

NOTES ON PSALM 93

Prayer: ***“Open, O Lord, the eyes of our heart that we may already see you as victor over evil, the eternal King of peace. May we love your commands and adore you in the beauty of your house, forever.”*** (Eaton, *Psalms*, 333.)

II. QUOTABLE QUOTES AND SUMMARY NOTES

A. Summary

“Psalm 93, with its vision of the Creator in glory, . . . brings a mighty recollection of the fundamental purpose and destiny of creation. Those led to see this vision are replenished in hope and granted a joy which the upsurgings of evil cannot kill; they live already in the certainty of the kingdom. This and related psalms accordingly have something of peculiar value to offer in the way of spirituality. Let other texts exhort and promise. In these psalms the gates are open to a celebration already begun. Even now they invite to a time-transcending experience of the great intervention, the world's transformation.” (Eaton, *Psalms*, 332-33.)

B. Message of Book IV (Pss 90-106)

“The placement of Book IV is significant especially in light of the downbeat ending of book III. But with the opening Psalm of Book IV attributed to Moses and the many illusions to the time of Moses in following psalms, the book also recalls a time when there was no king in Israel, when the Lord reigned over his people (Exod 15:18; cf. Pss 93–99) and was faithful to his promises even in the bleakest of circumstances (Exod 2:23–25). Three themes weave throughout Book IV. (1) The Lord reigns as king (see especially Pss 93–99). (2) God's people have an eternal hope grounded in an eternal God (90:1-2,4; 92:8,14-15; 93:2,5; 102:23-28; 103:17-18; 106:48). (3) The figure of David begins to slowly reemerge as evidenced by the two Davidic psalms in the book (Pss 101; 103) and the repeated pronouncement that the Lord's covenant faithfulness is eternal (100:5, 103:17-18; 106:1,45; cf. 89:38-45 and note). This paves the way toward the ‘return of the (Davidic) king in Book V.’ (ZNVSB, 2015, p. 1104.)

III. ISSUES

1. What more can we say about the poetic image of watery forces challenging God's rule?

“In the Bible evil is regarded as a malevolent force which is personal in character. The Old Testament occasionally appears to regard evil as under God's control but . . . [often] in the New Testament it is [also] seen as something quite distinct from Almighty God. Jesus speaks of this evil as being under the tyranny of the evil one whom he calls the ‘Prince of this world.’ Indeed, Jesus' ministry cannot be fully understood unless we take into account the very significant battle he had with the forces of evil from start to finish. He cast out demons, he spoke about the influence of Satan, and he looked on towards his death as the climax of his struggle with the powers of darkness.

This note is echoed in later New Testament writings. Paul, for example, adopts the language of his day and states that the Christian fights against ‘the rulers the authorities . . . evil in the heavenly realms.’ The language suggests that behind the political powers of his day stood spiritual ‘powers,’ controlling them just like a puppeteer with his strings. Nevertheless, Paul has no doubt that the cross of Jesus has shattered their power and influence. . . . But this gives little ground for complacency. The struggle with evil continues until God ushers in his Kingdom--only then will come the end when Satan will be cast out forever In the meantime the Christian fights against the desperate powers of evil and must put on the whole armor of God if she or she is going to prevail. . . .” (from George Carey, ed. *The Bible for Everyday Life*, p. 364.)

IV. RELEVANT TEXTS

Psalms 29 —like Ps 93:3-4, Yahweh’s powerful voice (equated with thunder and lightning, but reflecting also his commands) denotes his sovereign power over the cosmos. (Here no rival voices seek to challenge, as in Psalm 93:3-4.)

Zechariah 14:9, 16 (ESV)—As in Psalm 93, Yahweh’s eternal kingship is spoken of as coming of age. That time is here identified as a day in the future, and commemorated during the Feast of Booths, when ‘the Lord will be king over all the nations.’

⁹And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

¹⁴Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

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NOTES ON PSALM 110

Prayer: **“Lord Jesus, divine Son and eternal priest, inspire us with the confidence of your final conquest of evil, and grant that daily on our way we may drink of the brook of your eternal life, and so find courage against all adversaries.”** (Eaton, Psalms, 386.)

II. QUOTABLE QUOTES AND SUMMARY NOTES

“From the dark night of trial he [Jesus] had come forth in the break of a new day, proved to be the true son, bearing the dew of eternal life, powerful to atone, to intercede, and to bless.” (Eaton, Psalms, 386.)

“Though the poem focuses on Yahweh’s actions rather than the king’s, its theme is the divine sovereignty exercised by the Davidic king.” (Richard Clifford.)

“Standing at the right hand of the king, Yahweh . . . will act as the universal king. He will vanquish those who resist his vision for a rightly ordered creation, and he will prepare the way for his king to establish God’s rule over the whole earth.” (Tucker and Grant.)

“Israel’s acknowledgement of a hostile world was . . . always countered by the nation’s certainty of the kingship of God. One is as real as the other, but in the end only one prevails.” (Tucker and Grant.)

A. Message of Book V (Pss 107–50)

“Book V signals a renewed hope in God’s covenantal promises to King David (89.1–4, 20-37; 2 Sam 7:11b–16). David is the primary figure in Books I-II, but he fades into near obscurity in Books III-IV. He reemerges in Book V as a symbol of God’s chosen one, pointing ahead to the Messiah. Two collections of Davidic psalms (108–110, 138–145) and royal themes throughout book V highlight this. This Davidic emphasis coincides well with the hope that existed in the OT that a Davidic heir would save God’s people from all that threatened them (e.g., Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11). Thus the message of Psalms is consistent with the message of these other books: God will not abandon his covenant with David (. . . Ps 89:3 . . .). This promise is still part of God’s plan of salvation.” (ZNIVSB, 1131.)

B. Summaries

“Questions arising here are like those discussed for Psalm 2. Again we are led to a setting in the ceremonies enacting the installation of the Davidic king to Jerusalem. The prophetic singer announces two oracles of the Lord for the new king (vss. 1, 4) and fills them out with less direct prophecy (vss. 2-3, 5-7). Items of enthronement ceremonial seem reflected: ascension to the throne, bestowal of the scepter, anointing and baptism signifying new birth as the Lord’ son (v. 3), appointment to royal priesthood, symbolic defeat of foes, the drink of life-giving water. . . [T]he rights may have involved a sacred drama and have been repeated in commemorations perhaps annually in conjunction with the

celebration of God's kingship for which the Davidic ruler was chief 'servant.' After the end of the monarchy the psalm was understood to foreshadow the victory of the Messiah, the savior-king at the end of the age. Verses 1 and 4 are often applied to Christ in the New Testament, making it the most quoted psalm there." (Eaton, *Psalms*, 384-85.)

"The figure is messianic, casting the hope of Davidic kingship into the future; David is invited to the right hand of Yhwh, which is the place closest to the monarch, so he shares Yhwh's rule; the messiah as king whose rule provides a priestly ministry; direct link to Psalm 2, with an ultimate defeat of Yhwh's enemies; until that defeat comes, the messiah will be exercising a priestly ministry whose rule mediates between the world and its sovereign." (Summary of the view of J. L. Mays, by Vaillancourt, p. 86.)

"Our psalm consists of oracles and prophetic declarations, and with strong images it depicts an ideal figure most intimate with God, mediating God's own kingship—his son, his priest, and his warrior against the world's evils. No less than such a figure indeed would be needed to truly represent and express God's reign, and in time this ideal person of our psalm was understood as the Messiah the savior-king who should come." (Eaton, *Psalms*, 386.)

C. Background to the second declaration to David (Ps 110: 4b) involving Melchizedek

"Although the Jebusite inhabitants of Jerusalem had long since been enemies of Israel's, there was still a mystique about the place that went back hundreds of years to the time of Abraham. He, already a powerful chieftain, fresh from great military victory, came face to face with someone even greater in the person of the then king of Jerusalem. To this man, in homage, Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils of battle. From him he received—what resonances the words have!— bread and wine, and a blessing; the city's name at that time being Salem and the king's [name] Melchizedek so that he was both king of peace and king of righteousness, and Scripture tells us not only a king but also a priest, 'priest of God Most High'.

The tradition persisted. The name, if not the character, was still there when Joshua, taking possession of Canaan, found among his opponents 'Adoni-zedek [Lord of righteousness], king of Jerusalem.' Did David, becoming first Israelite king in Jerusalem, succeed to that tradition? The Lord, through the prophet-poet, said that he did, and we see him in all four of its aspects. There was a righteousness in him for he was 'a man after God's own heart.' Then Solomon, [meaning] 'peace,' was the name of David's son and successor Thirdly, David was seen as embodying the kingship as no-one else did, before or after, in those Old Testament times. And the fourth aspect of the tradition the priesthood" (Wilcock, *Psalms 72-150*, 164-65).

D. Suggested Applications

"In attempting to interpret Psalm 110 we would do well to be reminded that this song is offering a counterproposal in that it redefines both power and hope. Those who stand in opposition to the work of God and who appear to have power in and over this world in fact do not; those powers are not our source of hope.

We would also do well to be reminded that contemporary readers of Scripture are looking for a counterproposal. Most people are awash in a dominant cultural narrative that has little room for serious engagement with faith. "For centuries now, secularism has been defining and constructing the world. It is a world in which the theological order is either discredited or turned into a harmless leisure-time activity of private commitment." Neither of those options will do for the psalmist in Psalm 110. Instead, Psalm 110 calls us to declare our belief in the confession that 'the Lord reigns' (cf. Ps 93, 95-99). This confession, however, cannot and should not lead us to devolve into a faith that is a 'harmless leisure-time activity of private commitment.' Nor should our confession allow us to slip into some form of religious escapism.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that we have great hope as the people of God because we serve the one who endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And as we consider him, our high priest and king, we will not grow weary and lose heart (Heb 12:2-3). On the contrary, we will be emboldened by our conviction that ‘Since we are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe’ (Hebrews 12:28).” (Tucker and Grant, 597.)

IV. RELEVANT PASSAGES

Zechariah 6:9-13—*as in Psalm 110, a royal figure is described at one and the same time as a priest.*

⁹And the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁰“Take from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon, and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. ¹¹Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹²And say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. ¹³It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”’ (ESV.)

Matthew 22:41-45—*here Jesus quotes Ps 110:1 to indicate that David, “speaking through the Spirit,” spoke of the Messiah as his ‘Lord’ and not merely his ‘son’.*

¹¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, ⁴²saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet”?”

⁴⁵If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” ⁴⁶And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Acts 2:30–36

³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

³⁵until I make your enemies your footstool.”

³⁶Let all the house of Israel therefore¹ know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (ESV.)

¹ “Therefore” reflects this verse as the climax of Peter’s argument; “assuredly” adds emphasis. Note that Jesus’ resurrection, exaltation and the giving of the Spirit are understood together in Peter’s argument.