



# REFORMED

## — P A V I L I O N —

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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.  
—Psalm 27:5*

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Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. —Exodus 23:19

### Gospel Nourishment

**H**ow abundantly God nourishes his people by the gospel of Jesus Christ! In the Old Testament God declared the nourishment of the gospel in language that may sound strange to us: “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.” In the New Testament God declared that very same message of gospel nourishment in language that sounds more familiar: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere [pure] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2:2–3). But whether in the language of the Old Testament or the New, God declares to his weary and famished people that he nourishes us to spiritual health and strength by the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Oh, but how much trouble men have caused themselves over this little verse! The Jews think that it is a dietary law that prohibits serving meat and dairy together during a meal. Others think that it is a prohibition against some magical fertility rite of the Canaanites, which magic the Canaanites supposedly unlocked by boiling a lamb in its mother's milk. Others think that it is a prohibition against cruelty and an exhortation to kindness, it being considered cruel to cook a lamb or kid in the milk of its dam. Others think that it is a prohibition against the wanton luxury of mellowing the strong flavor of goat meat by boiling it in milk. Others think that it is a prohibition against a family member's lifting his hand against a family member in discipline, forgetting that scripture often requires family to be the first to discipline the wayward. Others simply shrug off the verse, saying that we do not know what it means, with the implication that we cannot know what it means.

But consider God's declaration to Israel: “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.” Though that Hebrew idiom may seem obscure by itself, it becomes clear in its context. Three times in the Old Testament God repeats this statement; and every time, the context is the Old Testament feasts.

The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. (Ex. 23:19)

The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. (Ex. 34:26)

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk. Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. (Deut. 14:21–23)

Therefore, “Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk” is God's commentary on the feasts. That is, the statement was intended to explain the feasts, not to be an additional ceremonial command regarding the feasts. The statement is not to be interpreted as a law but as a proverb; not as a command but as a commentary. The statement could be rendered this way to capture its meaning: “No one boils a lamb in its mother's milk.” By the statement God was

declaring that he gave the Old Testament feasts for his people's nourishment and abundance, not for their impoverishment and death. After all, why does God give milk to a dam? A mother's milk is not given to be the stew in which her lamb is boiled but to be the sustenance by which her lamb is nourished. Of course "thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk" because that is not what mother's milk is for! Just as God gives a dam's milk to enliven and nourish her lamb, so God gave the Old Testament feasts to enliven and nourish his people spiritually.

The people, in their folly, might doubt that the feasts were good for them. They had to bring the first and best of their crops to the feasts—a tax to impoverish them! They had to leave their homes and travel to Jerusalem—a journey to weary them! Over against the folly of the people, God declared to them the comforting truth of the feasts. The feasts were like mother's milk, which does not boil the kids but blesses them. The feasts were not for the people's destruction but for their delight. For the feasts were Jesus Christ. Jesus is our passover. Jesus is our atonement.

Jesus is our tabernacle. The feasts testified to God's poor and weary and weak people that he was their fullness and their sustenance and their strength in Christ. Mother's milk! The pure milk of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by which they grew!

So also today, God testifies to his empty people that he fills us by the gospel of Jesus Christ. In our folly we might think that the gospel is not good for us. The gospel is not a slick program that attracts the crowds—we are such a small scrap! The gospel brings so much reproach and loss—we die all the day long! Over against our folly God declares to us the comforting truth of the gospel. The gospel is like mother's milk, by which we are enlivened and fed. We die all the day for the gospel, but in the gospel we taste that God is gracious and see that God is good. The gospel is not for our destruction but for our delight. For the gospel is Jesus Christ!

No one seethes a kid in its mother's milk. Of course not! So also you are not destroyed but saved by the pure milk of the word of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—AL



## God of God: Nicea's Septendecicentennial (4)

### The Deposition of Arius

Because the bishop Alexander had oversight of the presbyter Arius, Alexander sought to correct Arius through instruction. But Arius, who denied that Jesus is God, refused to be instructed by Alexander, who affirmed that Jesus is God. The only course left for Alexander was to depose Arius from office. At a council meeting of one hundred Egyptian and Libyan bishops in Alexandria, Egypt, in AD 321, Arius' views were condemned as heretical, and Arius and his followers were deposed from their offices and excommunicated from the church.

Arius did not submit to his deposition. He was very popular in the city of Alexandria, and the public considered his deposition to be an outrage. With Arius' heresy firmly lodged in the people's hearts through his irresistibly catchy hymn, they would not suffer his removal from the church. "Soon there were popular demonstrations in Alexandria, with people marching in the streets chanting Arius's theological refrains."<sup>1</sup> Arius also had influential friends among the bishops of the church. He and many other ministers of the day had been trained in the seminary of Antioch under a beloved professor, Lucian, who apparently also had some erroneous views about Jesus. Arius appealed to his "fellow Lucianists," who were now in powerful positions throughout the church. These ministers came to Arius' defense and "wrote letters declaring that the deposed presbyter was correct, and that it was Alexander who was teaching false doctrine."<sup>2</sup>

What Alexander did next would have far-reaching implications in the Christian church. Alexander wrote a letter to be circulated to all the Christian churches in the world, warning them against Arius and his heresy. The letter was signed by many presbyters and deacons, indicating that the contents of the letter were not merely Alexander's private opinions on the matter but the judgment of Christ's church in Alexandria and other places. Alexander's letter, "The Deposition of Arius," is republished in full elsewhere in this issue.

Alexander's letter was exactly the need of the day. It did not have the effect of smoothing over the controversy, though it is always man's inclination to smooth over doctrinal controversy. But smoothing over controversy inevitably means making a compromise with the lie, and Alexander's letter made no compromise with Arius' lie. Rather, Alexander's letter established the controversy as an unbridgeable divide. On one side was the truth—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever. On the other side was the lie—there was when he was not. Alexander's letter condemned the lie and exposed Arius as a heretic. "Bishop rose against bishop, and province against province. The controversy soon involved, through the importance of the subject and the zeal of the parties, the entire church, and transformed the whole Christian East into a theological battle-field."<sup>3</sup>

Into the fray stepped Emperor Constantine.  
To be continued...

—AL

<sup>1</sup> Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 185.

<sup>2</sup> González, *The Story of Christianity*, 185.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity* (1910; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 621.

## The Deposition of Arius

**A**lexander's Deposition of Arius and his companions, and Encyclical Letter on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Alexander, being assembled with his beloved brethren, the Presbyters and Deacons of Alexandria, and the Mareotis, greets them in the Lord.

Although you have already subscribed to the letter I addressed to Arius and his fellows, exhorting them to renounce his impiety, and to submit themselves to the sound Catholic Faith, and have shewn your right-mindedness and agreement in the doctrines of the Catholic Church: yet forasmuch as I have written also to our fellow-ministers in every place concerning Arius and his fellows, and especially since some of you, as the Presbyters Chares and Pistus, and the Deacons Serapion, Parammon, Zosimus, and Irenæus, have joined Arius and his fellows, and been content to suffer deposition with them, I thought it needful to assemble together you, the Clergy of the city, and to send for you the Clergy of the Mareotis, in order that you may learn what I am now writing, and may testify your agreement thereto, and give your concurrence in the deposition of Arius, Pistus, and their fellows. For it is desirable that you should be made acquainted with what I write, and that each of you should heartily embrace it, as though he had written it himself.

A Copy.

To his dearly beloved and most honoured fellow-ministers of the Catholic Church in every place, Alexander sends health in the Lord.

1. As there is one body of the Catholic Church, and a command is given us in the sacred Scriptures to preserve the bond of unity and peace, it is agreeable thereto that we should write and signify to one another whatever is
2. Now those who became apostates are these, Arius, Achilles, Aeithales, Carpones, another Arius, and Sarmates, sometime Presbyters: Euzoïus, Lucius, Julius, Menas, Helladius, and

done by each of us individually; so that whether one member suffer or rejoice, we may either suffer or rejoice with one another. Now there are gone forth in this diocese, at this time, certain lawless men, enemies of Christ, teaching an apostasy, which one may justly suspect and designate as a forerunner of Antichrist. I was desirous to pass such a matter by without notice, in the hope that perhaps the evil would spend itself among its supporters, and not extend to other places to defile the ears of the simple. But seeing that Eusebius, now of Nicomedia, who thinks that the government of the Church rests with him, because retribution has not come upon him for his desertion of Berytus, when he had cast an eye of desire on the Church of the Nicomedians, begins to support these apostates, and has taken upon him to write letters every where in their behalf, if by any means he may draw in certain ignorant persons to this most base and antichristian heresy; I am therefore constrained, knowing what is written in the law, no longer to hold my peace, but to make it known to you all; that you may understand who the apostates are, and the cavils which their heresy has adopted, and that, should Eusebius write to you, you may pay no attention to him, for he now desires by means of these men to exhibit anew his old malevolence, which has so long been concealed, pretending to write in their favour, while in truth it clearly appears, that he does it to forward his own interests.

<sup>1</sup> "Deposition of Arius," [https://biblehub.com/library/athanasius/select\\_works\\_and\\_letters\\_or\\_athanasius/deposition\\_of\\_arius.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/athanasius/select_works_and_letters_or_athanasius/deposition_of_arius.htm), accessed June 27, 2025.



Gaius, sometime Deacons: and with them Secundus and Theonas, sometime called Bishops. And the novelties they have invented and put forth contrary to the Scriptures are these following: — God was not always a Father, but there was a time when God was not a Father. The Word of God was not always, but originated from things that were not; for God that is, has made him that was not, of that which was not; wherefore there was a time when He was not; for the Son is a creature and a work. Neither is He like in essence to the Father; neither is He the true and natural Word of the Father; neither is He His true Wisdom; but He is one of the things made and created, and is called the Word and Wisdom by an abuse of terms, since He Himself originated by the proper Word of God, and by the Wisdom that is in God, by which God has made not only all other things but Him also. Wherefore He is by nature subject to change and variation as are all rational creatures. And the Word is foreign from the essence of the Father, and is alien and separated therefrom. And the Father cannot be described by the Son, for the Word does not know the Father perfectly and accurately, neither can He see Him perfectly. Moreover, the Son knows not His own essence as it really is; for He is made for us, that God might create us by Him, as by an instrument; and He would not have existed, had not God wished to create us. Accordingly, when some one asked them, whether the Word of God can possibly change as the devil changed, they were not afraid to say that He can; for being something made and created, His nature is subject to change.

3. Now when Arius and his fellows made these assertions, and shamelessly avowed them, we being assembled with the Bishops of Egypt and Libya, nearly a hundred in number, anathematized both them and their followers. But Eusebius and his fellows admitted them to communion, being desirous to mingle falsehood with the truth, and impiety

with piety. But they will not be able to do so, for the truth must prevail; neither is there any “communion of light with darkness,” nor any “concord of Christ with Belial.” For who ever heard such assertions before? or who that hears them now is not astonished and does not stop his ears lest they should be defiled with such language? Who that has heard the words of John, “In the beginning was the Word,” will not denounce the saying of these men, that “there was a time when He was not?” Or who that has heard in the Gospel, “the Only-begotten Son,” and “by Him were all things made,” will not detest their declaration that He is “one of the things that were made.” For how can He be one of those things which were made by Himself? Or how can He be the Only-begotten, when, according to them, He is counted as one among the rest, since He is Himself a creature and a work? And how can He be “made of things that were not,” when the Father saith, “My heart hath uttered a good Word,” and “Out of the womb I have begotten Thee before the morning star?” Or again, how is He “unlike in substance to the Father,” seeing He is the perfect “image” and “brightness” of the Father, and that He saith, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father?” And if the Son is the “Word” and “Wisdom” of God, how was there “a time when He was not?” It is the same as if they should say that God was once without Word and without Wisdom. And how is He “subject to change and variation,” Who says, by Himself, “I am in the Father, and the Father in Me,” and “I and the Father are One;” and by the Prophet, “Behold Me, for I am, and I change not?” For although one may refer this expression to the Father, yet it may now be more aptly spoken of the Word, viz., that though He has been made man, He has not changed; but as the Apostle has said, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” And who can have persuaded them to say, that He was made for us, whereas Paul writes, “for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things?”

4. As to their blasphemous position that “the Son knows not the Father perfectly,” we ought not to wonder at it; for having once set themselves to fight against Christ, they contradict even His express words, since He says, “As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father.” Now if the Father knows the Son but in part, then it is evident that the Son does not know the Father perfectly; but if it is not lawful to say this, but the Father does know the Son perfectly, then it is evident that as the Father knows His own Word, so also the Word knows His own Father Whose Word He is.
5. By these arguments and references to the sacred Scriptures we frequently overthrew them; but they changed like chameleons, and again shifted their ground, striving to bring upon themselves that sentence, “when the wicked falleth into the depth of evils, he despiseth.” There have been many heresies before them, which, venturing further than they ought, have fallen into folly; but these men by endeavouring in all their cavils to overthrow the Divinity of the Word, have justified the other in comparison of themselves, as approaching nearer to Antichrist. Wherefore they have been excommunicated and anathematized by the Church. We grieve for their destruction, and especially because, having once been instructed in the doctrines of the Church, they have now sprung away. Yet we are not greatly surprised, for Hymenæus and Philetus did the same, and before them Judas, who followed the Saviour, but afterwards became a traitor and an apostate.

And concerning these same persons, we have not been left without instruction; for our Lord has forewarned us; “Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and the time draweth near, and they shall deceive many: go ye not after them;” while Paul, who was taught these things by our Saviour, wrote that “in the latter times some shall depart from the sound faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, which reject the truth.”

6. Since then our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has instructed us by His own mouth, and also hath signified to us by the Apostle concerning such men, we accordingly being personal witnesses of their impiety, have anathematized, as we said, all such, and declared them to be alien from the Catholic Faith and Church. And we have made this known to your piety, dearly beloved and most honoured fellow-ministers, in order that should any of them have the boldness to come unto you, you may not receive them, nor comply with the desire of Eusebius, or any other person writing in their behalf. For it becomes us who are Christians to turn away from all who speak or think any thing against Christ, as being enemies of God, and destroyers of souls; and not even to “bid such God speed,” lest we become partakers of their sins, as the blessed John hath charged us. Salute the brethren that are with you. They that are with me salute you.

[Here follow the signatures of many presbyters and deacons from Alexandria in Egypt and Mareotis near Libya.]





## The Psalms of Jesus

### Introduction

The topic of our speech this morning is “The Psalms of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> The book of psalms is not widely appreciated in the church world today. The psalms are very ancient songs, and they sound like ancient songs. Moses the man of God wrote Psalm 90, which may be the earliest of the psalms, which means that that psalm is some 3500 years old. David wrote many of the psalms, which means that many of the psalms are three thousand years old. They are very ancient songs, and they sound like ancient songs; thus many people today do not appreciate the book of psalms.

The psalms are also often considered to be very gloomy songs. The psalms contain much violence. There is warfare in the psalms. There are the blood of enemies and the blood of God’s people’s being shed. There are many tears in the psalms, many sorrows, so that people today, wanting something more upbeat, do not appreciate the book of psalms.

Another characteristic of the psalms is that they are very God-centered and are not man-oriented. That does not appeal to the flesh of man. The flesh of man likes what is oriented to itself; I like to hear about myself. The psalms, though, are very God-oriented, so that everything in the Christian life is viewed in the light of Jehovah God.

Even among those who do sing the psalms today, there is often an argument that the psalms are not necessary for the church. We could sing the psalms, but we could also sing other things than the psalms. So the psalms as a whole, even among those who sing them, are not much appreciated in the church today.

The truth of the psalms, though, is that the book of psalms is the loveliest songbook in the whole world. That is not hyperbole; that is not overstatement. The book of psalms is the loveliest songbook that there ever could be. Why are the psalms so lovely, and why is the book of psalms so marvelous? Because it is the book of songs that God gave to his people for their worship of him. God compiled a songbook for his church. What mercy of Jehovah God to his people, that he would not only give the psalms but also select which ones he wanted compiled into this book and place this book in the middle of his word, so that now God’s people have this precious songbook with which to express praise to Jehovah God. The psalms are the songbook that God has given.

Another characteristic of the psalms is their depth as a God-centered book. The fact that the psalms are God-centered is not appealing to our flesh, but the fact that they are God-centered makes them very, very deep. The psalms are deeper than any song that a man could come up with—even any religious song, even any true song. The psalms are so deep because in the psalms God orients everything around himself.

The psalms are also enduring. Even though many people, including us by nature, do not appreciate the psalms much today, the psalms are enduring. The psalms were sung by God’s church in the Old Testament, before the coming of Christ. The psalms were sung by Jesus Christ in his worship: when he instituted the Lord’s supper, he sang Psalms 113–118, the great Hallel hymns. The psalms were sung by the apostles; and the apostle Paul told the church to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all of which refer to the 150 psalms of David. The psalms

<sup>1</sup> This is a copyedited transcript of a speech given June 14, 2025, in Singapore. The speech can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HAKHgv4gBg>. We hope to publish the question and answer session of the speech in a future issue of the magazine, the Lord willing.

were sung by the early New Testament church. The psalms were sung by the reformers during the Reformation of the church. The psalms have been sung through the ages. It really is a recent development in the church that the church has gone away from psalms and introduced man-made hymns and praise songs. But the psalms have endured through the ages. Therefore, when the church sings the psalms today, there is a connection between the church today and the church going back all the way into the Old Testament.

Another characteristic of the psalms that makes them very, very lovely is that the psalms give expression to everything that a human being can go through in this life. There are many things that human beings go through. We fall into sin, and we are forgiven our sins in the blood of Christ. We live, and we die. We have joy, and we have sorrow. We have times of persecution and times of peace. Regardless of what the child of God is going through, day or night, in turmoil or in comfort, the psalms give voice to all of those things that go on in a human's soul. And therefore, the psalms are a marvelous book because God teaches us through them how to give voice to all of these things that a child of God endures.

For all of these reasons, the book of psalms is the most marvelous, loveliest songbook that there ever has been. But we have not mentioned yet the one thing that makes the psalms loveliest of all and the one truth about the psalms that is the key to understanding the psalms, to opening up the psalms, and to recommending the psalms to the church for her worship. That one key is that the psalms are the songs of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the psalmist. He is the one who sings them. The psalms are not only *about* Christ, but the psalms are also *by* Christ. That truth of the psalms, that marvelous truth that the psalms are the songs of Jesus Christ, is the golden key that opens to us the depth and the wonder of the psalms. Having that key, one can live his entire life on this earth and never exhaust the full meaning of the psalms. There are always

new depths to discover in the psalms with the key that they are the songs of Jesus Christ.

What an unspeakable privilege that God gives to his church. In the psalms we see through Jesus' eyes. In the psalms we hear through Jesus' ears. In the psalms we understand through Jesus' mind. In the psalms we know all things according to the mind of Christ. What a privilege that God has given his church! What a privilege to sing this glorious book of psalms!

So today we want to delve into this topic a bit. We'll use as the title of our speech "The Psalms of Jesus." First, we will consider that the psalms are Jesus' songs. Second, we will consider that the psalms are a miniature Bible. And third, we will see that the psalms are for worship.

### The Psalms: Jesus' Songs

When we say that the psalms are Jesus' songs, we mean especially two things. First of all, the psalms are *about* Jesus. That means that every psalm speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ in one way or another. That was Jesus' testimony about the psalms. After he had risen from the dead, he told his disciples that all things had now been fulfilled "which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, *and in the psalms*, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Jesus identified the psalms as being about him.

That the psalms are about Christ is also evident from the New Testament use of the psalms. Many times in scripture, Jesus' work was explained and interpreted out of the psalms. For example, when Christ poured out his Spirit on the church at Pentecost, Peter explained that wonder in part by quoting from Psalm 16.

That means that when we open the book of psalms and read in the very first verse, "Blessed is the man..." that is about Jesus Christ.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (Ps. 1:1-2)

Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1:1. Jesus is the one who sitteth not in the seat of the scornful. Jesus is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates upon that law day and night. Jesus is that blessed man. That is wonderful for the church. It is great comfort for the church to know that Jesus is the blessed man because if I had to obtain blessedness from God by perfectly not sitting in the seat of the scornful, perfectly meditating on the law of God day and night, I could never get that blessedness. I sin in that. I don't meditate upon the law of God the way I ought to. I do sometimes find myself walking in the counsel of the ungodly. And so I could not be the blessed man. But the fact that Jesus is the blessed man of Psalm 1 means that I have all of that blessing in him and for his sake. That is why Psalm 1 ends the way it does: "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous. What is the way of the righteous? It is simply Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. The Lord knows his people in Jesus Christ and so blesses them with the blessing of Jesus Christ.

When we say that the psalms are Jesus' songs, we mean that the psalms are about him from beginning to end. You can trace that right through to the very end of the psalms, Psalm 150. In that last psalm is the great call, "Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power" (Ps. 150:1). That is what the Lord Jesus Christ does. He sits now in the sanctuary of Jehovah God, in heaven, praising God. Jesus is in the firmament of God's power, having ascended above the heavens to sit at God's right hand. Jesus praises God night and day. And when we read, then, as the very last words of the psalms, "Praise ye the LORD" (v. 6), that is about Jesus Christ. He is the one who is praising the Lord. And that too is great comfort for the church because the only reason that you and I may praise the Lord is for Jesus' sake—in Jesus and through Jesus. At the end of the psalms, when we understand that the great call "Praise ye the LORD" is about Jesus, then we see how he takes us into the worship of the name of Jehovah.

That the psalms are about Jesus also means that the psalms teach the whole life of Jesus from beginning to end. If you want to know about Jesus before time, before creation—if you want to know what God thought of Jesus from all eternity in God's eternal counsel—you find that in the psalms. Psalm 2:7: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." God's Son was born in the fullness of time, made of a woman, made under the law; and he was born, according to Psalm 132:11, as the fruit of David's body, so that David, to whom promises were made, gave birth to a son Solomon and so on and so forth until the Lord Jesus Christ was born in the fullness of time as the fruit of David's body. He is God and man. He is God *with* man. He is God with us.

If you want to look at Jesus' boyhood, you find that in the psalms. Jesus, as a twelve-year-old boy, stayed behind at the temple after the pass-over feast and instructed the great teachers in the temple; and we find that in Psalm 119:99: "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." Or if you want to look at Jesus' ministry, his sermons that he preached and the beatitudes that he taught, you find those in the psalms. Jesus preached the sermon on the mount, in which he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3); for, according to Psalm 34:18, "the LORD...saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Or Psalm 37:11: "The meek shall inherit the earth" (see Matt. 5:5). Or Psalm 24:3–4: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart"—and you hear there Jesus' beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8). Jesus' whole ministry of teaching and preaching is there in the psalms.

Jesus also went through the events at the end of his life according to his own confession in the psalms. Psalm 118:26 records that when Jesus entered into the temple, those who greeted him said, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD." Jesus cleansed the temple of its

buyers and sellers according to Psalm 69:9: “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” Jesus instituted the passover with the great Hallel psalms, Psalms 113–118. Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot according to Psalm 41:9: “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Jesus’ disciples all fled from him according to Psalm 38:11: “My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.”

Jesus was crucified according to the psalms, so that you find that great work of the Lord Jesus Christ in this marvelous book. Psalm 22:12–13: “Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.” Suffering under Pontius Pilate, Jesus was crucified according to Psalm 22:16: “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.” Hanging upon the cross, Jesus suffered the jeers and the taunts of the wicked according to Psalm 22:7–8: “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.” The soldiers standing at the cross parted Jesus’ garments according to Psalm 22:18: “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” Hanging upon the cross, Jesus endured the wrath and curse of God against the sins of his people according to Psalm 89:38: “But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.” On the cross God covered Jesus with the shame of his people, which he bore on our behalf, according to Psalm 89:45: “The days of his youth hast thou shortened: thou hast covered him with shame.” Suffering the agonies of hell, Jesus cried out with a loud voice according to Psalm 22:1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Jesus, having come out of the three hours of darkness, thirsted; and, according to Psalm 69:21, the soldiers gave him gall. “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

Having finished working our salvation by his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus gave his spirit into the hands of God according to Psalm 31:5: “Into thine hand I commit my spirit.”

Jesus rose from the dead the third day, and that too is in the psalms. Psalm 16:10–11: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” Jesus ascended into heaven according to Psalm 24:3–4, 7: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart...Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.” Having ascended into heaven, Jesus sat at the right hand of God according to Psalm 110:1: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Pouring out his Spirit upon the church, Jesus Christ abides with his church and leads his church in the worship of God’s name according to Psalm 22:22: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.” God will come again to judge the living and the dead and will judge men righteously, according to the standard of Jehovah God—Psalm 50:3–6 and Psalm 69:27–28. The Lord Jesus Christ will make a new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells and where his people will dwell with him eternally, according to Psalm 23:6: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”

All of that is in the psalms. The psalms, from beginning to end, are about Jesus Christ, so that he is the blessed man of Psalm 1:1; he is the one who praises the Lord in Psalm 150:6; and all throughout the book are his life and ministry, his living and dying, his suffering and atoning for the sins of his covenant people. The psalms are the songs of Jesus, which means that these psalms are about Jesus Christ.

That answers an objection that is sometimes raised against the psalms, that the psalms don’t



mention Jesus' name. "We want songs that mention the name of Jesus." That objection is a misunderstanding of what the psalms are. It may be that Jesus' name is not mentioned in the psalms, but Jesus is in the psalms. He is at no point absent from the psalms. The psalms are entirely about Jesus Christ, so that singing the psalms, we are singing the work of Christ, and we are singing the love of God for his people in Christ.

But when we say that the psalms are the songs of Jesus, we do not only mean that the psalms are *about* Jesus. We also mean that the psalms are *by* Jesus. That is, the psalms are Jesus' songs. The psalms are not first of all the church's songs. They are not even first of all the church's songs *about* Jesus. But the psalms are first of all Jesus' songs. *He* is the singer. David described himself in II Samuel 23 as "the sweet psalmist of Israel." And when David identified himself that way, he used descriptions that indicated that he was the sweet psalmist as a type, a picture, a shadow of Jesus Christ, so that the real sweet psalmist of Israel is Jesus Christ. David was the man who was raised up on high. That is Jesus Christ. David was the anointed of the God of Jacob. That too is Jesus Christ. David as the sweet psalmist was a type; Jesus Christ is the sweet psalmist of Israel.

That means that Jesus is the one who sang the psalms in the Old Testament. When he gave the psalms, that was Jesus himself singing them. It was David's voice, as David was inspired by the Spirit to sing the psalm; but that was Jesus' voice through David's. Or it was the voice of another of the inspired psalmists—Asaph or Ethan or Jeduthun or Moses—but in all cases it was the Lord Jesus Christ who was singing those songs. That is evident from what the New Testament says about the inspiration of the Old Testament. The New Testament says that the Old Testament prophets searched their own prophecies, "which the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them" had given to them (I Pet. 1:11). And what is true of the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah is true also of David and Solomon and Moses and Ethan and Asaph and

the others who wrote the psalms. It was the Spirit of Christ who sang those psalms, who gave those psalms, who inspired those psalms. And because it was the Spirit of Christ, it was the voice of Christ. The Spirit, after all, is breath. That is what the word *Spirit* means: *breath*. The Spirit of God is the breath of God, and the Spirit of Christ is the breath of Christ. And what do you do with your breath? On your breath you sing, on your breath you speak, so that your breath carries forth your words into the world. That was the way the Spirit of Christ operated in the Old Testament. That breath of Christ carried his songs into the world through the voice of David; but they were the songs of Jesus Christ, the sweet psalmist of Israel.

Jesus sang these songs during his life upon earth as well. In his inspiration he sang the psalms; in his life upon earth he sang the psalms. Jesus sang Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man," singing that psalm about himself. Jesus sang Psalm 150, "Praise ye the LORD," singing that psalm about what he does on behalf of his people and leads his people to do. Jesus sang all the words of the psalms: the words about sin, the words about righteousness, the words about sorrow, the words about joy. All of those words were Jesus' words during his life upon the earth, so that in the great congregation he praised God with the psalms.

And Jesus continues to sing the psalms today. Jesus continues to sing those psalms by his word and by his Spirit, which he gives to his church. Perhaps the easiest way to understand Jesus' singing in the church today is by an analogy to the preaching of a sermon. Jesus is the preacher in church. Though he speaks through his appointed servant—the minister—Jesus is the one who is preaching. Jesus said so in passages like John 10: "My sheep hear my voice [they don't just hear *about* me; they hear *my* voice], and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). So it is in the psalm singing of the church. Jesus is the singer in church. Though he sings through his appointed servants—the congregation of his people—Jesus is the one singing. Jesus said so in passages like Hebrews 2:12: "I will declare thy name unto my

brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Just as Jesus is the one who is speaking by his word and Spirit in the preaching, so Jesus is the one who is *singing* by his word and Spirit in the congregation. These are Jesus’ songs yet today that he sings, so that the congregation, singing the psalms of Christ, is singing these songs of praise *with* Christ, who is our head and mediator and who mercifully and graciously gives us these songs to sing.

The fact that Jesus is the one who sings the psalms, that they are not merely *about* him but *by* him, helps open up to us certain passages of the psalms that otherwise would be closed to us. One example of that is Psalm 18:20–24:

The LORD rewarded me according to *my* righteousness; according to the cleanness of *my* hands hath he recompensed me. For *I* have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to *my* righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

Who could ever sing that? How could you and I ever sing that about ourselves? “I have kept the ways of the Lord perfectly”? “I have kept myself from all my sin”? “My hands are pure”? You and I cannot say that about ourselves. Even David, whose psalm this is—how could he say this about himself? How could David, who committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, say, “I kept myself from mine iniquity”? But when we understand that the psalms are Jesus’ songs, that opens up this passage. This is Jesus’ singing! He is singing about his own perfection, his own righteousness, his own keeping the ways of God, his own having the statutes of the Lord before him. And Jesus kept God’s law perfectly. There was no iniquity in his heart. There was no sin in his hands.

The Lord Jesus Christ was absolutely perfect. And now I can sing this part of Psalm 18! I didn’t know how to sing this before. Now, knowing that this is Jesus’ song, I know how to sing it. It is Jesus’ song, which his church sings with him about himself, so that we are confessing with him. Jesus is the one whose hands are clean and pure and whom the Lord rewarded according to his righteousness.

The fact that the psalms are Jesus’ songs, sung by him, also leads to some surprising but very beautiful truths in the psalms. In Psalm 32:5, for example, we find the psalmist’s confessing his sin: “I acknowledged *my* sin unto thee, and *mine* iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess *my* transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of *my* sin.” And now we are surprised to find that this is Jesus’ song! Jesus is the one singing about his own sin! “My sin,” he says. “I will confess *my* transgressions.” “*Mine* iniquity have I not hid.” Jesus is saying that about himself. How can that be? Jesus is not a sinner. He has not broken the commandments of God. We just saw that in Psalm 18. But here Jesus is singing about his real guilt for your sins and for mine. Jesus himself never personally disobeyed—he was absolutely perfect—but our justification is that God takes *our* guilt, *our* iniquity, *our* sin and lays them upon Christ. That is Isaiah 53, for example: “he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa. 53:5). *Our* guilt, *our* sin, was laid on Jesus. And now what we learn in Psalm 32:5 is that that laying of our sin on Jesus was not pretend. God was not making believe. God was not imagining when he laid our sins on Jesus. He laid our sins on Jesus *so really* that they were his sins and not mine anymore, so that now when I see Psalm 32:5, the great comfort is this: my guilt is forgiven—absolutely forgiven, taken away from me. It cannot be found on me. It cannot be credited to me but is credited entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the beautiful gospel of the psalms. And that also shows the connection between the



psalms in this lecture and the sovereign God of salvation in the last lecture.<sup>2</sup> These things are not two totally separate topics or two totally unrelated things. God saves sinners by putting our sin upon the Lord Jesus Christ, covering him with our shame, and cursing him with our curse. God saves sinners by this sovereign act of his mercy and grace through Jesus Christ. And you find that justification, that atonement, that mercy, that salvation all through the psalms when you have the key that the psalms are Jesus' songs, sung by him.

The fact that the psalms are by Jesus, that they are his songs, also means that the child of God can have comfort in every aspect of his life. The child of God goes through so many things in this life, and you and I never do those things perfectly. Even things as mundane as our waking and our sleeping are corrupted with sin. You and I don't sleep perfectly. We sin when we sleep. We don't awake perfectly. We sin when we awake. There are times when we cannot sleep and stay awake all night, and we don't do that perfectly. There are times when we are grieved in our hearts, so that the tears flow out of our eyes and make our pillows wet. There are times when we are happy and filled to overflowing with joy. There are times when we are persecuted and suffer the opposition of the foes of the gospel. There are many, many things that a child of God goes through. And you and I have never yet gone through those things perfectly. But Jesus did, and it is all in the psalms. He is the one who lies down in peace and sleeps, for the Lord only makes him to dwell in safety (Ps. 4:8). He is the one who rises up early to praise Jehovah God (Ps. 5:3). He is the one who makes his prayer known unto God with groaning, and he is the one who weeps and causes his bed to swim at night (Ps. 6:6). He is the one who suffers the opposition of many men, whose teeth are spears and whose tongue is sharp (Ps. 57:4). The Lord

Jesus Christ has gone through all of these things, and they are all in the psalms. He tells us about all of the things that he has gone through and done. And the great comfort is that he did all of those things as your substitute, so that now you have sleeping and waking and sorrows and joys and persecutions, but your salvation doesn't depend on how you do all those things. Christ already did all of them perfectly. And all of that righteousness of Jesus Christ is counted by Jehovah God to his people.

Some have written about this idea by calling the psalms "an anatomy of all the parts of the soul." That was one of John Calvin's phrases.<sup>3</sup> Inside our souls you and I have many things we go through, sorrows and joys. All of these sorrows and joys can be found in the psalms. And now, the great key to the psalms is that not only do the psalms help us give voice to *our* trouble and to *our* joy, so that we have God's words with which to express to him what is in *our* hearts; but the fact that these are Jesus' psalms means that *Jesus* gives voice to all of these things that the child of God goes through. He gives voice for himself to all of these things: *his* sorrows, *his* joys. And he does that on our behalf, so that now you are giving voice to these things, but nothing depends on it. Now your giving voice is simply the fruit of thanksgiving unto God for everything that Christ has already done and accomplished.

It is a marvelous thing to know that the psalms are Jesus' songs. They are about him, but they are also by him.

### The Psalms: A Miniature Bible

Let's move on to another characteristic of the psalms: the psalms are a miniature Bible. This was Luther's helpful and lovely description of the psalms: they are "a little Bible."<sup>4</sup> Many others have described the psalms this way as well. The psalms are the Bible in miniature. What that means, first, is that all the great events of the

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Lanning, "The Sovereign God of Salvation," speech given on June 7, 2025, in Singapore. The speech can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fckidJuPCLO>. See also *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 10 (June 14, 2025): 4–12.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, "The Author's Preface [to his Commentary on the Psalms]," <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom08.vi.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther, *A Manual on the Book of Psalms*, trans. Henry Cole, <https://www.lutheranlibrary.org/pdf/367-luther-psalms-cole.pdf#pagemode=bookmarks>, 18.

Bible are found in the psalms, so that you have all sixty-six books of the Bible compacted into this one book of psalms. Creation is in the psalms. “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth” (Ps. 33:6). In the psalms is the great flood. “The LORD sitteth upon the flood” (Ps. 29:10). We have in the psalms the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory. “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence” (Ps. 50:3). We have all the great events and prophecies of the Bible compacted into one book, so that in the book of psalms, we have the whole scripture. We have there a little summary of the whole Bible.

And we have there a little summary of the whole Bible in a form that will stick to our hearts because God has given the gift of song to stick to our hearts, so that we can learn and memorize more easily through song. In the psalms is the whole Bible, condensed and compacted into one little book of 150 psalms. That makes the psalms a wonderful, an amazing, a miraculous book, because if we want to sing about creation, it is there in the psalms. If we want to sing about the mercy of God in Jesus Christ in forgiving our sins, that is in the psalms. If we want to praise God in anticipation of the coming of the Lord to judge, that is in the psalms. Nothing in the whole scripture is absent from the psalms, so that all the Bible’s themes and all its great events are in that one little book. The book of psalms is the miniature Bible.

But when we say that the psalms are the miniature Bible, there is more to it. It is true that all the great events of scripture are in the psalms, but the fact that the psalms are a miniature Bible also means that the book of psalms follows the very same trajectory as the whole Bible does, or the very same theme. There is a theme that runs through the whole Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, and that very same theme is what organizes the book of psalms.

What is the trajectory that runs from the beginning of the Bible to the end? What is the theme of the Bible? That is quite an important

question. What is the Bible about? You could summarize the Bible in one word: *promise*. Or a similar word, *seed*, because that is the content of the promise in Genesis 3. Or another word, *gospel*. All three of those are essentially the same thing: *promise*, *seed*, and *gospel*; and then you could add to that *covenant*. We are probably most familiar with identifying the theme of the Bible as God’s covenant, because we call our Bible the Old Testament (*testament* means *covenant*) and the New Testament. But whatever you call it—promise, seed, gospel, covenant—that is the trajectory of the Bible. In Christ God has come to his people, who were helpless and unable to deliver themselves, and he has saved them by his sovereign power and made them his covenant people.

You can find that promise, or that gospel, throughout the scriptures. In Genesis 3, after Adam and Eve fall into sin, God comes to them and promises them the seed of the woman. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). The seed of the woman is the promise. He is the good news for fallen Adam and Eve. That seed indicates and implies their fellowship with God, that they are not friends with the devil but friends with God. There is the seed; there is the promise; there is the gospel. That seed and that promise is repeated throughout the Old Testament. To Abraham: “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee” (Gen. 17:7). To David many years later: “I will set up thy seed after thee...He shall build an house for my name” (II Sam. 7:12–13). Seed of the woman, seed of Abraham, seed of David, so that the whole Old Testament was all about this seed.

And when you turn from the Old Testament to the New, the very first verse in the New Testament is about the seed. The seed has come. Now he is called “the son.” It is the same concept. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). There is the seed, finally fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the New Testament is all about what this son of David and seed of

Abraham does in the salvation of his people. There is the theme of the Bible: the seed.

Or if you want to call the theme of scripture the gospel, the book of Mark opens with that language: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). Why is Jesus Christ the gospel? Because he is the good news that God’s promise of salvation has been fulfilled. Or if you want to see how the apostle Paul summarizes all the promises of the Bible, he says, “For all the promises of God in him [Christ] are yea, and in him Amen” (II Cor. 1:20). That is, the promises are sure. They are absolutely sure. Or if you want to see the culmination of all things, as that is revealed in Revelation, it is the fellowship of God with his church in Christ. “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Rev. 21:3). There is the covenant. So from the beginning of the scriptures to the end, we have this seed, this promise, this gospel, this covenant.

But what do we find about the trajectory of that promise as we go through the scriptures? What we find at every single turn is that that promise is *impossible* for man to bring to pass. Again and again, the promise comes to a dead end, as far as men are concerned. It comes to a dead end with Noah because the earth is too full of wickedness for the seed to survive. It comes to a dead end with Abraham and Sarah, who are too old to have the seed. It comes to a dead end with David, who may not build the house of God. It comes to a dead end with the Roman occupation of Canaan, so that God’s people are not in control of their own land. It comes to a dead end in Mary, for how can a virgin conceive? At every turn it is impossible that the promise of the seed be fulfilled. But what is impossible with men is possible with God. God brings the promise of the seed to pass by his sovereign power. Throughout the Bible God maintains his promise. God maintains his promise and brings forth the seed, so that throughout the whole scripture, what man can *never* do, God does. That is the wonder of our salvation. Who is going to save us from our sin?

You? Me? We cannot save ourselves. All we can do is increase our debt. But what is impossible with us, God does by his sovereign power through the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the trajectory we see regarding the promise. That is what makes the gospel good news. God does what you and I cannot do, in saving us through Jesus Christ.

That trajectory of the whole Bible is the trajectory of the psalms. There are so many psalms where Christ is singing of his grief and his wondering where the promise of God is. Christ sees that according to man, the fulfillment of the promise is impossible. But he also confesses throughout the psalms that God nevertheless keeps his promise, so that psalms that begin with sorrow and grieving and weeping over the psalmist’s foes and their rise in the world end with comfort and peace in Jehovah God. The trajectory of the psalms is the same as the trajectory of all of scripture.

And now, here is the wonder in the psalms: now that trajectory is taught from the point of view of the promise himself, the seed himself. In the psalms you have the promise come to life. You have the promise made flesh. And now you look at the promise through the promise’s own eyes, through Jesus’ own eyes, because the psalms are his songs. He is singing about what he is going through, so you can see it through Jesus’ eyes. You hear all about the gospel through Jesus’ ears. You know that gospel through Jesus’ mind. You sing about that gospel with Jesus’ tongue. In the psalms the promise himself marvels at God’s mighty fulfillment of the promise in him.

Is there any other book in the world as lovely as that? Is there any songbook in all the world that could compare to the book of psalms, this miniature Bible that teaches us to see the certainty of the promise of God through the eyes of the promise himself? In that alone there is a lifetime’s worth of exploration and study in the psalms. You and I are never going to exhaust the riches of that treasure in our lifetimes. We will go to heaven and need to learn more about the wonders that are in the psalms, as we see

the glories of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, the promise of God sure through the eyes of the promise himself.

### The Psalms: For Worship

Let's conclude by looking briefly at the idea of the psalms' being for worship. In what we have seen so far—that the psalms are Jesus' songs and that the psalms are a miniature Bible—it becomes evident that the psalms are the perfect songbook for worship. They are the perfect songbook for worship *because* they are Jesus' songs. That key to the psalms is the main key here as well, when it comes to worship. Jesus sings them!

When you look at worship throughout the Old Testament and the New, worship has a leader. In the Old Testament Moses led the people in worship at the Red Sea. The godly kings led the people of Judah in their worship, calling them to keep the feasts and worshipping in the temple. The worship always had a leader. And that is what Jesus Christ is: he is the leader of worship. That kind of terminology, *worship leader*, is quite common today in many churches. It is maybe a little more foreign to a Reformed or Presbyterian ear. We generally don't call our ministers worship leaders, and with some reason. The term carries a lot of baggage from the evangelical church world. However, though it might sound strange to a Reformed ear, Jesus as the worship leader is not a strange concept. All it means is that he is the head. He is the mediator. He is the one who comes to his people, picks them up, and carries them with him into the presence of God.

That was what the Old Testament high priest did. That was his whole work: to carry the people with him into God's presence. His sacrificing, his instructing, and his praying were all his work of bringing the people before God. That was also why the high priest wore the names of the tribes of Israel on his chest and on his shoulders: because he was powerfully bearing God's people on his shoulders and mercifully carrying them upon his heart into the house of God. In everything the high priest

did, he was carrying the people with him into the presence of Jehovah God.

And that is what Christ does today. That is what worship is today. Worship is not us saying, "We are going to go unto the house of God, we are going to stand in Jerusalem, because we have decided to"; but worship is Jesus' coming to his church and saying to them, "For my sake you may come into the presence of Jehovah." And then he carries us into God's presence. In our praying he is the one who takes us across the threshold of heaven and has us stand in God's presence, before the throne of grace. Christ is the head, the mediator, the high priest, the king of his people. Jesus Christ leads in the worship of the church. And what are Jesus' songs that he sings in the worship of the church? They are the psalms. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22:22, which is quoted in Heb. 2:12). The Lord Jesus Christ brings his people into the worship of the church.

We can also talk about the regulative principle of worship. We can talk about the law of God. We can talk about the second commandment: worship God only as he has commanded in his word and in no other way. All of those things are true and lovely; all of those things are divine; but the reason that the church will sing the psalms—the reason that she will be gripped by love, wonder, and appreciation for those psalms—is that they are the songs of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who can put words to the privilege that it is to go into the house of God and sing Jesus' songs with him? That is like the privilege of going into the house of God and hearing Jesus speak a sermon. Who can give voice to what a privilege that is? And so it is with the singing of the psalms. What a privilege to be able to go into God's house and sing these songs with him. There are no other songs in the world that can match them, no other songs made by men that can rise to the level of these songs. These songs are the songs that the Lord Jesus Christ brings into his house and sings in the great congregation with his people.



Is not this book of psalms lovely? Is it not wonderful? As we see all that the psalms are and all their characteristics, we see that the key to understanding the psalms—the key that will

open them up to our hearts and make them lovely and beloved to us—is this: the psalms are Jesus' songs.

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## HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES

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**Our Doctrine** by Rev. H. Hoeksema

### Article CXVI: The New King and His Kingdom: Abraham, the Friend of God (continued)

Abraham, so we found thus far, was not called away from a country and an environment where the name of God was unknown to a place of safe isolation, as if God were afraid that even Abraham would lose the true religion. This very idea is never that of the Word of God. God always has his people right in the midst of the world, even though they are not of the world. His grace is not only sufficient to keep them and seal them unto the day of complete redemption, but through the power of that same grace they are strong to be God's party in the world and to glorify his name over against a world that does neither love nor know him. And with regard to Abraham we found abundant reason to reject the conception as if his calling had for its purpose to lead him to a place of safe isolation where the enemy could neither find nor molest him. The contrary is true. Abraham hails from a country where the people of God lived. In Mesopotamia it was especially that God was present with the light of his special revelation. There was found the line of the saints. And even long after the calling of Abraham such persons as Rebekah are fetched from the same surroundings. And in our last article on this subject we warned against the attempt to explain special revelation as having its source or beginning in such documents as the Code of Hammurabi, and we maintained that much rather the contrary is true, so that in the

latter we must see a corruption of the light of special revelation.

This is borne out in every way by what we read of Abraham's calling. Abraham, then Abram, must leave his country and kindred and father's house and go to a land which Jehovah would show him. And of that land which Jehovah showed Abram we read that even at the time when the patriarch arrived, the Canaanite was in the land. Emphatically we are told, "And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land." Now, it is true that the iniquity of the Canaanite was not yet full at that time. Yet spiritually Abram was not only a stranger in the land of Canaan, but with his religion he stood antithetically over against the people of the country. It has been thought and asserted more than once that there was a certain basis of communion between the people of the land and Abram, as if there were little difference between Abram's religion and conception of God and that of the Canaanites at the time. It was thought that when Abram stops at the oak of Moreh and at Bethel and builds altars unto the Lord that these places are heathen, Canaanitish sanctuaries, and that by worshipping there Abram practically confessed that there was little difference between his God and theirs, between Jehovah and the gods of the Canaanites. But another interpretation is far more probable

and has at least as much right of acceptance. It may, perhaps, be granted that the places at which Abram stopped were sanctuaries where the Canaanites worshipped. But if this were the case Abram rather establishes the antithesis between Jehovah and the gods of the Canaanites by building altars unto the Lord and calling upon the name of Jehovah. Surely, Abram by faith looked for a country that he could call his own. That country was in first instance the land which God had shown him, ultimately the heavenly country. He had received the promise. The land on which he stood was Jehovah's, and in the way of faith he was to inherit it from the Lord. But it was to be a way of battle; for the Canaanite was then in the land. And the Canaanites were not his brethren, serving with him the same God. Much rather they were the enemies of the Kingdom of God, who, although the measure of their iniquity was not yet fulfilled, served other gods and were strangers to the God of Abram. By faith Abram lived as a stranger and sojourner in his own land. From his kindred and people he is called to a people that dwell in a land that is his by reason of the covenant, but who are enemies of Jehovah, his God. As friend of God in his covenant Abram becomes God's representative in the world.

Beautifully it appears in the entire sojourn of Abram in the land of Canaan that he is the covenant friend of God, that there is established a covenant between God Almighty and Abram.

First of all it appears that God is Abraham's friend. He will bless Abraham and take his side over against the enemy in the world in which he lives. This is always first in God's eternal covenant of grace. Surely, as also our baptism form has it, in all covenants there are contained two parts. In the covenant of grace the parties are Almighty God and his elect people in Christ. But never should we forget that in this covenant God is always first. His people become a possible party in the covenant only through the powerful operation of his grace in their hearts. God chose his people. God redeemed his people. God delivers his people through his grace. God calls and prepares his people to be received in his

covenant and to be his party in the world. The action always proceeds from God. Thus it is with Abraham. It is God who calls and prepares Abram in order that he may be his covenant friend. God is first of all Abraham's friend, and by making him the object of his grace also prepares Abraham to assume his own part in the covenant of God.

Clearly, this appears in all we read of God's relation to Abram, his friend. It is practically all contained in that wonderful passage of Gen. 12:2, 3. There we read: "And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing, and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." God will bless Abram. He loves him. In his grace he has chosen him to be the object of his favor. And in that covenant-favor God bestows his blessing upon his friend. But still more. He will at all times take Abram's side. They that bless Abram shall be blessed by Jehovah, and they that curse Abram shall be the object of God's curse. The implication is evident. Abram is bound to have enemies. This is inevitable. As friend of Jehovah, as the party of the living God in the world, he is expected to take a stand. This is the case with all God's people. Not simply with Abraham, but also with his spiritual seed. They that have the faith of Abraham, with him are friends of God and assume their covenant obligations, must take a definite stand. They are in the world and not of the world. But for the same reason they will meet with opposition. There will be those that curse them because they hate the living God to whom they belong and for whom they take a stand. And thus it was with Abram. He was in the country of Canaan as in a strange land. In that country where strange gods were served he appeared as the representative of Jehovah. He would have enemies. And God assures him that whoever may be his enemies, he, Jehovah, will always take his side. They that bless his friend Abraham will also be blessed by Jehovah, but they that curse him shall be cursed by Abram's Almighty Friend. The same direct



expression we find in Gen. 15:1. There we have the well known words, “Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” There we have the same elements. Jehovah is Abram’s reward. In trusting and believing in him he shall not be ashamed. He may be called upon to live as a stranger and a sojourner in the land which the Lord promised him. He may be called upon to represent Jehovah in the strange country. There may be those that curse him for it. His reward is Jehovah. His God will bless him and encompass him in his favor. And again there is in these words the element of God taking Abram’s side over against the enemy. He is Abram’s shield. There was, therefore, from a natural point of view, danger. Why otherwise this figure of the shield? There were those that cursed Abram. But God is Abram’s shield. He will faithfully protect him and guard him and be his refuge and defense over against the enemy. It is Jehovah that shields him in the midst of the Canaanites when he builds altars to Jehovah. It is Jehovah that shields him and curses his enemies when he proceeds to pursue with 318 men the victorious army of the king of Elam and his allies. It is Jehovah that sends plagues to the king of Egypt when Sarah has been delivered into his harem through Abraham’s own unbelief and folly. And it is Jehovah that protects him against his own folly once more when the same incident happens and Sarah is delivered to Abimelech.

God blesses Abram. He gives him the promise of a great seed. The stars of heaven and the sand by the seashore may be numbered if Abraham’s seed can be numbered. Nations and kings shall come forth from him. All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. And the whole country of his sojourn is to become his possession. To him and his seed God has given it. Thus we read Gen. 13:14–17: “And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot had separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy

seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for unto thee will I give it.” True, the full realization of this promise Abraham never saw. For the fulfillment of the promise of his seed he waited for years. And even then he saw it only in its very inception in Isaac. The realization of the same promise in Israel, in Christ, in the spiritual Israel of the new dispensation, Abraham did never behold. And the same holds good for the country. All his life Abraham lived in tents in his own country. He was a stranger and a sojourner. He did not live to behold the realization of this same promise in the kingdom of Israel. And the ultimate realization of this same promise is even still abiding till the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the New Jerusalem shall descend into the new creation. And, therefore, neither the promise of the seed, nor that of the better country, did Abraham see in its fullest realization. But he lived by that faith which is an evidence of things unseen. In that faith he looked forward. In that faith he longed to see the day of Christ. In that faith he expected the Seed that was to come from his own loins. In that faith he looked beyond the country in which he was now wandering as a stranger and a sojourner to the city that hath foundations, to the better, that is, the heavenly country. By that faith he lived and was righteous. In that faith he was content to live a stranger and pilgrim in tents in his own country, expecting the city that hath foundations and not caring to return to the country whence he had departed. In that same faith Abraham, the friend of God, was blessed.

Surely, God Almighty is Abraham’s friend. He blesses him and takes his side over against the enemy. He counsels with him and enters into him under his tent. He talks with him as a friend to his friend and has no secrets for him. And through his grace he makes him expect the better, that is, the heavenly country and the city which hath foundations.

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