

Psalm Genres (Part Three): Messianic

Christ Foretold in Song

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Aren't you glad that Christmas is over? That the season is finally in our rearview mirror? I am really thankful, even though I do not get out in the world all that much. I am usually hunched in front of my computer doing stuff like articles and sermons and stuff like that. But every time you go into a store or whatnot, all you hear is the Christmas music. We are inundated with nativity scenes in our neighborhoods or the local Christian church on the corner, lots of lights on the houses, baby Jesus is everywhere, and like I said, the aforementioned Christmas music.

Lately, over the past probably about five years, I have gotten an increasing number of emails about Advent and Advent calendars and Advent this and Advent that, and they are pushing back the Christmas celebration time all the way to the beginning of December, and they are counting down. I saw some of the emails I got have nothing to do with Christians at all, but they are like these online sellers give you a good deal on these things, and they are selling Advent Keurig cups. There is, I think, 24 of them and they are numbered and you count down from the first down to number one and you are supposed to have this final Keurig cup on Christmas Eve or something like that. It is just everything, everywhere you turn, there is just more and more advertising and song earworms and just things that just make you tired by the time you get to December 25th.

It is really excessive. Like Joe was talking about in terms of self-indulgence, and it seems to get worse all the time. I mean, they sing Joy to the World, the Lord has come, and by December 25th, I am very happy that Joy to the World, Christmas, is over. I am being a little bit facetious here. We are very thankful for His incarnation. That is what Christmas supposedly represents, when He came in the flesh. But it really bugs me that nominal Christianity believes so much about Christ's coming that is wrong. It is just totally made up out of thin air or more than likely has come down to us from various mythological stories that have been told about other gods, and they have

been then just smashed up with Christianity. It is syncretistic, as we would say, or syncretic. And they do not get His first coming wrong alone. They get His second coming wrong as well.

And so I look out there at what they do is supposedly keeping Christ in Christmas and worshipping Him, and then you look at it and you say, how could that be? There is no Christ there really. You have made everything up. You do not believe the Bible. It is just a lie from beginning to end. And then I think about those supposed Christians who darken the door of a church only once or twice a year. They leave the Christmas season having in their mind the image of a baby Jesus who is totally dependent on his mother. Powerless, lying in a manger. I mean, is that really the image of Jesus Christ that we are supposed to have? Probably by the end of the sermon you will think, no, I like this other one better. It means a whole lot more.

Some denominational Christians and some of their scholars believe the Scriptures, that is, they believe them enough to admit that what is generally understood among the masses is just unfounded in biblical terms. But most have accepted what is taught in their churches. I mean, most nominal Christians believe whatever their churches teach about the matter. If these Christians are believing in all the baby Jesus stuff and just ending basically the story of the Bible and what they are taught with this, just the birth of Christ, then I think that means that most of the churches do not believe either the of facts of history which are found in the Bible or the prophecies that predicted them. They are just going by what is generally considered to be the case.

Now I want to concentrate on the prophecy side of this rather than the facts of Jesus' birth or any of the facts of His coming, first or second.

The Old Testament contains about, let us just say, a few hundred Messianic prophecies, prophecies that predict Christ's coming, either first or second. The exact figure really depends on how you divide certain prophecies out and how you interpret them. Obviously when we are talking about Messiah you are going to get a difference between Jewish commentators and Christian commentators because the Christians believing in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world find evidence of Him more often in the Old Testament than the Jews do. They are looking for their Davidic savior, and

basically we are looking for His second coming, not His first, so we see a lot more.

But Alfred Edersheim, who was converted from Judaism into Christianity, says that the rabbis count 456 passages in the Old Testament that refer to the Messiah. But this is kind of funny because Christians, like Old Testament scholar J. Barton Payne, he was at Wheaton College in the middle of the last century, he says that there are only 191.

See what I mean about the difference of how you divide them and count them? But a commonly cited figure that both Jews and Christians seem to be able to accept is that there are either 332 or 333 distinct Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

Now my last few sermons have concentrated on the Psalms. So what about the Psalms in terms of Messianic prophecies? It contains a good many of them, actually, foretelling both His first coming and His second coming. In fact, one could assert and be absolutely correct that the Psalms are a major repository of Messianic prophecies, especially when we factor in something that Christ says in Luke 24:44. I will just read it to you here. After He had been raised and He was speaking to the disciples.

Luke 24:44 He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

Now generally we have come to understand that the whole of the Old Testament is what was written concerning Christ. What He says here, the law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, that is the three major divisions of the Old Testament. They are chock full of things concerning Christ. Now I would think that if the church of God got together and started looking through the Old Testament and started figuring out which parts of the Old Testament were Messianic prophecies, we could probably come up with a lot more than the people out there in the world because, using the Holy Spirit we should have our minds opened up to these things. I mean, look at what the apostles did in the New Testament. They were pulling things out of Scripture, the Old Testament, that nobody had ever connected with the Messiah. But they were

true. They, with their minds filled with the Holy Spirit, were able to discern the truth that was locked into these prophecies in the Old Testament.

This has been my longest introduction to another genre of the Psalms, and that is Messianic psalms. They are psalms, of course, in which the authors, under God's inspiration, prophesy of the coming Savior. And like I have said a couple of times already, either His first coming or His second coming, they are both in there.

Now something we need to understand, and I think you do, we have been at this for a long enough time that we understand the principle of type and anti-type that has been mentioned already a couple of times, but oftentimes in the Psalms the Messianic prophecy is written about the type.

And certainly David is the foremost of those types because he is the one that wrote the most psalms and so he is praying to God or praising God or, you know, otherwise talking to God about things that are going on in his life. But because we have the Holy Spirit and we already have the historical truth of Christ written down for us in the New Testament, we can see how these songs, psalms, in the Old Testament prefigured things that He would do.

And so those two are type/anti-type prophecies of Messiah. They were written about a type, let us say David, but they apply more significantly, to us, to the anti-type, which is Jesus Christ, either as a Man in His first coming, or as God, Divine Warrior, Judge, High Priest, what have you, in His New Testament appearances.

You may have heard, if you have studied any of the genres of psalms, I do not know how many of you have, but there is a genre called royal psalms. We are talking about Messianic psalms, but there is one that is called royal psalms, and oftentimes when you go to study in a commentary or whatnot, they will tell you that a psalm is a royal psalm, but when you look at it, you see very clearly it is a Messianic psalm. Why did they call it a royal psalm? Well, mostly it just has to do with the way the scholars categorize things.

The two categories overlap a great deal because obviously the Messiah is the coming King. And so when there are royal psalms, they are oftentimes talking about David or a coronation scene or something that happened in the

physical realm, but spiritually they are raised up to apply to the Messiah. So some interpreters say that royal psalms are a separate genre, whereas others say that Messianic psalms are a subset of royal psalms. You will get both in the commentaries, but I consider them two distinct genres.

And one of the reasons for that is that most Messianic prophecies that you find in the Psalms are just single verses. Or maybe a couple of verses. And so that may be a full royal psalm, but there is one verse or two verses in there that have Messianic overtones.

And so I am considering things a little bit differently than the commentators. I am saying that Messianic psalms are those in which a majority of the verses or a long section of the psalm is Messianic. So I would not have a problem with people saying this is a royal psalm or a Messianic psalm, or both. It does not matter when it is clearly identifying Christ in a royal psalm as King of kings as He is. Very well known examples of this overlap are Psalm 2, which is about God saying, "This is My Son, today I have begotten You," and it talks about Him picking up His rod and smashing the nations. We will go to this in a little bit.

Psalm 45 is another royal psalm which the first half is about the king and the second half is his bride. And this just points back to what Mark was saying about the bride of Christ and Christ Himself. So this one is obviously not only a royal psalm, but half of it is a Messianic psalm about Christ as the King.

Back to Alfred Edersheim. He commented about this. He lists 26 psalms that ancient rabbis considered as having prophecies or allusions to the Messiah. They are not saying necessarily that these 26 psalms are fully Messianic psalms, but there are 26 psalms in which Messianic prophecies appear according to them.

Christian commentators are all over the place in terms of which psalms they consider to be Messianic. Again, it has to do with the way they perceive things and how they cut things up. Generally, like I said, Christians find more than the Jews because the Jews have rejected Jesus Christ.

Now I will give you my list. It is only 11. Here they are: Psalm 2, Psalm 16, Psalm 22, Psalm 40, Psalm 45, Psalm 69, Psalm 72, Psalm 89, Psalm 101, Psalm 110, and Psalm 118. (The last three are highways in the LA basin. 101, 110, 118. Actually, 2 is as well. This just popped into my head. I drove so many miles around Southern California. It just kind of cracks me up that there are so many of those in this list.)

These particular psalms that I just gave you have major portions dedicated to foretelling Christ's life or His character or His ministry, or His death or His sovereign rulership in the Kingdom of God. Many other psalms contain a verse or two that are short Messianic prophecies and I want to go through a small list of this.

Let us start in Psalm 34, verse 20. You will recognize this one.

Psalm 34:20 He guards all [H]is bones; not one of them is broken.

This is when He was crucified. He was beaten quite badly and tied up on or nailed up on a stake, and not one of His bones was broken. So, this is one of those that the Jews would not believe would be Messianic because they do not have the actual historic fact to link to this.

Let us go to another one, chapter 41, verse 9. David writes here,

Psalm 41:9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

Judas Iscariot, here foretold in this psalm, betrayed the Christ whom he ate many meals with, I am sure, during His ministry.

Let us go on to chapter 78, verse 2. You can link this with Matthew 13 and the other parables.

Psalm 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old.

So clearly, the most famous parable teller in all of world history is Jesus Christ, and this foretold His ministry and how He would teach.

Let us go to one more, chapter 96, verse 13. Actually this is pretty much the same verse as in 98:9, but we will just read this one here.

Psalm 96:13 For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.

I will just read 98:9 for kicks,

Psalm 98:9 For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.

Jesus Christ Himself said that all judgment had been given into His hand by the Father, and He will do this. He will judge the earth when He returns.

I could go to many, many more of these. There are plenty of them scattered across all 150 chapters. If you go out on the Internet, you will probably find lists that will give you the psalms that contains prophecies that were fulfilled in the New Testament with both the psalm chapter and verse and the fulfillment in the New Testament, usually in the Gospels. But there are roughly 70 of those, 70 clear specific references to Christ fulfilled in the New Testament just from the book of Psalms.

Let us make this just a slightly bit more complex. Some have further subdivided Messianic psalms into five types, five distinct types of Messianic psalms.

The first are what they call *typical* Messianic psalms, meaning a type. It refers to a type that is fulfilled in Christ, so they are called typical Messianic psalms. The psalm's subject, usually the author, is in some respect a type of Christ. And so like I said earlier, this is usually David. Something occurs in David's life. He writes it in a psalm, and later it is fulfilled in the life of Christ in a greater way.

Let us just pick up Psalm 69, verses 4 through 9. This is David actually going through a very severe trial.

Psalm 69:4-9 Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully. Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it. Oh God, you know my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You. [obviously we are talking about David here, not Christ] Let not those who wait for you, O Lord of hosts, be ashamed because of me; let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel. Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; because zeal for your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.

Knowing what happened in the life of Christ, we can see how this was fulfilled in His life. He was reproached terribly, without a cause really because He had never sinned, never done anybody wrong. But He had borne that reproach. He had borne that shame. And then we also know that His brothers did not believe until afterward. And this specific verse 9 was used to describe the zeal of Jesus Christ.

We do not need to go any farther there.

The second one of these subdivisions of the Messianic prophecies are called *typical prophetic* Messianic psalms. Let me explain this one. The psalmist's present experience points to the Messiah's life. It is very similar to the first one, but the difference is that the one we just saw, we see from David's life in Christ. This one is a little bit different.

Let us go back to Psalm 16. You know those scholars, they break things up really fine. It is hard for me to explain the difference between these two. One is typical Messianic, the other one is typical prophetic. This is the prophetic.

Psalm 16:8 I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and

my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

And in this case, it is the Davidic hope of being resurrected, a prophecy that he would be resurrected. That is slightly different from the experience that we saw in chapter 69, but this one very clearly applies to Jesus Christ because when He was put in the tomb, He did not stay there, not enough even to begin to rot, if you will, and He was brought up and resurrected and brought to the Father's right hand.

Let us go to the next one, number three. This one is an indirectly Messianic psalm. This psalm refers to someone or something else but finds its fulfillment in Christ. These are often found in royal psalms, and this one is a little bit easier to explain. The royal psalms and the coronation psalms and the enthronement psalms and such like that, depending on how they are named, have to do usually with some piece of liturgy that they would use at a coronation and so they were used in like David's coronation, Solomon's coronation, Rehoboam's coronation, whatever. And so they refer to that but actually they find their greatest fulfillment in Christ.

Psalm 2. This is definitely a coronation song. Let us just pick it up in verse 5.

Psalm 2:5-9 Then He shall speak to the nations in His wrath and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

I do not need to go any further. Obviously, this refers to Jesus Christ, even though in its original context, it had to do with the king who sat on the Davidic throne being crowned and this was the blessing that was put upon him.

Number four: Purely prophetic Messianic psalms. How is this different? It is different because it is a psalm that refers to Christ and no one else. It *cannot* apply to anybody else. And this would be (I will not go there) Psalm 110. You cannot squeeze David in there. You cannot squeeze anybody else in there. It is only about Christ.

And then the fifth one they call enthronement Messianic psalms. It is very much like what we just saw in Psalm 2. But this is a psalm that foretells Christ's coming as King of kings. I will not go into any of these, but they are called the Lord Reigns Psalms from Psalm 96 through 99. They are all enthronement psalms and they are about Christ being enthroned as King in the Millennium.

Let us read Psalm 110. I am not going to have time to do much commentary on it, but I want you to see it. This is the purely prophetic psalm that I mentioned earlier that can only refer to Jesus Christ and no one else. Sometimes it is categorized as a royal psalm because some scholars think that it was used as liturgy for the coronations of Davidic kings, but to me, even if it was used that way, it does not fit. It fits better as a purely prophetic Messianic psalm.

It applies to no one else but Christ. It is prophesying of the anointed God-Priest-King, if you will, of the line of David. The Old Testament Davidic kings could not act as priests, so it cannot apply to them. And the Maccabean kings who came after the return from exile and before they were pretty much overthrown by the Romans, they were Levites. They were not Davidic, so they do not fit either. The only one that does is Jesus Christ.

Now this psalm is divided into two parts. Verses 1 through 3 and verses 4 through 7. And they are two oracles that are put back-to-back, two prophecies from God. Oracles are prophetic declarations or decrees and one is given in verse 1 and the next two verses give you a glimpse of its fulfillment. And then the second divine oracle is given in verse 4 along with an oath from God that is irrevocable. He says He will not relent. He will not change His mind. And then in verses 5, 6, and 7 is another glimpse of its fulfillment.

By the way, the first verse in this is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament, 14 times, and it is also alluded to several other times beyond. Let us just read it.

Psalm 110:1-7 The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people shall be volunteers in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. The Lord has sworn and will not relent, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; therefore, He shall lift up the head.

A lot of people do not understand this psalm. They understand verses 1 and 4 to a certain degree because they are explained considerably in the New Testament, but they do not understand the fulfillments very well. Also, the language in some of these verses is obscure and so there are a lot of different translations that you can find.

But like I said, I am not going to be able to go into too much detail here. But I want to at least get to verse 1 and to make sure you understand—you probably do—what is being talked about here. Both Jesus and Peter, Jesus in Matthew 22:43 and Peter in Acts 2:34, verified that David, acting here as a prophet, is the author of this verse. And you have to believe that in order to understand the pronouns that are used and the Lords that are mentioned here. If you do not have David as the author, then this gets really confusing about who is being talked about and who is talking.

If I can make it a little simpler, the declaration or the oracle that said in verse 1 is, "Yahweh declares to my Adon, 'Sit at My right hand.'" We are talking about three different people here. This is not two, this is three. Yahweh is the Father. My is a reference to David. And then the second Lord, Adon, in the Hebrew is his Master or his Lord.

So, "God above all said to my Master, 'Sit at My right hand [meaning Yahweh's right hand or the Father's right hand], till I make Your enemies [that is, Christ's enemies] His footstool.'" What this does is it is very important in establishing the Father-Son relationship and the fact that there are two God beings. There is the Father called here Yahweh, and then the Son called here Adon, or the Master, the Lord. And then David is below Them. David's master is Christ and the Son. Once you have all that straight, then the rest of the psalm gets a little bit easier to understand.

I also want to mention just before my time runs out here that the time setting here in verse 1 is Christ's ascension to heaven after being resurrected from the tomb. That is when the Father said, "Sit at My right hand. I will make Your enemies Your footstool," and everything goes from there. By the time you get to verses 2 and 3, we are talking about Christ's second coming. And just interestingly, if we endure to the end, you are mentioned in verse 3. "Your people shall be volunteers." That means you have a choice. And you will come to Christ and serve Him and be a part of that great army that comes from heaven and defeats His enemies.

By the way, just as a little sidelight, the word volunteers there in verse 3 means free will offering. You know where Paul took that in Romans 12:1? Living sacrifices. Your people will be living sacrifices, it says, and that is how you become a follower of Jesus Christ.

So like I just said, endure to the end. Because if you do, you will have the same victory that is shown in the rest of the psalm.