

The Messianic Psalms

Jeff Smelser

Text: Lk. 24:44-45

Introduction:

- I.** What do we mean by “**Messianic**” for purposes of this study?
 - A.** Merely being quoted in the New Testament doesn’t make it Messianic.
 - 1.** Ps. 34:12-16 is quoted in 1 Pt. 3:10-12, but it is not especially about the Messiah.
 - 2.** Ps. 4:5 in the LXX has ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε (*be angry and do not sin*), precisely the words Paul uses in Eph. 4:26, and yet we will not consider Ps. 4:5 to be particularly Messianic.
 - 3.** Of the 58 passages in the psalms that are arguably quoted in the New Testament (see the list at the conclusion of this outline), most are used in similar fashion as the two aforementioned, and are not particularly Messianic.
 - B.** On the other hand, some psalms not quoted in the New Testament are by any other measure Messianic.
 - 1.** Ps. 17:15 describes David’s hope in the resurrection, which will be accomplished in Jesus.
 - 2.** The principle in Ps. 9:12 that God requires blood is one familiar to the OT reader.
 - a.** Capital punishment required the shedding of blood (Gen. 9:6) to atone for capital crimes.
 - b.** Israel’s substitutionary animal sacrifices required the blood rite to atone for sin, and these sacrifices were a foreshadowing of the ultimate substitutionary blood sacrifice of the Messiah. Cf. Heb. 9:22.
 - 3.** Ps. 87 is sublime in its confident declaration that God can decree one’s nativity after the fact.
 - a.** God will say of those from Rahab (=Egypt, *cf.* Is. 30:7) and Babylon, from Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, “This one was born there,” *i.e.*, in Zion.
 - b.** The Lord can raise up children of Abraham from stones (Mt. 3:9), and declare those not descended from Abraham to be his heirs (Gal. 3:29).
 - c.** Similarly, as Paul was a citizen of Rome before he had ever been there, so Christians are declared citizens of heaven though we’ve not yet been there.
 - d.** Isn’t Psalm 87 utterly messianic, combining as it does the hope of Gentiles and the prospect of citizenship in the City of God?
 - e.** The New Testament passage that comes closest to saying in one breath what this Psalm says is perhaps Ephesians 2:19. And yet the Psalm is not quoted in the New Testament, nor is there even any clear New Testament allusion to it.
 - C.** However, for the purposes of this study, I want to focus on some of those psalms that are quoted in the New Testament with specific reference to Jesus. And even here, we see a variety, not all being of the same sort.
 - 1.** Some were **explicit predictions**, or were otherwise **clearly Messianic** such that Jews before Christ recognized them as such.
 - 2.** Some pertain to OT events and characters that **foreshadow the Messiah**, but were not certainly recognizable as being Messianic until the Messiah came.

3. Some are **adapted** by the New Testament writer for use in communicating the gospel message, though that was not in the mind of the psalmist, and the actual words of the Psalm could not have been used in the same way.
4. Some actually seem to have **the Messiah speaking** in the first person.

Body:

I. SOME PSALMS WERE RECOGNIZED BY JEWS AS MESSIANIC PRIOR TO BEING QUOTED BY NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS.

A. Psalm 110 (Verse 1 is quoted in Mt 22:44; 26:64; Mk 12:36; 14:62; Lk 20:42-43; 22:69; Ac 2:34-35; He. 1:13, and alluded to in Mk. 16:19; Ro. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; He. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 10:13; 12:2. Verse 4 is quoted in He. 5:6; 7:17, 21 and alluded to in Jn. 12:34; He. 5:10; 6:20; 7:3)

1. In Mt. 22:41-46 (*cf.* Mk. 12:35-37; Lk. 20:41-44), the difficulty for the Pharisees arose only because of the assumption that it was the Messiah whom David spoke of as “my lord.”
 - a. Apart from this assumption, they could have simply denied that David so spoke of “his son” and there would have been no problem. But the fact that they did have a problem is a testament to their recognition of the Psalm as Messianic.
2. In the Midrash on the Psalms, the phrase “Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” is connected with Dan. 7:13, 14, and with the words “Thou art My Son” (Ps. 2:7) which is taken to refer to the Messiah. (Braude, 40f)
3. Perowne says, “In later Jewish writings nearly every verse of the Psalm is quoted as referring to the Messiah.”
 - a. Perowne gives an impressive list of examples. (Perowne, 300)
 - b. But he also adds: “It is not surprising, however, to find that by many of the Rabbis this line of interpretation was abandoned. So long as the Psalm was admitted to be a Messianic Psalm, the argument based upon it by our Lord and His Apostles was irresistible. Accordingly, we find as early as the second century that the interpretation common among the Jews was that which explained the Psalm of Hezieiah.” (*Ibid.*)

B. Psalm 2

1. In later Jewish commentary, represented here by the Midrash, their messianic homilies based on the psalm.
 - a. On the phrase, “This day have I begotten thee” the commentary is as follows: “Suffering is divided into three portions: one, the Patriarchs...took; one the generation that lived in the time of [Hadrian’s] persecution took; and one, the generation of the lord Messiah will take. When the time comes, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: ‘I must create the Messiah—a new creation.’ As Scripture says, *This day have I begotten thee*—that is, on the very day of redemption, God will create the Messiah.” (Braude, 41)
 - b. And there is this: “In another comment the verse is read *I will tell of the decree: The Lord said unto me: Thou art My son...Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession* (Ps. 2:7, 8). R. Yudan said: All these goodly promises are in the decree of the King, the King of kings, who will fulfill them for the lord Messiah. And why all this? Because the Messiah occupies himself with Torah.” (Braude, 41)

2. Rashi was an 11th century French Rabbi. “Rashi” is an acronym for Rabbi Solomon Isaki (or Shlomo Yitzhaki).
 - a. From Rashi’s commentary on the Psalms, there is this on Psalm 2: “Our rabbis interpreted the subject of the chapter as a reference to the King Messiah. However, according to its basic meaning and for a refutation of the Christians it is correct to interpret it as a reference to David himself.” (Rashi, 52)
 - b. The version of Rashi’s commentary online at www.chabad.org omits the acknowledgement of a polemic motive in interpreting the passage with reference to David.
3. David Kimchi (or Qimchi) was a prominent rabbi who lived from A.D. 1160 to 1235. He authored several commentaries.
 - a. Perowne says, “That the Messianic interpretation of this Psalm was the earliest, is admitted by the Jews themselves. Qimchi says, ‘Some interpret this Psalm of Gog and Magog, and the ‘Anointed’ is King Messiah, and so our Rabbis of blessed memory have expounded it; and the Psalm so expounded is clear; but it is more natural to suppose that David spake it concerning himself, as we have interpreted.’” (Perowne, 114)

C. Psalm 16

1. In Acts 2, Peter’s messianic exegesis of Psalm 16 seems to have been a new thought for his audience.
2. However, in the Midrash on the Psalms, there is this comment on Psalm 16:10 “*and my glory rejoiceth*, rejoices in the lord Messiah who will rise up out of me.”
 - a. While the Midrash clearly sees David as describing his own flesh which “will not dissolve like dust,” the Midrash nonetheless recognizes in David’s words an application to the future Messiah. (Braude, 201)

D. Psalm 118

1. The words “Oh save, we pray” (Ps. 118:25) seem to be the source of the expression *Hosanna*, which is how the crowds addressed the one whom they recognized as “the son of David,” adding the phrase from Ps. 118:26, “*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD*” (Mt. 21:9, cf. Mk. 11:9-10).
 - a. These words had Messianic import to them, and this significance was not lost on the chief priests and scribes who took offense at such (Mt. 21:15-16), as did the Pharisees (Lk. 19:39).
 - b. Mark’s account indicates that the crowds connected these words with the coming of the Davidic kingdom (Mk. 11:10).
 - c. Luke indicates that they called him “King” (Lk. 19:38) and John says they called him “King of Israel” (Jn. 12:13). All of this is a testament to the Jewish recognition of the Messianic significance of Ps. 118.
2. In light of this evidence that the Jews understood the Messianic significance of Ps. 118, consider Jesus’ quotation of Ps. 118:22 (“The stone which the builders rejected...”) during the last week before his crucifixion (Mt. 21:42, Lk 20:17, Mk. 12:10-12), as well as the impact of Peter’s allusion to Ps. 118:22 when addressing the Sanhedren (Acts 4:11, cf. 1 Pt. 2:7).

- a. In both instances, the leaders of the Jews understood the Messianic import and consequently, the nature of the accusation directed at themselves.

II. MOST MESSIANIC PSALMS NEED TO BE UNDERSTOOD FIRST WITHIN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- A. This is not to say God did not have the Messiah in mind. It is to say the human writer often had something else in mind.
- B. Four years ago at this seminar, I spoke on Isaiah 7 and made the case that there was an 8th century child born as a sign to Ahaz, and that that child, Immanuel, foreshadowed the birth of Jesus, who would indeed be God with us.
 - 1. I compared this with Abraham's offering of Isaac, whom the writer of Hebrews refers to as Abraham's only begotten son, saying that in a figure, Abraham received him back from the dead. Isaac foreshadows Jesus, God's only begotten son, whom God received back from the dead.
 - 2. My point was that often in Messianic prophecy, most often, there is a historical meaning to the prophecy.
 - a. There really was an 8th century child born as a sign, just as there really was an Abraham and an Isaac and a mountain and very nearly, a sacrifice.
 - b. But these things *happened* historically and *were recorded as they were* because God had in mind what he would do with Jesus.
- C. When we come to the Psalms, once again it is important that where a historical meaning is clear, we see it. Only then will we more fully understand that the Messianic theme pervades OT events
- D. Given that in Ezek. 37:24 "David" stands for the Messiah, we should expect to see parallels to the Messiah in the life of David.
 - 1. Along with his place of birth, his lineage, and his right to the throne, many of the Messianic elements of David's psalms pertain to aspects of his life that prefigured the Messiah.
- E. Of the Messianic Psalms, those that explicitly and consciously look forward to the Messiah, in my estimation, include Ps. 110, and Ps. 89, as well as Ps. 2 and Ps. 16.
 - 1. (However, Ps. 2 and Ps. 16 may fall into a special category. Rather than seeing them as David talking about the Messiah, perhaps we should see them as the voice of the Messiah speaking through David).
 - 2. Most, if not all, of the rest, have a historical meaning and reference which foreshadows the Messiah.
 - 3. **Psalm 41**
 - a. A historical context is to be found in David's flight from Absalom
 - 1) David's sin and consequences (2 Sam. 12:11-12)
 - 2) Messianic theme in David's flight (2 Sam. 15:30)
 - 3) Ahithophel, whom David trusted (2 Sam. 16:23), betrays him and seeks his death (2 Sam. 15:12, 31, 17:1-3)
 - 4) Popular sentiment in some quarters (Jerusalem?) turned against David (1 Sam. 15:3-6, 12-13, although see 15:23)

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- 5) Shimei mocked, ridiculed, and heaped scorn on David (2 Sam. 16:5-8, 13)
 - 6) Ahithophel took his own life (1 Sam. 17:23)
- b.** Psalm 41 and the historical narrative in 2 Samuel
- 1) The Psalm easily fits one of two periods in David's life, either the period when he was being pursued by Saul, or the episode when Absalom attempted to take the kingdom.
 - 2) David's plight is associated with his sin (Ps. 41:4), suggesting the context is the episode when Absalom attempted to take the kingdom, which was part of the aftermath of David's sin with Bathsheba.
 - 3) His enemies anticipate his death (Ps. 41:5)
 - 4) Ps. 41:6 is possibly a reference to Absalom's deceit and malicious accusations about David's governance (cf. 2 Sam. 15:2-4)
 - 5) David's demise could be at any time. "When he lies down, he will not rise up again" (Ps. 41:8; cf. 2 Sam. 17:1).
 - 6) Compare "even my close friend, in whom I trusted" (Ps. 41:9) with 2 Sam. 16:23.
 - a) Note that Eliam, Ahithophel's son, was among David's inner core, "the thirty" (2 Sam. 28:34) and that Bathsheba was the daughter of an Eliam, and the husband of Uriah the Hittite, both names being among "The Thirty."
 - b) There can be no question that the designations Ahithophel the Gilonite and Uriah the Hittite identify these men mentioned in 2 Sam. 23 with the well known Ahithophel and Uriah of the earlier chapters.
 - c) That Eliam is also to be identified with Bathsheba's father in 2 Sam. 11:3 seems probable; it would not be unexpected if Eliam gave his daughter in marriage to a close comrade from among "the Thirty."
 - d) But then this would make Ahithophel the grandfather of David and might provide a powerful motive for Ahithophel's betrayal.
 - e) In any event it would be expected that David's trusted counselor would have sat at David's table and eaten David's bread.
- c.** Psalm 41 quoted by Jesus in Jn. 13:18
- 1) Jesus dipped the sop and gave it to Judas (Jn. 13:26-27) thus creating the analogy to Ahithophel who ate David's bread.
 - 2) Judas killed himself after betraying Jesus (Mt. 27:3-5), as Ahithophel had killed himself after betraying David (2 Sam. 17:23).
 - a) If we should ever wonder why Jesus would have entrusted Judas with the bag (Jn. 12:6), given that he knew what Judas was from the beginning (Jn. 6:64), perhaps it was to complete the parallel, Jesus entrusting Judas with the bag as David had trusted Ahithophel.
- 4. Psalm 22**
- a.** Psalm 22 and the historical narrative in 2 Samuel
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- 1) Based on its content, this psalm also belongs to one of two periods in David's life, either the period when he was being pursued by Saul, or the episode when Absalom attempted to take the kingdom.
- 2) Although the words of Ps. 22:1 "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" are spoken by Jesus on the cross, they are not unexpected on the lips of David (cf. Ps. 13:1).
- 3) Compare David's reliance on the Lord in Ps. 22:3-5, notwithstanding the seeming despair of verse 1, with 2 Sam. 15:31 and 16:12.
- 4) Compare Ps. 22:6 ("*I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people*") with the abuse David received from Shimei (2 Sam. 15:5-8, 13).
- 5) Psalm 22:18, "*They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots,*" describes David's enemies taking what had been his, notably, his wives (2 Sam. 16:21-22), his throne, his kingdom.
- 6) "*They pierced my hands and my feet*" is figurative as are all the complaints of 22:12-16. But as I argued when discussing Is. 7:14, language is sometimes used in the OT of historical events that is more literally or more thoroughly accurate in its reference to the Messiah. (See below).

b. Psalm 22 and the Messiah

- 1) "The realization in the life of the Messiah presses the language to service beyond what was needed in the first realization. Just as David's enemies might well be supposed to have cast lots for his clothing and pierced his hands and feet only figuratively, those who crucified Jesus did these things literally. Just as it can be argued, with a bit of mental flexibility, that Isaac was Abraham's son, his only son, the characterization is much more readily applicable to Jesus, God's unique ('only begotten') son. So while in the OT, a young woman, who might have been presumed a virgin, would marry and bear a child who would signify God's presence, in the NT a young woman who would yet be a virgin when her child was born would bring into the world a son who would himself be God with us." (Smelser, 44f)
- 2) McGarvey, commenting on the relationship between Isaiah 7:14 and Mt. 1:22-23, identified a category of prophecy wherein "an event has been described in language more elevated and elaborate than it demands [and] is followed by another similar event to which the said language is more perfectly suited." (McGarvey, 25)
- 3) Compare the language used in Psalm 22 with the events describe in Matthew 27

Matthew 27

27:35 "they parted his garments among them, casting lots" (cf. Jn. 19:23-24)

διεμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ

βάλλοντες κλῆρον

27:39 "wagging their heads"

κινῶντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν

Psalm 22

22:18 "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots"

[LXX: διεμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτιά μου ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἱματισμὸν μου ἔβαλον κλῆρον]

22:7 "they wag the head"

[LXX: ἐκίνησαν κεφαλὴν]

27:43 He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him”

πέποιθεν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν,
 ῥυσάσθω νῦν εἰ θέλει αὐτόν
27:46 “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”

22:8 “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him’.”

[LXX: Ἠλπισεν ἐπὶ κύριον, ῥυσάσθω αὐτόν· ὅτι θέλει αὐτόν.]
22:1 “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

- 4) There is a literary subtlety in this account of Jesus’ crucifixion that to my mind, argues for authenticity and ultimately for inspiration.
- a) Whereas Matthew is often blatant in his appeal to the OT scriptures (1:22f, 2:15, 2:17f, 3:3, 4:14ff, 12:17ff, 13:35, 21:4f), here he doesn’t even mention, as John does, that the casting of lots for the garment was prophesied.
- b) The words, “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me,*” would have been instantly recognizable.
- 1) Imagine the Jews who witnessed the crucifixion saying, “That’s David’s cry!” and then contemplating the significance of these words on the lips of the one so many had so recently hailed as Son of David and King of Israel.
- c) I suppose this is why Jesus spoke those words, to call attention to David’s psalm that paralleled these events. And Matthew’s recording of the cry is all that is necessary to take the reader’s mind back to the language of the 22nd psalm and see the parallels.
- 1) Matthew didn’t need to identify the reference to Psalm 22 as such, nor to call attention to each phrase, “wagging the heads,” “let him deliver him,” etc., with an “as it is written.”
- 2) And yet, is such subtlety to be expected in the work of, not a highly educated man, but a tax collector, if his account is contrived to create the appearance of messianic validation?
- 5) Psalm 22:22 (“*I will tell of Thy name to my brethren, In the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee*”) is quoted as spoken by the Son in Heb. 2:12.

5. Psalm 8

a. “Son of Man” = “man”

- 1) Singular *ben ‘ādām* (“son of man”) is used 93 times in Ezekiel, once in Daniel 8:17 (Aramaic *bar ʿnāš* is found in Dan. 7:13) *ben ʿnōš* in Ps. 144:3
- 2) *ben ‘ādām* is used in the second line of poetic couplets 13 times as a parallel to “man” (usually either *ish* or *ʿnōš* [indicated in bold]).
- a) In addition to **Ps. 8:4** (MT **8:5**), these occurrences are Nu. 23:19; Job 16:21; **25:6**; 35:8; Ps. 80:17 (MT 80:18); Ps. 146:3; **Is. 51:12**; **Is. 56:2**; Jer. 49:18; 49:33; 50:40; 51:43.
- b) The synonymous parallelism is obvious. Clearly in all of these passages, including Ps. 8:4, the meaning of “son of man” is the same as “man.”
- b. Ps. 8:5-8 describes the place God has given to man just as was decreed in the beginning (Gen. 1:28).

c. Messianic significance of Psalm 8:4

- 1) I don't think it does justice to the text to suppose that the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 2:5-9) construed Ps. 8:4b as an explicit reference to Jesus any more than Ps. 8:4a.
 - a) Not once, after introducing Jesus, does the writer refer to him as "son of man." Rather, Jesus is introduced as the particular man through whom even death will be subjected to mankind.
- 2) The writer of Hebrews says, "not unto angels did he subject the world to come." We might ask, "Well then to whom did he subject it?" And the intended answer is, to men (or in the words of Heb. 2:16, "*to the seed of Abraham*").
 - a) "*Not unto angels did he subject the world to come,*" and therefore "*not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham,*" and for this reason, "*it behooved him [Jesus] to be made like unto his brethren.*"
- 3) The point of Hebrews 2:5-18 is that the world is made subject, not to angels but to mankind. However, it is the particular man, Jesus Christ, who completes that subjugation inasmuch as it is through him that death is conquered.
 - a) Major Premise: God subjected all things to man (He. 2:6-8)
 - b) Minor Premise: Not all things are yet subjected to man (He. 2:8)
 - c) Conclusion: All things are ultimately subjected in Christ, the man (He. 2:9-18)

6. Psalm 18

- a. The title connects this psalm with David's deliverance from his enemies and from the hand of Saul.
 - 1) In 2 Samuel 22, this same Psalm with minor variations, is introduced with words making the same connection.
 - 2) If we grant the historical context of the psalm in 2 Samuel 22, we have to allow it at Psalm 18 also.
- b. "The LORD is my rock and my fortress (*m^etsûwdâh*)" is an appropriate expression for David who was delivered at the Rock of Escape and who sought refuge in the strongholds (*m^etsâd*) of Engedi (1 Sam. 23:28-29).
- c. Psalm 18:49 (or 2 Sam. 22:50) is quoted in Romans 15:9 in connection with the work of the Messiah, along with Dt. 32:43; Ps. 117:1; and Is. 11:10.
- d. Ps. 18 presents a prototypical picture of the Lord's coming in judgment, using imagery (*e.g.*, clouds, darkness) later carried forward in the prophets (Isa. 13:9-10; Ezek. 30:2-3; 32:7-8; Joel 2:1-2, 10) as stereotypical Day of the Lord imagery, and ultimately foreshadowing the final Day of the Lord.

7. Psalm 45

- a. The Psalm seems to describe a wedding.
 - 1) The King is the groom and is praised in verses 1-9.
 - 2) The queen, his bride, is introduced in verse 9 as standing at his side adorned in gold from Ophir.

- a) She is urged, "Forget your people and your father's house," language bearing some similarity to that used of a bride taken from among captives in Dt. 21:13 and to the husband's leaving father and mother in Gen. 2:24.
- b. The particular historical setting of this Psalm is unclear.
- 1) The identity of the bride and groom has been the subject of much speculation. According to Perowne, suggestions include Ahab and Jezebel (Hitzig), Joram and Athaliah (Delitzch), Solomon and a "daughter of Tyre" (Hupfeld). (Perowne, 367)
- 2) The presence of a daughter of Tyre among guests (contrary to Hupfeld) and the reference to ivory towers may suggest a marriage involving the house of Ahab.
- a) This is suggested because Jezebel was from Sidon (1 Ki. 16:31), at times closely allied with Tyre, and also because Ahab had built an ivory house (1 Ki. 22:39).
- 3) However, it would seem more likely that the historical marriage was that of Jehoram of Judah from the line of David to Athaliah of the house of Ahab, rather than the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel.
- a) (Note however, that in the psalm, as contrasted with the hymn "Ivory Palaces," the ivory palaces are the place from whence comes the wedding music, and not necessarily the place from whence comes the King.)
- b) That Joram's reign is summed up in the words, "he did evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Ki. 8:18, 2 Chron. 21:6) might argue against his being a messianic figure, but not decisively so. Compare Solomon, who was clearly a Messianic figure.
- c. The messianic import of the Psalm is indicated in He. 1:8-9 where the words addressed to the King in Ps. 45:6-7 are said to be "of the Son."
- d. Other aspects of the Psalm in which one might see messianic themes include the myrrh and aloes.
- 1) Both spices were used to prepare Jesus' body for burial (Jn. 19:39), and myrrh, along with gold (cf. Ps. 45:9), was among the gifts brought by the wise men on the occasion of Jesus' birth.

III. LANGUAGE IN SOME OF THE PSALMS HAS BEEN ADAPTED (ALTERED) TO A MESSIANIC APPLICATION

A. Psalm 68 and Ephesians 4:8

1. Psalm 68 is variously interpreted as a celebration of the Ark's entry to Zion (2 Samuel 6), or of a military victory, or of the return from captivity. Some interpret it as being utterly messianic with no historical reference at all.
2. The difference in the wording at Ps. 68 and as quoted by Paul in Ephesians is significant.

Psalm 68:18

Thou hast ascended on high,
Thou hast led captive Thy captives;
Thou hast received gifts among men

[LXX]
ἀνέβης εἰς ὕψος,

as quoted in Ephesians 4:8

When he ascended on high,
he led captivity captive,
and gave gifts unto men.

Ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος

ἠχμαλώτευσας αἰχμαλωσίαν,
ἔλαβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ

ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα
τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

3. The change from 2nd person verbs to 3rd person would not be too great a problem by itself.
4. But *received* is changed to *gave*, and connected with the apostles, *et al.*
 - a. In Ps. 68, the gifts are possibly from the King's subjects in honor of his victory.
 - b. Or, in view of Ps. 68:12 ("*she who remains at home will divide the spoil*") they may be the spoils of war brought back and divided among the king's subjects (*cf.* Jdg. 5:30, 1 Sam. 30:24-31).
 - 1) If this is correct, then the gifts, though *received* from the vanquished, are then *given* to the subjects of the conquering king.
 - 2) Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that Paul modifies the language of the particular verse he quotes.
5. But there are aspects of the quoted verse, as well as the whole Psalm, that would make it a suitable device for Paul's point in Ephesians 4.
 - a. The unquoted final line of Ps. 68:18 is, "*Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there.*"
 - b. Given that Ephesians is addressed to Gentiles in light of their new standing in the household of God, who along with Jewish believers, are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19), and given that the message of the second half of Ephesians is a call to these formerly rebellious people (Eph. 2:2; 4:17-19) to walk worthily of the calling with which they have been called, the remarkable thing isn't so much that Paul adapted the first three lines of Ps. 68:18, but rather that he didn't go on to quote the perfectly suited last line.
 - 1) It is also interesting to notice that Paul adapts OT language both in Eph. 4 and Rom. 10, and in both places, he is discussing Christ's ascent and descent, although the precise meaning of ascent and descent are not the same in the two contexts.
 - c. Psalm 68 pictures God...
 - 1) as having vanquished enemies (68:1-2, 11-14),
 - 2) as having ascended to a place of honor (68:15-18),
 - 3) and as beneficent toward his subjects (68:5-6).
 - d. Paul, by the Holy Spirit, sees in the words of Ps. 68:18 (with some adaptation) an application to the Christ, who has...
 - 1) vanquished *his* enemies,
 - a) (Compare Col. 2:15: "*having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in [the cross]*")
 - 2) ascended to a place of honor,
 - 3) and is beneficent toward *his* subjects.

6. For the believer, who needs not be convinced that David wrote by the Spirit, nor that Jesus is the Christ, Paul has as much right to say “*he gave*” as David had to say “*you received.*” Both are speaking from God.
 - a. The purpose of the quotation is neither to prove that fact nor to prove that what Paul wants to say must be true because it was already said by David.
 - b. The purpose of the quotation is to use again the imagery of the victorious king, and with it, make a new application. (Compare the use Paul makes of Dt. 30:11-14 in Romans 10:6-10.)

B. Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10:5

1. The writer of Hebrews wanted to talk about the sacrifice of Jesus’ body (Heb. 10:10). There is the appearance of an alteration of the quoted OT text so as to accommodate the argument the NT writer wanted to make.

Psalm 40:6a

Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in;
Mine **ears** hast thou opened

as quoted in Hebrews 10:5b

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,
But a **body** didst thou prepare for me

2. One explanation is that the writer accurately quoted from the Septuagint [LXX].
 - a. Rahlfs’ edition of the LXX has ὠτία δὲ κατηρίσω μοι (*but ears you prepared for me*), consistent with the Hebrew text of Psalm 40.
 - b. But in some manuscripts, notably, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, and Alexandrinus, the LXX has σῶμα (*body*) rather than ὠτία (*ears*). It may be that the writer of Hebrews was quoting from a copy of the Septuagint that had this reading.
 - 1) If we assume the original reading of the LXX was ὠτία (*ears*), conforming to the Masoretic text, there is an interesting conjecture as to how some LXX manuscripts came to have σῶμα (*body*).
 - 2) In the LXX, the preceding word is ἠθέλησας (*you willed/you desired*). In the uncial script of the ancient manuscripts, where no spaces occurred between words, this and the following word for *ears* would have looked something like this: ΗΘΕΛΗΣΑΣΩΤΙΑ. Notice that the TI could be mistaken for M if the exemplar were somewhat faded or otherwise unclear. And once the scribe supposed he saw ΩMA rather than ΩΤΙΑ, he could easily associate it with the preceding *sigma* so as to have ΣΩMA (*body*) and then mistakenly reckon it twice, once as the end of ΗΘΕΛΗΣΑΣ and once as the beginning of ΣΩMA. As a result, he would write, ΗΘΕΛΗΣΑΣΣΩMA (...*you willed, a body...*).
 - c. On the other hand, it may be that the manuscripts of the Septuagint that have σῶμα have been assimilated to the reading found in Heb. 10:5.
 - 1) Compare the incorporation of Romans 3:13-18 (Paul’s quotation of Ps. 14:3; 5:10; 139:4; 9:28; Is. 59:7-8; Ps. 35:2) as part of Psalm 14 in some LXX manuscripts.
 - d. And even if we could assume the writer accurately quoted a copy of the LXX that had *body*, is the integrity of Hebrews compromised if the writer took doctrinal advantage of what appears to be a mistranslation from the Masoretic text, which has *ears*?

3. There is another way of looking at this, based on reconsidering the purpose of some OT quotations in the NT:
 - a. We sometimes view these quotations as apologetic tools, either...
 - 1) ...as a means of proving the divine inspiration of the OT
 - a) *e.g.*, Micah 5:2. It happened as prophesied, therefore Micah 5:2 must have been inspired. This is true and useful to us.
 - b) But that was not necessarily first in the thoughts of first century Jews, many of whom already believed in the inspiration of the OT scriptures
 - 2) ...or as a means of proving that Jesus was the Christ
 - a) Jn. 5:39 “these are they which bear witness of me”
 - b) See Peter’s argument in Acts 2:25ff, and Paul’s use of the scriptures in Acts 17:1-3
 - b. But as in the case of the Eph. 4 quotation from Psalm 68, what if the reader already considers both the OT & NT writers to be writing by the Holy Spirit? Does this perspective help in understanding the manner of quoting the OT we sometimes see?
 - 1) Thus we would have a New Testament prophet, speaking with divine authority, using language familiar because of its use by an Old Testament prophet but for the purpose of making a new point.

IV. IN TWO PSALMS, SHOULD WE VIEW DAVID AS NOTHING MORE THAN AN AMANUENSIS?

A. Psalm 16

1. Peter affirms that David wrote this psalm, “*knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne.*” (Acts 2:30)
2. Peter further affirms that David, “*foreseeing this,*” *viz.*, that God would set one upon his throne, “*spake of the resurrection of the Christ.*” (Acts 2:31)
3. The combination of the two words, “*knowing,*” and “*foreseeing*” seems to preclude our considering this the sort of prophecy uttered by Caiaphas in Jn. 11:50.
4. At first blush, one might suppose David is speaking of himself in part, and of the Messiah in part, inasmuch as David’s hope was in the resurrection (Ps. 17:15)
 - a. Therefore he could say of himself “*Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol,*” and also prophecy of the Messiah “*Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.*”
 - 1) That is, the first line of verse 10 anticipates a resurrection, but not necessarily a prompt one, whereas the second line requires a prompt resurrection before the body decays.
 - 2) “*Thy Holy One*” would be taken as a direct reference to the Christ in contrast to David himself.
5. However, Peter asserts that David “*spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades nor did his flesh see corruption*” (Acts 2:31). Therefore, Peter affirms that both parts of Ps. 16:10 had the Christ in view.

6. One could argue that David wrote the psalm of himself, and that his anticipation of his own deliverance from Sheol was a foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection, and that being a prophet, he then knowingly added a comment that was specifically describing the Messiah, "*Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.*"
7. So then Peter could rightly affirm that David knowingly foresaw the resurrection of the Christ, that both parts of Ps. 16 pertained to the Christ (one typically, and the other directly), and we could still imagine that David wrote the Psalm primarily expressing his own prayer. However, this strikes me as a very contrived attempt to reconcile all of the information.
8. I wonder if we ought to see Christ as the speaker who says, "*Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol*" as well as "*Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay,*" and consider David's role in writing the Psalm merely as that of an amanuensis, (Compare Is. 49:1-6, and Psalm 2:7-9). But how appropriate that David should be the one through whom the Messiah speaks!

B. Psalm 2

1. As noted above, Psa. 2:7-9 has the Messiah speaking in the first person.
2. Upon the release of Peter and John, the disciples indicated that David wrote Psalm 2, but the attribution is interesting: "*O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say...*" (Acts 4:25).
 - a. They attribute the psalm to the Lord, speaking by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of David.
 - b. Unlike Heb. 10:15ff, this language seems to do more than acknowledge inspiration. It seems to go so far as to relegate the role of David to that of Aaron who was Moses' spokesman, Moses' mouth (Ex. 4:16).
 - c. Contrast this with the passionate pleadings of David's heart elsewhere in the Psalms, as for example, in Ps. 51. With reference to that psalm, one would hardly expect to find the sort of attribution we see in Acts 4:25.
3. On the message of the psalm, the Jewish Rabbis saw a connection with Ezek. 38, and I'm inclined to think they were right. In fact, I had come to that conclusion without being aware of the rabbinical view.
 - a. The Psalm has the Lord's anointed already installed (Ps. 2:6) and the kings of the earth conspiring to tear off their fetters in an attempt at rebellion (Ps. 2:2-3).
 - b. In Ezek. 38, as in Joel 3 (and I would add Daniel 2 & 7), there is a picture of a conflict between God's people and the enemies of God's people *after* the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom.
 - 1) Or, more precisely, as portrayed in Ezekiel and Joel, there is a conflict between *God* and the enemies of God's people, as those enemies think to do harm to God's people.
 - 2) These enemies of God's people hope to plunder the land of unwallled villages, but the Lord executes his judgment against them.
 - 3) Although it's beyond the scope of this work, I see the same conflict described in Revelation. But if that is right, the application made of the Psalm by the disciples in Acts 4 is not the primary application.

- a) They connected it with Jesus' crucifixion at the hands of Pilate and Herod.
- b) Based on the immediate occasion, it seems that they saw the persecution of the apostles as a further manifestation of the same conflict, which it was.
- c) But this can at most be regarded as only the very beginning of the conflict described in Ezek. 38-39; Joel 3; Dan. 2:44; and Dan. 7:21.

Conclusion:

- I. As is true of other messianic prophecies, the passages in the Psalms that are quoted in the New Testament in connection with the Messiah or the Messianic kingdom belong in different categories.
 - A. Some were **overtly Messianic** and were recognized by the Jews as such.
 - B. Most had first to do with **some historical circumstance** experienced by the Psalmist, but the Spirit had in mind another meaning that would be realized in the Messiah.
 - C. In some cases, the wording of a Psalm is **borrowed and adapted**, even **altered**, by a New Testament writer for his own purpose (or rather, for the purpose of the Spirit).
 - 1. Whether in these instances it is proper to refer to the original wording as Messianic depends on whether or not we suppose God intended all along that the language would be borrowed and adapted.
 - 2. I have no way of knowing that, but only a speculation that the God who marked off the heavens by the span (Isa. 40:12) and who calls things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17), and who also numbers the very hairs of our heads (Mt. 10:30), could well have anticipated such uses and for his own reasons, could have ordained them from the beginning.
 - 3. On the other hand, if our God saw fit to allow the literary instincts of New Testament writers to reach back to the Old Testament for familiar phrases and thoughts in order to communicate the gospel message, he allowed such in his unerring wisdom, and I will not complain!
- II. The great apologetic value I see in the Messianic Psalms is not the tidy "**Prediction + Fulfillment = Inspiration**" formula applied to discrete phrases.
- III. While there are examples of such in the OT (e.g., Micah 5:2), and while they are valuable, even they are open to charges of fulfillment by revisionism on the part of New Testament writers.
 - A. (The popular belief that Jesus was born in Galilee countered by Matthew's story claiming that Jesus was born in Bethlehem according to prophecy can appear suspicious to a skeptic.)
- IV. The apologetic value I see is rather the further development of the pervasiveness of the story of Jesus throughout the OT. In the Psalms the story of Jesus is seen especially in David's life.
 - A. This is impressive to me because David was held up even in the OT as prefiguring the Christ (Ezek. 37:24), and of course he is the beginning of the line from which the Christ would come.
 - B. So then to see the Christ in the record of David's life, in the historical books as well as the Psalms, in small ways and large, in things noted and things not noted by New Testament writers, to me is very compelling.

Jeff Smelser
953 Churchtown Rd.
Narvon PA 17555
jeffsmelser@ntgreek.net

PSALMS QUOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (from the list in the UBS Greek New Testament)

Why did the Gentiles rage?	Ps 2.1-2	Ac 4.25-26
Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee	Ps 2.7	Acts 13.33, He 1.5, He 5.5
Be ye angry, and sin not	Ps 4.4	Eph 4.26
Their throat is an open sepulchre	Ps 5.9	Ro 3.13
Out of the mouth of babes	Ps 8.2	Mt 21.16
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?	Ps 8.4-6	He 2.6-8
He put all things in subjection under his feet	Ps 8.6	1 Cor 15.27
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness	Ps 10.7	Ro. 3.14
They are together become unprofitable	Ps 14.1-3	Ro 3.10-12
Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades	Ps 16.8-11	Ac 2.25-28
Neither was he left unto Hades	Ps 16.10	Ac 2.31
Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see destruction	Ps 16.10	Ac 13.35
Therefore will I give praise unto thee among the Gentiles	Ps 18.49	Ro 15.9
Their sound went out into all the earth	Ps 19.4	Ro 10.18
My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?	Ps 22.1	Mt 27.46, Mk 15.34
They parted my garments among them	Ps 22.18	Jn 19.24
I will declare thy name unto my brethren	Ps 22.22	He 2.12
The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof	Ps 24.1	1 Cor 10.26
Into thy hands I commend my spirit	Ps 31.5	Lk 23.46
Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven	Ps 32.1-2	Ro 4.7-8
He that would love life, and see good days	Ps 34.12-16	1 Pe 3.10-12
They hated me without a cause	Ps 35.19	Jn 15.25
There is no fear of God before their eyes	Ps 36.1	Ro 3.18
Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not	Ps 40.6-8	He 10.5-7
He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me	Ps 41.9	Jn 13.18
For thy sake we are killed all the day long	Ps 44.22	Ro 8.36
Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever	Ps 45.6-7	He 1.8-9
That thou mightest be justified in thy words	Ps 51.4	Ro 3.4
They are together become unprofitable	Ps 53.1-3	Ro 3.10-12
When he ascended on high	Ps 68.18	Eph. 4:8
They hated me without a cause	Ps 69.4	Jn 15.25
Zeal for thy house shall eat me up	Ps 69.9	Jn 2.17, Ro 15.3
Let their table be made a snare	Ps 69.22-23	Ro 11.9-10
Let his habitation be made desolate	Ps 69.25	Ac 1.20
I will open my mouth in parables	Ps 78.2	Mt 13.35
He gave them bread out of heaven to eat	Ps 78.24	Jn 6.31
I said, ye are gods	Ps 82.6	Jn 10.34
I have found David	Ps 89.20	Ac 13.22
He shall give his angels charge concerning thee	Ps 91.11-12	Mt 4.6, Lk 4.10-11
The Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise	Ps 94.11	1 Cor 3.20
Today, if ye shall hear his voice	Ps 95.7-8	He 3.15
Today, if ye shall hear his voice	Ps 95.7-11	He 3.7-11, He 4.7
As I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest	Ps 95.11	He 4.3 5
And they all shall wax old as doth a garment	Ps 102.25-27	He 1.10-12
Who maketh his angels winds	Ps 104.4	He 1.7
His office let another take	Ps 109.8	Ac 1.20
The Lord said to my Lord	Ps 110.1	Mt 22.44, Mt 26.64, Mk 12.36, Mk 14.62, Lk 20.42-43, Lk 22.69, Ac 2.34-35, He 1.13
Thou art a priest for ever	Ps 110.4	He 5.6, He 7.17, 21
He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor	Ps 112.9	2 Cor 9.9
I believed, and therefore did I speak	Ps 116.10	2 Cor 4.13
Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles	Ps 117.1	Ro 15.11
The Lord is my helper	Ps 118.6	He 13.6
The stone which the builders rejected	Ps 118.22	Lk 20.17, Ac 4.11, 1 Pe 2.7
This was from the Lord, and it is marvellous in our eyes	Ps 118.22-23	Mt 21.42, Mk 12.10-11
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord	Ps 118.25-26	Mt 21.9, Mk 11.9-10, Jn 12.13
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord	Ps 118.26	Mt 23.39, Lk 13.35, Lk 19.38
Of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne	Ps 132.11	Ac 2.30
The poison of asps in under their lips	Ps 140.3	Ro 3.13

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