

PSALM 3

Each Sunday, being the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), we meet together as the brethren of Christ to memorialise the death of our absent Master in the appointed way. By the eating of bread and drinking of wine - the emblems of his body broken, and blood shed - we do show forth his death till he come (1 Cor 11:26). At these times, we reflect upon the sufferings of Yahweh's pre-eminent Servant and Son, and contemplate how through his stripes, many are healed (Is 53:5). By this simple act of remembrance, we are reminded of what was accomplished on our behalf; how the Just suffered for the unjust (1 Pet 3:18), how for the ungodly a perfect man died (Rom 5:6), and how Yahweh's righteousness was declared (Rom 3:25) as the basis upon which the sins of Christ's brethren might be blotted out.

The prophetic Psalms are filled with allusions to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (Luke 24:44, cp 1 Pet 1:11). Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, holy men of old such as David, Moses and others, drew upon the experiences of their own lives as allegories, pointing forward to the experiences of Messiah. David the shepherd-king particularly stands out as a *type*, or pattern of things later to be manifested in Christ. His whole life stands as an allegory closely matched by the incidents and experiences of our Master. And the Psalms that he penned as he was moved by the Spirit of God, teach us in intimate detail of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In our considerations here, we shall reflect upon just one of his inspired utterances: Psalm 3, written in days of persecution during his flight from Absalom his rebellious son, seeking to show how it speaks of David's Greater Son.

"Yahweh, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me"

Through writing the merciful principles of Yahweh's revealed Truth upon the tables of his heart, the Master initially found favour in the sight of God and man (Prov 3:4; Luke 2:52). But he was not of the world, and did not seek after the things which pertain to the world. He was a light shining in a dark place, illuminating the hearts of those who would hear (Jno 9:5), and exposing the otherwise hidden works of those who did evil. Evil-doers hate the Light - it has been so from the beginning, since sinful Adam hid from Yahweh amongst the shade of the trees (Gen 3:8), for the Light reveals works done in darkness (Eph 5:13; Jno 3:20) and manifests the motivations of men. Christ testified against the world, that its works were evil (Jno 7:7), and so the world hated him. "The light shone into darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not" (Jno 1:5), but instead strove against it.

The men who contended against Messiah were not in the minority, as we might suppose - they were greatly "increased" that troubled him. Indeed, the entire Jewish world hated him, as he testified to his brethren in the flesh: "the world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil" (Jno 7:7). There were "many" that rose up against him, who could not receive the admonition of the word he spoke. When Judas the betrayer lifted his heel against Christ, the record informs us that he brought with him: "a *great multitude* with swords and staves ..." (Mat 26:47, cp v 55). A "great multitude" of those he came to save rose up against him, seeking his destruction. Again, when Pilate gave the people an opportunity to choose between their Messiah and Barabbas, "the chief priests and the elders persuaded *the multitude* that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas". "Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed" (Mat 27:20,21; Luke 20-23). Here was democracy in action; the voice of the multitude prevailed against the desires of a minority. Multitudes of men and women set themselves against Yahweh's anointed, in an unholy union of Jews and Gentiles, rulers and people, who sought his destruction (Acts 4:27,28). Yet it was of Yahweh's hand, for he determined before what should be done (Acts 4:28, cp Is 53:10). Extending an arm of salvation in the person of His Only Begotten Son, Yahweh used the instrumentality of wicked men to bring about the means whereby Christ would be offered up as the Lamb of God to bear the sins of the world.

"Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah"

To endure straitened days of great affliction, with no hope and no help from the Almighty must be among the most desolate of all human circumstances. Christ was rejected of men, and they thought, rejected of God also. They did esteem him "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Is 53:4). With a zeal of God not according to knowledge, the Jews assumed that in his crucifixion, Yahweh was smiting the prophet who claimed to speak in His Name, in punishment.

“He trusted in God; let him deliver him now. If he will have him: for he said I am the Son of God” (Mat 27:43) they railed. The sarcasm in these words is self-evident; they did not believe that God would have him, or help him. But how wrong they were! In the afflictions of Messiah we see not God smiting his Holy One in punishment, but rather he was being “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Is 53:5). Many there were who said “there is no help for him in God,” but in reality there was no separation in relationship between the Father and the Son. “I and my Father are one” (Jno 10:30), declared the Master; the Father and the Son working together in unity of mind and purpose. The Son “despised the shame” of the cross (Heb 12:2) - and here was, perhaps the greatest shame of all; the sarcastic jibe of the multitude that His Father, whom he always loved and obeyed, had rejected him, and would not help him, or have him any longer. They did not know – they could not know – that in the sorrowful events of which they were an instrumental part, the Father and Son remained united as One, in the purpose of bringing salvation to a death-stricken earth.

“But thou, O Yahweh, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head”

Here is the confidence of the Son; he trusted not in himself, but in defiance of the multitude, he trusted in Yahweh who was his Shield, Glory, and the Lifter up of his Head.

Back in Genesis 15, we read the words of Yahweh to Abram, following the rescue of Lot from the four kings of Canaan: “Fear not, Abram: *I am thy shield*, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1). To be a Shield is to be a defence against the fiery barbs of the wicked (cp Eph 6:16). Abram had just used shields and weapons to deliver Lot, yet it was of the Almighty that they were delivered. He was their shield – he was their defence and protecting power against those with whom they strove. Again, Proverbs 30:5 reads: “Every word of God is pure: *he is a shield* unto them that put their trust in him”. Messiah was “the word made flesh” (Jno 1:14), who put his trust in His Father at all times. Though he knew that he was to die the death of a criminal (Is 53:9), he was strengthened by the vision of joy that was set before him (Heb 12:2), trusting that he would become the heir of the world. His trust was in Yahweh to bring about his deliverance and salvation.

Notice here, Christ did not seek his own glory, for Yahweh is his glory. He sought the glorification of His Father in all things (Jno 7:18), that he might be glorified with Him (cp Jno 17:4,5).

To *lift up the head* is to elevate from a humbled position to a position of honour. So, Joseph told the deposed chief butler who was imprisoned with him: “Yet within three days shall Pharaoh *lift up thine head*, and restore thee unto thy place” (Gen 40:13). That is to say, he would be elevated, and restored from his position as a prisoner, to stand once again in the presence of Pharaoh as chief butler. Similarly, Jehoiachin, the deposed king of Judah was elevated in Babylon: “... Evil-Merodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign *lifted up the head* of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, and spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon” (Jer 52:31,32). And in Psalm 27:6, David speaks of how he would become elevated above his enemies: “And now *shall mine head be lifted up* above mine enemies round about me ...”. In Psalm 3 then, we have the Spirit of Christ in the Psalmist trusting that Yahweh would deliver him from the oppression from his enemies, and place him into a position of dominion over them (cp Ps 108:9).

“I cried unto Yahweh with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah”

In total faith and trust in Yahweh, Messiah cried out to his Father for deliverance – and he was heard. He “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of (Gk) death, *and was heard* in that he feared” (Heb 5:7). The occasion being referred to in this place, is the threefold prayer of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, as he made his Father’s Will his own. “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” was the prayer (Mat 26:39), as Jesus’ sweat fell from him as drops of blood (Luke 22:44) for the agony he was in. Here we behold the great battle between the flesh and the Spirit, as Jesus wrestled with himself to overcome his own natural desire not to drink from the cup of suffering - submitting it to the Will of his Father, that drink it he must. And we see every thought of the Master being brought into captivity to Yahweh, as he cried out to his Father in his agony, knowing all the events which must befall him.

The Master cried out again when he expired upon the accursed tree, uttering his last words: “When Jesus had *cried with a loud voice*, he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the spirit” (Luke 24:46).

So, the light of the world was extinguished, as the woman's seed was bruised upon his heel. But he was heard in that he feared, and his Father saved him out of death. Though the presence of Yahweh had departed from His People generations earlier, yet Yahweh heard him out of his Holy Hill of Zion, and deliverance came to the Son of the Highest. His cries were heard, a fact shown by a mighty earthquake (Mat 27:51), the darkening of the sky (Mat 27:45), and the rent of the temple veil from the top to the bottom (Mat 27:51).

"I laid me down and slept; I awakened; for Yahweh sustained me"

So, the Master laid down his life and slept the sleep of death. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because *I lay down* my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but *I lay it down* of myself. I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (Jno 10:17-18) declared the Master. He laid down his life of his own voluntary will. He laid him down and slept in the rich man's tomb for three days and three nights. But his sleep was temporary. God raised him up, "having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). Miraculously, his body was preserved for the duration of that time; for it did not see corruption. Here is the Spirit of Christ apparent in another Psalm "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps 16:8, cited Acts 2:27). Yahweh sustained His Son even in the death state, not allowing his body to corrupt. And he awakened from his sleep; he took up his life again. His bruised heel being healed, he was able to walk in the land of the living once again - but this time to be given glorious immortality.

"I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about"

Of David, it was sung by the women in Israel, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam 18:7). David was a fearless warrior of Yahweh; rather than to be afraid of ten thousands of men who set themselves in battle against him, he put his trust in the Almighty and slew them. But Messiah also, having been redeemed from the hand of death, will not be afraid of the multitudes that will set themselves against him, when he is enthroned in Zion. The Scriptures reveal that when he returns to take up his dominion, there will be many who oppose the imposition of his rule: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth *set themselves* and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps 2:1-3).

Jesus, as the anointed King appointed by Yahweh, shall be seated upon the ancient Davidic seat of power, restored in Zion (Luke 1:32). But the heathen, rather than to accept his rule over them, shall seek to rebel, and cast off the constraints he will place upon them. They will "rage" against him, and set themselves in battle against him (see Rev 17:14). But he will not fear them, for all the power of the Almighty will be vested in him. The reference to "ten thousands" here may not be intended to signify a literal number, as it is used elsewhere in Scripture to represent a *multitude* (Deut 33:2; 2 Sam 18:3; Mic 6:7; 1 Cor 4:15; 14:19).

"Arise, O Yahweh; save me, O my Elohim: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly"

When great multitudes of insurgents raise themselves up against Yahweh's Anointed, he shall crush their rebellion with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces, like a clay pot (Ps 2:9). The power of Yahweh shall deliver him, as "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure" (Ps 2:4,5). At one level, it will truly be a laughable thing for mortal man to think he can cast aside the cords of Almighty power. How ridiculous it will be for mere flesh to consider it possible to rebel against the Great Creator, and His Son! Yet it will be so, as the might of the world's best weapons of warfare will be exercised against the great King. But He will laugh at them. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and sore displeasure: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion ... be wise now therefore O ye kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve Yahweh with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Some nations will heed the warning, and submit to the authority of Christ. But others shall fight against the enthroned Lamb (Rev 17:14), that is, those nations who collectively form Daniel's fourth Beast dominion (Dan 7). The Beast, and all who lend their support to it, shall be "destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (Dan 7:11) as the Son's wrath is kindled. Yahweh shall smite his enemies in the "cheek bone", or the jaws (cp Ps 58:6). He shall break their teeth - in

other words, he shall smite them in the head. As we read in Psalm 68: “Elohim shall wound the head of his enemies ...” (Ps 68:21), as the old Serpent shall be bound up for a thousand years (Rev 20:2) that the peaceful reign of Messiah might commence.

“Salvation belongeth unto Yahweh: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah”

In Psalm 37:39-40, the sweet Psalmist of Israel declares: “The salvation of the righteous is of Yahweh: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And Yahweh shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him”. Yahweh is pre-eminently the Saviour, for He saved His Son out of death (Heb 5:7), and shall save his brethren through his redeeming work. He shall also deliver His People Israel out of the hands of the oppressor, for a time of great trouble and travail awaits them. There shall be a time of tribulation for Israel, styled by the prophet, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer 30:7), but the Master, Jesus the Christ shall come as the “deliverer” to save them out of it. In that day, when all nations shall be gathered together against Jerusalem to battle (Zech 14:2), Yahweh shall “go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zech 14:3). Messiah, as the Great Deliverer shall save his people, and bring them to repentance, for it is written: “there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26). Ungodliness being turned away from Jacob, the people shall enter into a new covenant with their God; having his laws and precepts written in their hearts (Heb 8:8-13). Jerusalem shall become a praise, and a joy in all the earth (Ps 48:2), being the capital city of the world, the global centre for worship, education, and administration (Is 2:2-3), unto which the nations shall seek. Yahweh’s people shall become “a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that [He shall] do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that [He shall] procure unto them” (Jer 33:9). Truly, in that day shall the blessing of Yahweh rest upon His People.

But all these things are only made possible through the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the laying down of his life in obedience to His Father, there could be no taking of it up again. And without the immortalisation of Yahweh’s Son, there could be no hope for any of his brethren (1 Cor 15:17-19), and no future for Israel. There could be no restoration of the ancient Israelitish kingdom (Acts 1:6), and no global centre of worship established at Jerusalem. There would be no kingdom of God upon the earth (Dan 2:44), and no peace to the inhabitants thereof. There would be nothing but a world full of dying sinners, who would eventually destroy themselves through the mismanagement of the earth, and wars between nations. But thanks be to Yahweh who has ordained strength and salvation to come through His Son, that mortal men might look forward in hope and confidence to a certain future! We must, therefore, have the trust of the Greater than David that Yahweh will deliver us from all of our adversities, even the sleep of death, that we might awake in the day of resurrection to the dawning of a new day; a day of glory, righteousness and blessing (Dan 12:2,3).

Christopher Maddocks