice in the view they give of our beloved Lord. But there are difficulties in the contexts of not a few.

Shall we seek by grace to deal with some of these difficulties. At the outset may I remind you that our beloved Lord humbled Himself when He became a man, and so some exceptional passages may and do apply to Him. You will follow what I mean, if I pick out the 22nd. There Christ speaks of Himself as the One Who was in sore straits. The Psalm begins "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and it goes on "I am a worm and no man". Surely our hearts realize that WE could not have applied that Psalm to our Lord. We could not have used the language, but now that the Holy Spirit has shown us that He was the One Who cried "Why hast Thou forsaken Me", we bow our heads and worship, and acknowledge how He became wondrously humbled. I think that is the key to Psalm 102, which is definitely applied to the Lord. It brings before us the prayer of an Afflicted One, and the term "afflicted" is the same as the "Poor one", and the Poor and the Needy One of the Psalm often suggests Him Who became poor and needy, beyond all that we can understand. Toward the end of the Psalm we read, "He weakened My strength in the way, He shortened My days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days, throughout all generations are Thy years. In old times didst Thou lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands". Now at first sight we wonder how to take this passage, but we realize there is a measure of dialogue in it, (as for example in Psalm 2). The Lord Jesus we know, was the One Who was indeed weakened, Who in the midst of His days, about half the seventy years, died, - not that He was taken away in the sense of being a failure. This passage I think closely parallels with Isaiah 49, concerning the One Who seemed to be spending His strength in vain, and for nought. In the middle of Ps. 102.24, or if not at the beginning of the next verse, there is a sudden change. The Son has been addressing the Father, and the Father now addresses the Son, it may be the change should be in the middle of the verse. "Thy years are throughout all generations" being the answer to the beloved Son of God. How do we know this? From Hebrews 1, for Hebrews 1 tells us, "Thou didst lay the foundations of the earth" was addressed TO the Lord Jesus, and not to the Father. I mean, not to the Father primarily. It is quoted as a proof of the absolute Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. So here we have in Psalm 102, the humanity and Deity of the Lord Jesus entwined in one context. But though His wondrous humiliation explains some difficult passages, we must acknowledge there are some that cannot apply to Him. For example, the psalmist says, "I am old and greyheaded. I have been young, and now am I old", and expressions of that nature. Moreover he tells of the way in which grace brought him back after a period of wandering. "Blessed is the

man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" and the Psalm goes on to say, "I said, I will confess my sin". The Lord Jesus never had personal sin, and He never held aloof from the Father, hence He is twice out of that Psalm. He is often the contrasted One; and here we reach a most important point, and that is, every type and every parable contains as much by contrasts as by parallels. There are some parables which are actually contrasts. "Ye yourselves" says the Lord, "are to be like men who wait for their lord, when he - the eastern master - shall return from the wedding". You are to be like those who wait for the return FROM the wedding. The eastern slave watched for his drunken master to come back, in fear and trembling. We are to wait with the same intensity, but certainly not with the same trembling, and He Whom we love will come back, not having had a feast, but to welcome US INTO the feast, who. He will serve His people. The widow pleads with the unjust judge, and he answers, to spare himself trouble. The Lord's people called to be His bride, plead with the Righteous Father, and He answers them in love and grace. So we have a contrast throughout, and one of the most important things in the reading of Scripture is to distinguish. Beloved friends, God has never made our paths so easy that there will be no tests. When He put Adam in the garden of Eden, He put the tree of knowledge of good and evil near the tree of life. If Abraham tells a lie, it is not rebuked in the context. Indeed God declares of him soon that he is a prophet. (The sin is not explained to the Gentile king), and it is only a SUBSEQUENT context that makes clear, and we see sad effects of this sin afterwards. So it is with many things. We are never expected to read one Scripture alone. The Bible is not a Book to be understood by mere learning, but VIA spiritual communion, then there will be the distinguishing, but TRUTH ever becomes in a false light to those who are not in harmony with God. There are passages that speak of sin in the Messianic Psalms, for example Ps. 69. How are we to deal with that passage? One verse says "They hate Me without a cause". Three verses further on brings before us the bearing of reproach, and yet a verse between says, "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my guiltiness, (or my guiltinesses) are not hid from Thee". How are we to explain this? It is perfectly possible for the Holy Spirit to pick out one verse as belonging to the Lord, and for the next verse not to apply to Him. Let me give an illustration that I am

sure you will clearly follow. In 2 Sam. 7, and 1 Chron. 17 we have a record of the words of God concerning Solomon, but in the 2 Sam. 7 account there is rather a stress on Solomon; in 1 Chron. 17 account, there is rather a stress on our beloved Lord. In the 2 Sam. 7 record we read, "I will be His Father and He shall be My Son", which plainly refers to Christ, but it adds, "If He commits iniquity I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men". Those added words cannot apply to Him Who was absolutely perfect, and they are OMITTED with Divine wisdom in Chronicles. The Holy Spirit expects that we should be in harmony with Himself when we go to the Scriptures. The Bible is never meant as a Book to be learnt ALONE. I am sure you would understand what I mean if I were to say that a human teacher would write a very different grammar of a language if he meant to take it as the outline in lectures he was giving, from that which he would write if he meant it for private students alone, and far off from him. Now the Scripture is not meant for private students alone, but for those who attend the teaching that God gives, and therefore the difficulties are only blessings, invitations to study and full of instruction. But though it is quite possible that one verse may refer to Christ and the next one not refer to Christ, we must not forget that in Hebrew the same word is used for sin and sin offering, and what may be true of David's sin is, blessedly true of Christ's sin-offering. David's guiltiness was known to the Lord. Christ's offering for guiltiness. Thus the Scripture twice over becomes forcible and expressive. Psalm 40 may be taken in the same way, where we have the bringing up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. There we do not find the mention of sins in so many words, though most read into this early verse a description of a sinner and there is a measure of truth, but such an interpretation does not exhaust the passage. Nor does it seem the primary one, but undoubtedly verse 12 is rather difficult in that 40th Psalm. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about. Mine iniquities have taken hold of me", but THAT is the Psalm which says "I delight to do Thy will, Oh My God". You see how the Holy Spirit always brings the difficulty into a position that may help to solve it, because of its EXTREME nature. Just as Psalm 69, the verse BEFORE the mention of guilt contains the reference to a hating WITHOUT CAUSE, which could only be true of Christ; so here this difficult passage is very near the one which says "Thy law is in the midst of Me" which could ONLY be true of Christ in its fulness. The greater the difficulty, the less the difficulty, for it is fairly clear that One Who could say that He was hated without a cause could not have the personal guilt. It is fairly plain that One Who said "I come", instead of offerings "Thy law is in the midst of Me", ("in My very

howels" as the word is in Divine expressiveness, the term 'heart' loses something of the force) - the One Who could thus speak could have no personal iniquities. Therefore the greatness of the difficulty, the intensity of the contrast only emphasizes ~~that~~ God cannot mean any failures on the part of our beloved Lord. We must either see a fresh section starting in the Psalm, or an allusion to our beloved Lord taking the sin of sinners on Him and becoming a sin-offering in their place. This language even occurs in the Later Scriptures, Him Who knew no sin God made to be SIN, OR A SIN OFFERING for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. I had hoped to have spoken of a solemn contrast, namely, Antichrist, who, with Satan is sometimes seen in the Psalms, the wicked one, not always clearly marked in our translation, for the word "wicked" that is used is sometimes plural. If only "wicked one" were put, we should see more definitely, but you can often find out without knowing Hebrew because of the "he" or the "his" of the context. If the next clause says "his" you know the rendering cannot be "wicked ones"; if it says "their", on the other hand, you will know the word is plural. Antichrist is the wicked one, the "man of the earth" of Psalm 10, and, as we see, Judas, the one son of perdition, in various Psalms, for example 41, 69 and 109, so we see the other son of perdition, who is indeed the man of blood, and the antitype of Saul, "the enemy" of whom Psalm 18 speaks.

Our last point is an affectionate warning and exhortation. I rather put this first than at the end - urging against mere speculation, and urging God's dear people not only to see Christ as the Central One in the Book, but to wait on their God continually that He may be the Central One of their lives.

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