

THE SEED OF THE WOMAN  
Genesis 3:8-15

Intro: I am beginning a short series this morning of seven messages on the subject, OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF CHRIST'S FIRST ADVENT. As the theme suggests, we will be looking at various passages in the OT, prophetic in nature, which were fulfilled when Christ came to the earth the first time approximately 2,000 years ago. The Old Testament also gives us prophecies of the second coming of Christ, but we will not be concerned with those in this series except as they might have some reference to His first coming.

The first of these prophecies is found in Genesis 3:15. (Read.)

However, in order for us to understand this prophecy correctly we need to understand that the decision for our Lord to come to the earth to give Himself as a sacrifice for sin was a decision that goes back even before creation. Let me prove that from the NT.

- 1) Note Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:18-21 -- especially verse 20.
- 2) In Revelation 13:8 we have another statement which applies to God's predetermined plan for His Son. (Read.)

There is a question in the translation of this verse as to whether the phrase, "from the foundation of the world" belongs with "the Lamb slain," or with the words, "whose names are not written in the book of life."

You can see that the KJ translators take it as referring to the death of the Lamb. The NASB takes it as speaking of "the book of life." The NIV renders it,

" . . . all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world."

So the NIV translators agree with the KJV.

Whichever way you take it, something very determinative was done by God about salvation before creation.

- 3) These verses help us to understand a point which Peter made in his messages recorded in the book of Acts. E.g., in Acts 2:23, where he was speaking of Christ as he spoke these words,

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

The point that I am making is this: The sin of Adam and Even did not take God by surprise so that the prophecy of Genesis 3:15 marked the beginning of God's redemptive plan. No, what we have

in Genesis 3:15 is the beginning of God's revelation of a redemptive plan that had been completely worked out by the members of the Godhead before creation, and so, obviously, even before sin had been committed by angels or by men!

How important it is to understand this! Man's sin did not take God by surprise. God had already made provision for it in His eternal counsel and plan. This is the reason that Paul could describe his salvation in terms of God's "own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

But let us look more specifically at Genesis 3:15.

Before we look at the details of the verse, let me make some preliminary observations:

- 1) Our first impression of the verse is that, with regard to salvation, it is rather vague. It seems only right that we should believe that Adam and Eve and the serpent all knew what the Lord meant, but it only becomes clearer to us as we go on reading in Scripture.

E.g., the Lord does not say,  
 who the seed of the woman would be, or  
 who the seed of the serpent would be, or  
 how the serpent's seed would bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, or  
 how the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head.

Adam and Eve and the serpent knew that this was a promise of redemption, but perhaps even they had to wait on the details that greater light would provide.

- 2) A second observation that we should make is that, consistent with the first time any doctrine is mentioned, we have:
  - a) A very important passage (because it is the first time this particular truth is mentioned).
  - b) A very basic passage (because of the information that it does give us). So often the first time any teaching is mentioned, we have the important features of that teaching. E.G., Genesis 15:6, the doctrine of justification.
- 3) A third observation is this: We have here an emphasis on DIVINE GRACE because we have here the promise of salvation before judgment is announced for Eve and for Adam, and before it is partially executed by their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

His grace can be seen in the fact that salvation was ordained before creation, and here it is seen again in that it was announced before judgment was pronounced! These are our first illustrations in Scripture that "by grace ye are saved through faith."

- 4) My final observation is this: A study of this verse in the light of all of Scripture gives us the right to say that we have in this verse four of the most important doctrines in all of Scripture -- and if we wanted to get into all of the details, we could say that there are more than four. But there are four in particular, and these four will make up my outline.
- a) The doctrine of the age-long conflict between Satan and the human race, and especially between Satan and the people of God, and with Christ.
  - b) The doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.
  - c) The doctrine of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - d) The doctrine of the triumphant resurrection of Christ, marking as it would the complete overthrow and Satan and all of his evil schemes.

Let us look at each one of these briefly.

I. THE AGE-LONG CONFLICT BETWEEN SATAN AND THE HUMAN RACE,  
 BETWEEN SATAN AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD,  
 BETWEEN SATAN AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Remember that it was God Who said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." He said it to the serpent, which Satan was using.

The only thing which takes precedence in human history over this conflict between Satan and men, and between Satan and God, is the way in which God is working out His own purposes in spite of and even through all that Satan does.

Satan keeps up the battle constantly.

Who is the seed of the serpent, the seed of Satan?

Well, we know that Satan will never give birth to anyone because he is a fallen angel, and angels do not have children! What then can it mean?

It has to mean those whom Satan uses, and the results of what he does directly -- against God, and against men! Think, in the OT, about what he did to Job! Think, in the Gospels, of what he tried to do to the Lord Jesus Christ (at our Lord's temptation), and what he did do through Judas when he entered into him (cf. John 13:2, 27). And, as the age comes to a close, we have the activities of the Anti-christ, whom one writer facetiously refers to as "the devil's eldest son" (Manton, Vol. 17, p. 246). Add to that what the Lord said to the Pharisees in John 8:44,

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning,

and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

All of these, and many more particular illustrations, go to make up the seed of the serpent, and are involved in the conflict which God in His sovereignty brought about by His words in the Garden of Eden! Satan may have usurped the authority he has in the world, but God has marked it with the greatest possible disruption and enmity. Note the words again: "I will put enmity . . ."

Cf. Eph. 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against . . ."

## II. THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

It is seen in the words, "her seed," i.e., THE SEED OF THE WOMAN.

This has to mean that whoever was to bruise the serpent's head had to be a man.

But isn't it interesting that this one is spoken of as the woman's seed -- not the man's seed!

The meaning of this becomes clearer as we go on through Scripture and come to the prediction Isaiah made in Isaiah 7:14,

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The actual identity of this Son is given by Matthew in chapter 1, verses 18-23. (Read.)

Paul adds to the evidence in Galatians 4:4, 5 when he wrote these words:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

The foundation for all of this marvelous teaching is found in our text, Genesis 3:15, in the words, "her seed."

How accurate the Word of God is!

Now let me call your attention to the third doctrine -- and let me take the truths in the order in which they are mentioned here -- not as they occurred and will occur in time.

## III. THE DOCTRINE OF THE VICTORY OF CHRIST AND THE COMPLETE OVERTHROW OF SATAN AND ALL OF HIS EVIL SCHEMES.

This teaching is in the words, "It shall bruise thy head."

Thinking of the "head" of the serpent, listen to these words from one who has written on this passage:

The head is the principal instrument both of the serpent's fury and mischief, and of his defence, and the principal seat of the serpent's life, which therefore men chiefly strike at; and which being upon the ground, a man may conveniently tread upon, and crush it to pieces (Poole, III, 10).

This does not mean the annihilation of Satan, but his absolute and final defeat.

His doom was sealed by this prophecy, but the work was actually done at the Cross! As the Lord anticipated the Cross, He said,

Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out (John 12:31).

And in John 16:8 and 11 we have these words of our Lord: And when he (speaking of the Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment . . . of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The Apostle Paul touches on this doctrine in several passages:

- 1) Col. 1:13, speaking of <sup>the</sup> Father "who hath delivered us from darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."
- 2) Eph. 4:8 -- Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
- 3) Finally, Rom. 16:20:  
And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

Christ's work on the Cross was a total victory over Satan, over demons, over sin, and over all of the effects of sin -- hell, death, and the grave.

Hell itself was "prepared" primarily "for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

The fourth and last doctrine that we will deal with in Genesis 3:15 is

#### IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And this we have in the words, "and thou shalt bruise his heel."

There is no comparison, is there, between what the Lord did

to Satan, the serpent, as compared with what the serpent did to the Lord! The serpent's head was crushed; the seed of the woman was only bruised in His heel! But, oh, what terrible agony is contained in those words for our Lord Jesus Christ!

Think of all who were involved at the Cross:

- 1) The Father: Isa. 53:6, 10.
- 2) The Son: John 10:17, 18.
- 3) "Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel" (Acts 4:27).
- 4) Satan -- bruising His heel!

Who can measure or even describe what the Cross meant to our dear Saviour? Can you explain for me . . .

- 1) 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us . . ." or
- 2) 1 Pet. 2:24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body . . . by whose stripes ye were healed." or
- 3) Gal. 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . ."

Dear friends, remember that this is where our hope is -- that before the judgment was announced, the remedy for sin was proclaimed. We have the Word of God,  
the work of Christ,  
the defeat of Satan,  
the putting away of sin,  
here, and in no other place, is there hope for us as guilty sinners under divine judgment. If you believe in Christ, you will be saved; if you do not, you are completely without any hope whatever!

Concl: The writer of the book of Hebrews has given us a NT version of Genesis 3:15. You will find it in Heb. 2:

14, 15,

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Back in the latter part of the year 500 A.D. a man lived who knew and loved our Saviour. He wrote in verse form the truth of Genesis 3:15. It has been set to music. Let me just read the words for you to give a final emphasis to what I have been trying to say. Here are the words:

Praise the Saviour now and ever;  
Praise Him, all beneath the skies;  
Prostrate lying, suff'ring, dying  
On the cross, a sacrifice.  
Vict'ry gaining, life obtaining,  
Now in glory he doth rise.

(Over)

"IMMANUEL"

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25.

Intro: (This is the second message of seven in a series on Old Testament Prophecies of Christ's First Advent.)

There are many OT passages which speak of Christ. In fact, it can truly be said that He is the outstanding theme of the OT as He is of the NT.

We narrow these down considerably when we consider Christ's first coming to the earth -- His first advent. And we narrow them down still more when we consider those OT passages which speak specifically of His Deity. That is what I want to do this morning.

Last Sunday we saw that Christ, or the Messiah (which is the meaning of Christ), was to be THE SEED OF THE WOMAN, which basically means two things:

- 1) The Messiah was to be a man.
- 2) He was to be a man born of a woman in the sense that He would have no human father.

It is this latter point that brings us to our subject this morning in which I want to deal with three passages which teach us that the Messiah was prophesied to be God as well as man. And it is interesting to note that all three of the passages which speak of His Deity are three passages which speak also of His humanity -- and one of these three passages will be my text for next Sunday, the Lord willing, when we consider together the very place that the Messiah was to be born!

What are the three passages?

The first one is actually quoted in the NT passage we read a few minutes ago in our Scripture Reading. It is Isaiah 7:14. Matthew's quotation gives us absolute proof that Isaiah was writing about Christ, and that his prophecy was fulfilled when Christ came to earth 2,000 years ago, born of the virgin Mary. In its OT setting it reads like this:

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 actually says in the last clause of the verse, and SHE shall call his name Immanuel.

Actually she had been told, according to Luke 1:31, that His Name was to be "JESUS." It is never said in the Gospels that anyone ever called our Lord, "Immanuel." Therefore, the translation, She shall call his name Immanuel, actually means that she would know that her Son was both God and man. The angel Gabriel told her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the

Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Elisabeth called her, "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43), and so this would reinforce this fact upon Mary's heart. Her Son was to be both man and God!

A second OT passage which I want to consider with you this morning is Isaiah 9:6,

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

This verse also speaks of our Lord's humanity and His Deity:

- 1) "A child is born" speaks of His humanity.
- 2) "A son is given" speaks of His Deity.

Paul helps us to understand this language when he wrote in Gal. 4:4 that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." When Mary's child was born, God was giving His Son. He was true man and true God.

Thus, we have a second OT prophecy of the Deity of the Messiah.

The third passage will also be my text for next Lord's Day: Micah 5:2. Listen as I read it:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

It is here predicted that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. But He is also described as One Who is more than an ordinary human being. He is One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Before we look at one particular feature in all of these verses I want you to be sure to notice that all three of these prophecies of Christ, the Messiah, were given for the encouragement of the people of God in the Old Testament (Isaiah and Micah were contemporaries) -- and, therefore, they should be for our encouragement, too. The most encouraging thing that we can do is to look at Christ as He is revealed in the Word of God! Let us pray that this may be the case even in the time we have left this morning.

Let us look now, for just a few minutes, at

#### I. THE MESSIAH'S NAME, IMMANUEL.

Matthew interpreted it for us. He wrote in Matt. 1:23 that it means, "God with us."

But what is this to mean to us? What did God intend for it



to mean to the people in Isaiah's day? How is this an encouragement?

- A. First of all it meant that, when the Messsiah would come, that revelation of God which had been extended over many, many years, would suddenly be completed.

Christ would not only confirm everything that the writers of the OT had given, but He would go beyond all of that and complete the revelation. Listen to Heb. 1:1-3 (in part):

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son . . . Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person . . .

Paul wrote in Col. 2:9,  
For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Our Lord even told Philip, ". . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father . . ." (John 14:9).

That in itself would be enough, but there is more to be seen in the Name, Immanuel.

- B. It was a strengthening of that OT promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

One of the last things that our Lord said to His disciples before He returned to the Father was, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (age) (Matt. 28:20b).

And, as if this were not enough, we learn from Scripture that

- C. It was a great step ahead in making us understand our Lord's understanding of our needs.

Cf. Heb. 2:17,  
Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people.

And then, even though I am sure that there are many other things that could be said,

- D. It is the greatest proof we have that God is "for us" -- that He has not forsaken us in our sins, but that His

Son came to provide salvation for us.

In the words of Rom. 8:31,

What shall we then say to these things?

If God be for us, who can be against us?

All of this, and more, is to be seen in the fact that the Son of God in human flesh was called, "Immanuel."

But what about

## II. OUR LORD'S OTHER FOUR TITLES.

I want to refer briefly to those used in Isa. 9:6, linking Micah's statement about Christ with one of them, as you will see.

The four are:

- 1) "Wonderful Counsellor" (putting these two together).
- 2) "The mighty God."
- 3) "The everlasting Father."
- 4) "The Prince of Peace."

### A. "Wonderful Counsellor."

This certainly means that there is no greater Advisor, or Counsellor, for any human being, than our Lord Jesus Christ. His words are infallible. He will never lead you astray. See James 1:5. The Father and the Son are alike in this, as in all other things.

But the meaning here is deeper.

Link this with Paul's words in Rom. 11:34, which, in turn, Paul took from Isa. 40:13,

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

What was Paul thinking about? What did Isaiah have in mind? The answer is easy to find. They both were thinking and writing about the marvelous scheme of redemption, ordained of God from eternity past, and worked out in time -- the major part of which was in the coming of "Immanuel" to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins! Paul and Isaiah marvel at God's wise plan, His design to redeem -- and all that was involved in that marvelous salvation.

This is why Paul also wrote just before this: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God . . ."

This is where we need also to consider Micah's words.

The expression, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," certainly could only be said of One Who is eternal, but note that the emphasis is upon His "goings (plural) forth"!

He intimates here, that it would not be a sudden thing (my comment: i.e., a thing suddenly decided by God), that a prince should arise to govern the people; for it had been already long ago determined by God . . . God had from the beginning (my comment: i.e., from eternity) determined to give his people an eternal king (Calvin, Vol. XIV, p. 299).

This applies equally to all of His "goings forth," and to all that had to do with His redemptive work.

It was ordained from all eternity, and carried out in the fullness of God's time! Cf. Gal. 4:4.

But is there any distinction to be drawn between the eternal plan which God has laid out and His ability to see that it is carried out. Can men or circumstances stand in the way?

This is where our Lord's next title is so important!

B. "The mighty God."

I was interested and blessed to discover that the word that Isaiah used here for "mighty" is the same word that David used in Psalm 24, a Messianic Psalm, when he wrote,

Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

"Mighty" is a soldier's word; a word for the battlefield. It speaks of conflict, but it also speaks of victory. It is a word which is the explanation for the strength of Abraham's faith as Paul describes it in Rom. 4:21 -- that Abraham as "fully persuaded that, what God had promised, he was able also to perform"!

As the Lord commissioned His disciples to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations, He preceded His charge with those all important words: "All power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18b). It would have been useless of the disciples to go if the Lord could not have said this. But because our Lord is "the mighty God" "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

And the next title is related to the fulfillment of the purposes of God, too.

C. "The everlasting Father," or, the Father of eternity.

Our Lord is not only "a child" and "a son," but also "the everlasting Father" ("he that hath seen me hath seen the Father").

Cf. Phil. 4:19. Our Lord has the resources necessary so that every detail of the eternal plan can be carried out. There is no end to His provision for His people.

And, finally, we come to

D. "The Prince of Peace."

A prince in this sense is one who is sovereign. The idea is that the Lord is sovereign over our peace.

Cf. Isa. 26:3, 4; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:6, 7; 1 Thess. 5:23.

Concl.: When I began my message I said that in the context of all of these verses: Isa. 7:14

Isa. 9:6

Micah 5:2

you can see that God's purpose in making these revelations was for the encouragement of His people, to strengthen their faith -- and all of this, with regard to salvation: its plan, and the certainty that the plan would be carried out to its fulfillment.

May the Lord use these verses to encourage our hearts.

And I trust that any of you who do not know the Lord in salvation may be led of God to trust in Christ Who is more than sufficient that is required for your salvation and mine.

What is the special emphasis here? Is there any significance to the order of the names

"BETHLEHEM"

Micah 5:2

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2:1-12.

Intro: As we continue with the Old Testament Prophecies of Christ's First Advent, we note from our Scripture reading this morning that 700 years before Christ was born it was prophesied by the prophet Micah that He would be born in Bethlehem. One amazing thing which Luke records for us in the NT is that Joseph and the virgin Mary were living in Nazareth in the northern part of Israel at the very time when Mary was to give birth to our Lord. And what happened? Our sovereign God moved upon the heart of Caesar Augustus at this very time to issue a decree which required everybody to return to their own city for taxation. This meant that Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem at the very time when our Lord was born -- thus the Word of God was fulfilled! What a proof this was that

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will (Prov. 21:1).

Suddenly from the pages of ancient Jewish prophecy the name of Bethlehem became known around the world down to the present day as the birthplace of Jesus of Nazareth! The chief priests and the scribes told the wise men to go to Bethlehem. The Angel of the Lord told the shepherds,

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And after the angels returned to heaven the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

Let us consider Bethlehem this morning according to what is said about it in Scripture.

First of all,

I. SOME OF BETHLEHEM'S HISTORY.

Bethlehem goes back to very ancient times. It is first mentioned in the Bible in connection with

A. Rachel. Cf. Gen. 35:19; 48:7. It was at "Ephrath, which is Bethlehem," that Rachel died, and there she was buried. And you will remember that she died as Benjamin was born -- so it was in the vicinity of Bethlehem that we have Benjamin's birthplace.

The next important reference to Bethlehem has to do with

B. Naomi and Ruth and Boaz. The setting for most of the

book of Ruth is in Bethlehem. And you will remember that Ruth, through her married with Boaz, became a part of the Messianic family -- the line leading down to Christ.

But Bethlehem is noted most of all in the OT as the home of

C. David. It is recorded in 1 Sam. 17:12 that "David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah whose name was Jesse." It was at Bethlehem that Samuel anointed David as King of Israel. Bethlehem is known as "the city of David."

But in spite of this outstanding history, it seems that after the death of David Bethlehem became a rather insignificant place. Therefore, notice how Micah spoke of Bethlehem:

II. THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF BETHLEHEM: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Israel . . ." (Micah 5:2).

The word, "little," means both small in number and/or of little value, despised, worthless.

ONE THING THAT IS OFTEN TRUE OF GOD'S WORKS IS THAT HE CHOOSES (IT IS DELIBERATE) TO WORK WITH LITTLE THINGS AND PEOPLE:

One of the problems for Bethlehem was that it was located in the shadow of Jerusalem, which was only 5 or 6 miles away -- to the north!

It is even interesting to compare the number of times that Bethlehem is spoken of in Scripture with the number of times that Jerusalem is mentioned. How would you think they would compare?

In both the OT and the NT Bethlehem is only mentioned 53 times, while Jerusalem is mentioned approximately 800 times! This means that for every time that Bethlehem is mentioned once, Jerusalem is mentioned some 15 or 16 times.

MOSES  
GIDEON  
DAVID  
THE DISCIPLES  
PAUL

When you stop to think about it, it is amazing that our Lord was not born in Jerusalem!

But now I want you to notice something in Micah 5:2, and then look carefully at the way this verse is quoted by Matthew in Matt. 2:6.

In Micah 5:2 Micah addresses Bethlehem as it was then, "little," but he clearly implies that Bethlehem would not remain obscure, unimportant, despised. There would be a change. He cannot say when that change would take place, but there would be a change. This is evident in the words,

THE BOY'S LUNCH

. . . yet out of thee shall HE come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from

of old, from everlasting.

An event was going to take place in Bethlehem that would not and could not take place in any other city of the world! It was here that the Messiah would be born! Even the chief priests and the scribes of our Lord's day knew where to look for the birth of the Messiah! They told Herod that it would be, "In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet" -- and then they probably even quoted Micah 5:2!

But now I want you to look at the way Matthew has written this out to show

### III. THE PROMINENCE OF BETHLEHEM.

The Spirit of God has the right to make whatever emphasis He chooses to make. In Micah's prophecy he starts with the insignificance of Bethlehem in his day, looking ahead to the change, but Matthew writes after the change had been made -- and he stresses what Bethlehem had become!

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, ART NOT THE LEAST among the the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Suddenly that little, obscure, relatively unimportant village of Bethlehem had moved ahead of the glory of Jerusalem because it was here, not in Jerusalem, that our Lord came into the world! And Bethlehem could never be what she had been before! No other city in Israel or in any other country can claim to be the birthplace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

But I want you to be sure to see the reason for her prominence. It was not

- 1) Because of her history -- even though David had been born here.
- 2) Because of her proximity to Jerusalem -- which had probably been a reason for her obscurity. So it was not her location.

It was solely because Jesus Christ had been born there! It was Jesus Christ Who made the change in Bethlehem, and to Him belonged all of the glory. God had ordered it "from of old, from everlasting." Micah had prophesied that it would be here. And so it was!

I want to ask a question while all of this is fresh in our minds. It is this: WHY DO YOU THINK THAT GOD DID ALL OF THIS IN THE WAY THAT HE DID? WHY DID HE DECREE THAT HIS SON WOULD BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM? WHY NOT IN JERUSALEM, OR IN SOME OTHER MORE PROMINENT PLACE? WHY DID HE TAKE "LITTLE," INSIGNIFICANT, OBSCURE, DESPISED BETHLEHEM?

Would you let me suggest an answer? It seems that one reason

certainly must be that the Lord was setting before the whole world an illustration of what happens whenever anyone is saved. We have in all of this what I would like to call

#### IV. THE MESSAGE OF BETHLEHEM.

Let me prove this by asking you to turn to 1 Cor. 1:26-31.

(Read these verses commenting especially on " . . . base things . . . despised . . . things which are not," showing that we without Christ are just like Bethlehem without Christ!)

And why did God do it this way with Bethlehem? For exactly the same reasons that He has saved us the way He has --

- 1) that we would not glory in ourselves.
- 2) that we would see that the change in us is because of Christ.
- 3) that we would do all of our glorying in the Lord!

(Eph. 2:1-7 is another passage which can be used in the same way.)

Concl: It was part of our Lord's humiliation that He was born in Bethlehem, not in some prominent place -- and born in a stable like He was. But it was also a part, the most dreadful part, of His humiliation that He died for sinners. But it is through that death that He prepares for glory those who in themselves are vile, obscure, hopeless, and worthless. You do not need to prepare yourself to come to Him. Just come as you are, trust Him for your salvation, and He will make all of the changes that need to be made to make you acceptable to God!



THE PREACHER  
Isaiah 61:1, 2a

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:14-32.

Intro: " . . . one of the old Puritans said, 'God had only one Son, and he made a preacher of him'" (Spurgeon, Vol. 57, p. 73).

The Gospels make it very clear that our Lord was both a Teacher and a Preacher. We have many passages in each of the four Gospels which prove not only that He preached, but they show us what He preached!

Not only did He preach, but in Matthew 10 when He sent out the twelve disciples He charged them with this statement: "And as ye go, preach . . . (Matt. 10:7a).

Later, when the seventy were sent out, our Lord said to them, " . . . and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9b). They had a message to proclaim.

Among our Lord's last words to His disciples we find Him saying, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The book of Acts makes it very clear that preaching (and teaching) was predominant in the ministry of the Apostles and of the early Church. When the people of the Church were scattered out of Jerusalem because of the persecution, Luke tells us in Acts 8:4 that they "went every where preaching the word"!

In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul deals with the subject of preaching. He says this:

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 21).

Preaching indicates the proclamation of a message. Good preaching includes good teaching. Preaching can be public, to thousands of people, or it can be private -- to just one person! The Old Testament prophets were primarily preachers. The same can be said of the New Testament apostles. Their performance of miracles came to an end before the New Testament was completed, but preaching continues to be the vital ministry of the Church down to the present day. It is even said of John the Baptist who announced the coming of Israel's Messiah <sup>that he</sup> did so by preaching. Cf. Matt. 3:1.

But just now we are interested in the fact that our Lord came as a preacher. I am sure that we would all agree when I say that He was THE PREACHER, the Prince of preachers, the Preacher of preachers. No one could excel the Lord in anything that He did, and so there never has been a greater preacher than our Lord Jesus Christ!

However, let us turn to our Scripture reading. And let us pay particular attention, first of all, to

I. THE WAY IN WHICH OUR LORD PRESENTED HIMSELF TO THE JEWS IN NAZARETH (Luke 4:16-21). (Read and comment.)

Our Lord read from the opening part of Isaiah 61. In verse 21 He applied it to Himself, thus claiming to be the Servant of the Lord, Israel's Messiah!

Secondly, I would like for you to pay particular attention to

II. THE MEANING OF THE WORDS WHICH OUR LORD READ.

The first part of verse 22 (Luke 4) certainly indicates that our Lord explained what He had read. Note that verse 21 says that "he began to say unto them . . ."

He began with

- A. The reference to His anointing: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me . . ." See Luke 4:18a.

This is just as we have it in Isaiah 61 except Isaiah says, "because the Lord hath anointed me . . ."

We have

1. The involvement of all of them members of the Godhead -- which certainly indicates how extremely important this is. You have the Holy Spirit, "of the Lord" -- pointing to the Father, and "me," a reference to Christ.

The implication is also here that the coming of the Messiah with His message and His mission to men was not something that originated with men, nor even wanted by men, but that it was completely the work of the Father in conjunction with the Son and the Holy Spirit.

And, after seeing this, we are not too surprised when we look into

2. The meaning of the word, "anointed."

Let me give it to you directly from my Greek Lexicon (dictionary). It means according to Thayer, p. 673, "Consecrating Jesus to the Messianic office, and furnishing him with powers necessary for its administration."

Thus, it means two things:

- 1) That our Lord was divinely authorized to do the work of preaching, and
- 2) That He was given by His anointing all of the power necessary for the successful completion of His mission to the earth.

This latter part is especially important for us to remember when we come to the latter part of this passage. See Luke 4:28-30.

When was the Lord anointed? See Luke 3:21, 22.

The ministry of Jesus Christ even with reference to His preaching was certain to succeed by virtue of the anointing which was upon Him. You must always look at the life and ministry of Christ in this light if you are to understand it as it was -- not a failure in any sense, but that He fully accomplished all that He came to do!

Next notice

#### B. The message He preached.

Will you notice that the word, "preach," is found three times in Luke 4:18, 19? The first word is different from the second and third (which are the same). The first needs all of these words to translate it: "to preach the gospel." The last two words simply mean to proclaim something, to announce or declare.

So actually two things are stated about our Lord's message:

- 1) That it was good news! (Read verses 18, 19 again.) What better news could there be? And this is the only place you will ever hear that good news!
- 2) That this present time is "the acceptable year of the Lord" -- by which He did not mean a twelve-month period, but this present age. "Acceptable" in the Greek means the time when men can be saved and when the blessings of God in salvation flow with a profuse abundance!

Turn back to Isaiah 61 and note where the Lord stopped His reading. Perhaps this was what amazed the Jews in the synagogue in Nazareth. The time is coming when "the

acceptable year of the Lord" will be over, "and the day of vengeance of our God" will be here! That "acceptable" time is over even now for anyone who dies with Christ as his Saviour. Little did those Jews realize what they were doing when they put the Lord out of the synagogue, and drove Him out of the city, and would have killed Him if they could have done so.

They were like those Jews in Antioch of Pisidia who, opposing Paul and Barnabas, judged themselves "unworthy of eternal life" (Acts 13:46).

People today are gripped with various fears, but the greatest fear of all should be the possibility that they might suddenly be ushered into eternity without Christ!

But let us also look for a moment at

### C. The people to whom the Lord was sent.

The context itself would teach us that the Lord is not referring to those who were

- materially "poor" (although they would be included), nor just to those who were
- actually "captives," nor just to those who were
- physically "blind,"

but that these and the other terms used in Isa. 61:1 were used to describe the spiritual condition of sinners, the effect that sin has upon people's lives.

The Lord was speaking to a synangogue of people who fell into these categories -- but this didn't know it! As Luke's account goes on to show, they were more interested in the physical and the earthly than they were in the spiritual and the heavenly.

What a wonderful day it is in any person's life when he begins to see himself as he is in the sight of the Lord!

Before I conclude, let me say just a word about

### III. THE RESULTS OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY IN NAZARETH.

Note the pressure that He was under to give them a display of His ability to perform miracles. He faced the question: SHOULD I GIVE ~~THEM~~ WHAT THEY WANT, OR WHAT THEY NEED? After all, they were listening! Would not a miracle or two make them even more receptive?

Here is an important lesson for all of us -- a very practical lesson which we must learn if we are to be faithful preachers

of the Word. He gave them a lesson from their own Scriptures which they should have known -- from the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, the two greatest miracle workers of the OT!

What was this lesson? It was a lesson in the sovereignty of God -- a lesson that teaches us that God is accomplishing what He has set out to do.

He told them about a Gentile widow who was poor, and who faced starvation. He told them about a Gentile army captain who was a leper -- and he knew that he was. Elijah was sent to the widow, and he met her need; Naaman was brought to Elisha in a providential way, and he was healed.

Concl: Oh, how the Jews hated this! For anyone, but especially for Gentiles!

Bishop Ryle, in his commentary on this passage in Luke says this: Of all the doctrines of the Bible none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God's sovereignty.

And then he adds:

Let us settle it in our minds that, whether we like it or not, the sovereignty of God is a doctrine clearly revealed in the Bible, and a fact clearly to be seen in the world (Ryle, Luke, Vol. I, p. 122 -- both quotations).

So, what we learn from our Lord's Example as a Preacher? Three things:

- 1) God has taken the initiative in man's salvation. It is never initiated by man.
- 2) God has given us the message by which men will be saved, the Gospel, and we must never deviate from that message.
- 3) God will bless the message as it pleases Him. It is ours to be faithful in preaching the Gospel; it is God's work to use it for His own glory. Isa. 55:10,11, "For as... So..."

How do you respond to what the Lord has said in this passage? Is Christ your Saviour? Has God shown you your need? Then turn to Christ. Believe in Him. There is no other way of salvation. God will receive you if you come to Him through the merit of Christ's work.

FORSAKEN BY GOD  
Psalm 22

Intro: For those of you who are with us this morning for the first time during this present series of messages, let me explain that for the past several Sundays I have been speaking on the subject, OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST, or, OF CHRIST'S FIRST ADVENT.

My text this morning is Psalm 22.

If I need some justification for speaking on a Psalm like this on the Sunday before Christmas, let me ask you to pay particular attention to verses 9, 10. (Read.)

However, this has been called, THE PSALM OF THE CROSS. See Spurgeon's Treasury of David, Vol. I, p. 324. Another writer has made this comment:

The Psalm so vividly sets before us not merely the sufferings of the Crucified One, but also the salvation of the world arising out of His resurrection and its sacramental efficacy, that it seems more like history than prophecy (italics mine).

Cf. Delitzsch on the Psalms, Vol. I, pp. 305, 306.

Undoubtedly in reading through this Psalm you have noticed expressions which are either found in the Gospel records of the suffering and death of our Lord, or expressions which closely resemble those found in the Gospels. E.g.,

1) V. 1 gives us some of the very words spoken by our Lord from the Cross. You will find them in Matt. 27:46 and also in Mark 15:34.

There are three<sup>e</sup> unusual things about these quotations in Matthew and Mark: One, they are found only in these two Gospels. Two, they are the only quotation given by Matthew and Mark. (Luke gives three, and John gives the other three.) Three, this is the only word from our Lord on the Cross which is given also in Hebrew (although Mark's is evidently taken from the Syriac). These facts undoubtedly give this expression a place of unusual importance.

2) V. 8 is found also in Matt. 27:43.

3) V. 16 is clearly a reference to the crucifixion.

4) V. 18 predicts what is recorded in John 19:24.

5) V. 22 is quoted in Heb. 2:12.

6) Vv. 27-30 are clearly in line with the salvation passages of the Old Testament, and also of some found in the New Testament.

7) There are even some who feel that the last words of the Psalm, "that he hath done this," should be translated, that He hath finished this, anticipating another word from our Lord on the Cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30).

So the evidence is overwhelming which relates this to Christ and His first coming.

In preparation for my message this morning I have read Psalms 22, 23, and 24 over 20 times. I say this to encourage you to do the same. The three Psalms go together.

- 1) Psalm 22 is the Psalm of Christ, the Suffering One.
- 2) Psalm 23 is the Psalm of Christ, the Shepherd.
- 3) Psalm 24 is the Psalm of Christ, the coming Sovereign of all the earth!

Even their order in the Scriptures is significant!

When we think of the coming of Christ to the earth, it is very important for us to know the answer to the question, WHY DID HE COME? And an examination of the Scriptures will prove to us that there is more than one answer to that question. E.g.,

- 1) He came to the earth to provide salvation for us.
- 2) He also came to complete the revelation of God which had been started in the Garden of Eden, but never really finished.
- 3) But -- and this seems to be the main emphasis in Psalm 22 -- He came as indicated in Heb. 4:14-16,  
Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

No one is saved very long until he experiences what the saints in past days have called, God's desertions. That is really the subject of this Psalm. The keynote is sounded in verses 1, 2. To be sure this is a Psalm of David, and it does reflect David's experience, probably as he was fleeing from Saul. But this Psalm goes far beyond anything that David experienced by way of God's desertions; this Psalm belongs uniquely to our Lord Jesus Christ -- and how it strengthens the picture that we have of Him in Psalm 23!

Let us consider the Psalm itself.

It obviously has two parts: vv. 1-21, and vv. 22-29.

Graham Scroggie says that it begins with a SOB, and ends with a SONG.

Spurgeon interprets that Psalm as having to do entirely with the Cross. In fact, he suggests that it is possible that our Lord quoted this Psalm while He was hanging on the Cross.

Scroggie sees the Cross in vv. 1-21, but the resurrection in vv. 22-31.

Andrew Bonar has still another idea: that vv. 1-21 have to do

our Lord's first coming -- His sufferings; that vv. 22-31 have to do with His second coming -- His glory!

All of these ideas have merit. It is interesting that all of these men related the first part of the Psalm (vv. 1-21) to the Cross. Let me, for our consideration this morning, recognize these two major divisions, but I would like to divide the second division into two parts so that we have this:

- I. The Messiah's Prayer (vv. 1-21).
- II. The Messiah's Praise (vv. 22-25).
- III. The Messiah's Prophecy (vv. 26-31).

#### I. THE MESSIAH'S PRAYER (Psa. 22:1-21).

If you relate your own difficulties to those experienced by our Lord, I am sure that you (and I) will admit that neither we nor any other person has ever suffered like our Lord did.

His prayer indicates that He suffered in three ways -- and yet they were all interrelated with each other:

- 1) In vv. 1, 2 we see our Lord's agony of soul, the inner sufferings which can never be adequately expressed in words.
- 2) In vv. 6-8 we see the ridicule, the reproach, that was hurled at our Lord by His enemies, words which seem to indicate that they, too, recognized that God had left Him alone -- and they loved to throw it in His face!
- 3) And then we have that detailed description of the physical sufferings of the Messiah -- in vv. 11-21. There is nothing like it in the Old Testament unless it might be in Isaiah 53, and many are of the opinion that there is no description of our Lord's sufferings comparable to this even in the New Testament!

All through this passage the Son is speaking to the Father. He is obviously confused, dismayed, but intense in His praying. This is the greatest of all examples of importunate prayer.

But I want you to notice another thing of interest in our Lord's prayer: IT IS THE WAY IN WHICH HE DRAWS ENCOURAGEMENT FOR HIMSELF. There are three encouragements -- two in vv. 3-5, and one in vv. 9, 10.

They have to do with:

- 1) The holy character of God (v. 3).
- 2) The experience of the fathers of Israel (vv. 4, 5).
- 3) The hand of God even in the birth of our Lord (vv. 9, 10). Cf. also of Gal. 1:15 and its reference to the Apostle Paul. There is a great mystery here, and probably one which no one can really explain -- the work that God does in the hearts of His own before birth, and immediately after!



Oh, what holy ground we stand on here! One writer says, "This is true wrestling; let us learn the art" (Spurgeon in his Treasury of David, I, 326).

But let us go on. The encouraging thing about this Psalm is that it does not end with v. 21. Neither did our Lord's experience end at Calvary. And so we go on to read of

## II. THE MESSIAH'S PRAISE (Psa. 22:22-25).

Does God cast us off forever? Has He forgotten to be gracious? Is His mercy exhausted? NO! NO! NO!

Read these words, and take heart! Read these words, and remember the empty tomb! Read these words, and remember the ascension! Read these words, and then read Psalm 23, and follow that with Psalm 24. Read these words, and then read again Heb. 4:14-16. Read these words, and be hopeful!

If these words do not mean anything else they mean this: YOU AND I SHOULD CONTINUE TO TRUST THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF OUR TRIALS, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON, THAN UPON THE FIRM RECOMMENDATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!

God is holy. He did not fail the fathers -- any of them! Nor did He fail the Lord Jesus. And we can be sure that He will not fail us! This is one of the most important messages of Christmas!

And then, as though that were not enough, the Psalm closes with

## III. THE MESSIAH'S PROPHECY (Psa. 22:26-31).

This is David's version of Phil. 2:5-11.

Note how positive the statements are, how certain! Note especially v. 28, and relate it to the apparent contradictory state of things in the first part of Psalm 22!

"They shall come." See v. 31.

Sovereign grace shall bring out from among men the bloodbought ones. Nothing shall thwart the divine purpose. The chosen shall come to life, to faith, to pardon, to heaven. In this the dying Saviour finds a sacred satisfaction. Toiling servant of God, be glad at the thought that the eternal purpose of God shall suffer neither let nor hindrance (Spurgeon, Treasury of David, I, 334).

Concl: We cannot trust our God in vain! Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning! See again Psalm 23, 24 and Hebrews 4:14-16.

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EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS.

our Lord out of their city, and had it not been for an exercise of miraculous power on His part, they would doubtless have put Him to a violent death.

Of all the doctrines of the Bible none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God's sovereignty. To be told that God is great, and just, and holy, and pure, man can bear. But to be told that "He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy,"—that He "giveth no account of His matters,"—that it is "not of him" that will eth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,"—these are truths that natural man cannot stand; they often call forth all his enmity against God, and fill him with wrath. Nothing, in short, will make him submit to them but the humbling teaching of the Holy Ghost.

Let us settle it in our minds that, whether we like it or not, the sovereignty of God is a doctrine clearly revealed in the Bible, and a fact clearly to be seen in the world. Upon no other principle can we ever explain why some members of a family are converted, and others live and die in sin,—why some quarters of the earth are enlightened by Christianity, and others remain buried in heathenism. One account only can be given of all this. All is ordered by the sovereign hand of God. Let us pray for humility in respect of this deep thing. Let us remember that our life is but a vapour, and that our best knowledge, compared to that of God, is perfect folly. Let us be thankful for such light as we enjoy ourselves, and use it diligently while we have it. And let us not doubt that at the last day the whole world shall be convinced, that He who now "gives no account of His matters" has done all things well.

## THE INCORRUPTIBLE ONE

## Psalm 16

Intro: Peter, in Acts 2:25-28, and by his explanation of Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:29-32, gives us the authority to call Psalm 16 a Messianic Psalm. (Read Acts 2:22-32.)

In explaining the superscription of the Psalm, "Michtam of David," Franz Delitzsch says that this is "a poem containing pithy sayings" (I, 218). The dictionary defines pithy as meaning a saying that is "full of meaning, substance, or force" (New World Dictionary, p. 567).

Thus, this is a Psalm, a Messianic Psalm predicting the resurrection of Christ, in which we have sayings which could be put up on the wall of your home, or written on a monument somewhere, or even taken out to become the testimony of a person's life, or even the text of a sermon!

The only other Psalms which carry this heading, "Michtam of David," are Psalms 56-60.

It is a Psalm which is a prayer, and yet there is only one request in the entire Psalm: verse 1.

It is a Psalm in which the Psalmist concerning what he is doing, or will do, or will not do, or what he possesses:

- 1) V. 1, "in thee do I put my trust."
- 2) V. 2, "(O my soul,) thou hast said unto the Lord . . ."
- 3) V. 4, "their drink offerings will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips."
- 4) V. 6, "I have a goodly heritage."
- § V. 7, "I will bless the Lord."
- § V. 8, "I have set the Lord always before me."  
"I shall not be moved."

It is good for us to consider all of these statements not only as spoken by the Messiah (Christ), but also as spoken by David. They ought also to be the statements of every believer.

For our consideration of this Psalm just now, let me suggest four divisions. And let us think of them as coming from our Lord in His humanity while He was here on earth. They anticipate both His death and His resurrection. For our Lord to be able to say these things should be an encouragement for us to do the same. Here are the divisions:

- I. THE MESSIAH'S PETITION (v. 1).
- II. THE MESSIAH'S DEEP CONVICTIONS (vv. 2-4).
- III. THE MESSIAH'S DELIGHT IN JEHOVAH (vv. 5-8).
- IV. THE MESSIAH'S HOPE (vv. 9-11).

First of all, let us look at

I. THE MESSIAH'S PETITION -- the only one in the Psalm (Psa. 16:1).

Here we see our Lord's dependence upon His Father during His days on earth. He prays to be guarded, protected, watched over as a shepherd looks out for his sheep.

"God" is the Hebrew word, EL, which emphasizes the omnipotence of God Who is able to do all that our Lord needed as well as all that any of His people will ever need.

At the very moment in which these words were spoken our Lord (as well as David) is pictured as having fled in His heart to the Lord, and as having taken refuge there. In other words, He was not going to do it; He had already done it!

II. THE MESSIAH'S DEEP CONVICTIONS (Psa. 16:2-4).

Here are some of those "pithy" sayings.

A. First, concerning Jehovah, His Adonai (v. 2).

Having taken His place as One Who was under the authority of His Master (the One Who owned Him), He declares that He does not have to go beyond Adonai to find all that really pleases and satisfies Him: "my goodness extendeth not to thee" (a poor translation of one of the most powerful and important statements of Scripture)!

Do we believe this, and do we live like we believe it?

B. Second among His deep convictions: concerning the people of God (v. 3).

Think of the Lord saying this!

The Father finds His delight in His Son; the Son finds His delight in His Father and in His people!

The Lord sees His people as "saints," "excellent," or glorious (glorified). He loves them, desires them, wills to have them.

These first two statements illustrate the first two commandments in the Law.

C. Third -- concerning the results of seeking after other gods (v. 4).

What a revelation, and how tragic that so many people in the world do not know this! Have we forgotten? What are

some of the twentieth century gods? Are we as anxious to avoid evil as David was, and as our Lord was?

This brings us to the third main division:

### III. THE MESSIAH'S DELIGHT IN JEHOVAH (vv. 5-8).

Last Sunday we saw in Psalm 22 that the greatest reason we have for trusting the Father is that the Son encourages us to trust Him, commands us to trust Him. We have the same emphasis here in this section.

Listen to the rendering of vv. 5, 6 in the NIV, and then think of how these words have to do with all of us who know Christ, as well as to Christ:

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;  
you have made my lot secure.  
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.

The only thing that is wrong with this translation is that it does not emphasize strongly enough that the Messiah is talking about what He has in the Father -- that His inheritance is the Father! But, noting that, note also:

- 1) That our relationship with the Lord is not of our doing; it is what the Lord has "assigned" for us, as well as for Him.
- 2) It is "secure."
- 3) It is an inheritance which has brought contentment, complete satisfaction (in support of v. 2b).

Consequently He says, "I will bless the Lord." "Bless" is the verb we get our word, berachah, from. It means not only to praise, but to worship in a kneeling position. Thus, humbling one's self before God is also included.

What does the Messiah "bless" the Father for? How does this apply to us?

- 1) For the work of the Word in His heart -- "counsel," which includes revealing, convicting, persuading. And behind the word, "counsel," is the idea of having the power, the strength, to command obedience. This all shows the irresistible work of God upon the hearts of men through His Word.

He does not work in us against our will, but He changes our will by His Word.

- 2) For the inner work, prompted by His own heart ("my reins"), which went on "in the night seasons." It is interesting at this point to contemplate those many nights which our Lord spent in prayer with His Father as the Father ministered to Him.

Consequently, what was He doing? See v. 8 -- and what a

pithy saying this is! "I have set the Lord always before me" -- always thinking about Him, always remembering Him, always meditating on Him, always learning of Him, always trusting Him, always seeing Him in every situation.

To put the Father "at my right hand" is another way of expressing total acceptance and complete satisfaction. And consequently, as a result of all that has preceded, "I shall not be moved," i.e., totter, or fall. It speaks of that which in reality can never happen. He will stand firm and secure!

This is the answer to all of our spineless lack of conviction and failure to stand in difficult times. There is so much for us to learn from this Psalm from David himself, but even more when we remember that this is a Psalm of our Lord!

Finally . . .

#### IV. THE MESSIAH'S HOPE (vv. 9-11).

In one sense, this is the inevitable hope that is guaranteed by the promises of God, but, in another sense, at least the enjoyment and anticipation of it is the result of all that has gone before in the Psalm.

V. 9a deals with the present -- inward and outward rejoicing that knows no limitation.

Vv. 9b, 10 deal with death and the grave. God will not cut Him loose, nor desert Him. He will die and be buried, but he will not stay in the grave. God will not allow it -- for His Pious One, One Who has shown such trust and such love for God!

V. 11, while having some application to the present, deals primarily with the future, and heaven. Even the way back to glory was prepared and mapped out by the Father for the Son -- the place where there is absolute satiety and uninterrupted joy. The one who places the Lord at his right hand now (v. 8) will one day be at the Father's right hand in heaven (v. 11).

Concl: The prayer of v. 1 is answered far beyond our expectations -- leading from faith, all through the trials of life, experiencing here the incomparable joy of knowing the Lord and walking with Him, going through death and the grave to the eternal joys in heaven.

(If time permits, read the Psalm from the Scottish Psalter.)