

Exegesis of Psalm 8:3–6

(4–7 in Hebrew)

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The passage assigned to this essayist is the middle part of a psalm that has been, and still is, interpreted in various ways by scholars. There are few passages in the Book of Psalms, or even in the entire Old Testament, where there is a greater difference of opinion in what the inspired author states. As an indication of the various interpretations we shall quote a few passages from various authors. These passages can in general illustrate three different interpretations of this psalm, and of the four assigned verses in particular. We may classify these interpretations as Humanistic, Typical and Messianic.

I. HUMANISTIC. For want of a better word, we use this expression to indicate a strictly human interpretation of this psalm, one which maintains that the psalm treats only of mankind, whether it be the perfect primordial man (Adam and Eve before the fall) or sinful man after the fall. This interpretation ignores and excludes the New Testament references, primarily Heb. 2: 6–8, but also I Cor. 15:27 and other quotations or allusions. The following quotations are representative of scholars who espouse that view, and who today are in the majority.

Here is a psalm that is a mine for the expositor, as well as for any who would meditate worthily in the eventide. W. E. Addisⁱ heads it simply “A Nature Psalm,” but it is more than that. It has also been called “a lyric echo of the first chapter of Genesis”; but it is more than that too. It is a psalm of God, nature, and man, and might be called today the psalm of a religious scientist. Some of its phrases have become part of the permanent mental furniture of reflective people.ⁱⁱ

Ps. 8 is an evening hymn in two synth. trimeter octastichs, contrasting the glory of man as creature with the glory of the Creator. The Strs. are enclosed by identical trimeter couplets, praising the name of Yahweh as widespread in all the earth (v. 2a 10). An initial prayer that Yahweh would set His splendour above the heavens, is followed by a contemplation of His strength, in the speech of sucklings, overcoming His enemies; and of the insignificance of man when compared with moon and stars (v. 2b–5). Man made lower than the gods is yet sovereign of all creatures (v. 6–9).ⁱⁱⁱ

John Calvin also interprets this psalm humanistically, in spite of its quotation in Heb. 2: 6–8. He states, in his comments on verse 5 (6):

What the apostle therefore says in that passage concerning the abasement of Christ for a short time, is not intended by him as an explanation of this text; but for the purpose of enriching and illustrating the subject on which he is discoursing, he introduces and accommodates to it what had been spoken in a different sense.^{iv}

In his rationalistic and humanistic exegesis of this psalm he not only ignores the powerful testimony of the New Testament, but also presumes to read the heart and mind of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews when he states that it “is not intended by him as an explanation of this text,” a prerogative that an exegete ought to refrain from assuming.

II. TYPICAL. Under this kind of interpretation can come a number of varieties. However, we can generalize by stating that this interpretation regards the statements in the psalm as referring first and foremost to man in general, and only secondarily, by application, to the Coming Messiah.

Perhaps the foremost proponent of this interpretation is E. W. Hengstenberg of more than a century ago. We must quote him at some length.

Passages from this Psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament; and this has led many expositors to refer the whole Psalm to Him alone. Not only, however, do many internal grounds oppose this view, but it is not sufficiently confirmed by the authority of the New Testament. This will appear on an examination of the particular passages. In Matt. xxi. 16, Christ rebukes the Pharisees, who could not contain themselves because children were crying to him Hosanna, by bringing to their remembrance the 2nd verse of this Psalm: "Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?" From this quotation, it does not at all follow that the Lord explained the Psalm to refer to Himself. It is enough that the idea uttered in the Psalm,—viz. the high-minded, who proudly shut their heart to the impression of what is Divine, withstanding, and impiously blaspheming it, are put to shame by the cheerful acknowledgement thereof, uttered by the unsophisticated mind of childhood, is here also exemplified. The stroke which the Lord here dealt to the Pharisees, was a completely silencing one; they must have felt it in their innermost conscience. The second quotation from this Psalm, in Heb. ii. 6–9, appears to favour more the Messianic interpretation. There vers. 4, 5, are applied to Christ's glory, and His lordship over all creation. But neither are we necessitated by this passage to refer the Psalm, in its primary and proper sense, to Christ. Although David, in the first instance, speaks of the human race generally, the writer of the Epistle might still justly refer what is said to Christ, in its highest and fullest sense. For whereas the glory of human nature, here delineated, has been so dimmed through the fall, that only some few slight flashes of it are seen, and therefore what is here said refers rather to the idea than to the reality, it appeared anew in Christ in full splendour. The writer of the Epistle describes the dominion obtained for humanity in Christ over creation, whereby it was exalted above the angels, in the words of the 4th and 5th verse of this Psalm. The thoroughly incidental reference of the beginning of ver. 5, as rendered in the LXX, to the humiliation of Christ, is not properly an exposition, but a popular adaptation. This is unquestionably the case also with the third quotation, in 1 Cor. xv. 27. Paul there refers the words of ver. 6, "Thou hast put all things under His feet," to Christ, because the power of humanity over the whole creation, lost and changed in Adam to a base servitude, was regained in Christ, and that, indeed, in a still higher and more perfect manner than it was possessed by Adam.^v

In his introduction to this psalm, H. C. Leupold also maintains that the psalm is Typical rather than directly Messianic.^{vi} Leupold was for many years Professor of Old Testament at Capital Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, and died only a few years ago. We must let two more brief quotations illustrating the Typical interpretation suffice. Both are from books of men of about a century ago, George Phillips and J. J. S. Perowne.

This is a Psalm of thanksgiving to God for the exaltation of man above all terrestrial creatures. It is quoted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews with reference to Christ; but whether it is to be considered a prophecy, or whether it is quoted simply because it describes by way of accommodation the character of our Lord does not appear certain. It is appropriately applied to our Lord by way of illustration; for this power and dignity did not obtain their full consummation till He became invested with our nature, and was exalted 'above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.'^{vii}

The Messianic import of the Psalm is not of a direct kind. It is, however, necessarily implied in that mysterious relation of man to God, and that kingship over the inferior creatures of which the Psalm speaks, for this rests upon the Incarnation. Man is what he is, because the Son of God has taken upon Him man's nature. Man is very near to God, higher than the angels, because the Christ is both God and Man. This is the profound truth on which the Messianic character of the Psalm depends. This truth is the key to its interpretation.^{viii}

While this comes close to the Messianic Interpretation, it still falls short of making the Psalm a direct, linear Messianic Psalm, and is therefore rather Typical.

III. MESSIANIC. This interpretation maintains that the psalm is a direct prophecy of the Messiah in which from the outset the psalmist is speaking not of mankind in general, but of the One True Man who in the fullness of the time assumed human nature and who during the state of humiliation did not generally make use of His divine prerogatives and powers and later during the state of exaltation exercised those powers, also according to His human nature. This psalm, particularly in the verses under consideration (3–6 or 4–7), does not, then, speak of other human beings, but rather of the Son of Man who, in the New Testament, repeatedly referred to Himself as such, echoing that expression from verse 4 (5). It is this interpretation which is held by the present writer, and we shall attempt to present it and defend it. Before we take up the exegesis, we shall quote a few statements from exegetes who have held the rectilinear Messianic Interpretation.

First we shall quote from the Prince of All Exegetes, the Great Reformer, Martin Luther. From the very outset he maintains that this psalm is a direct prophecy of the Messiah. We must content ourselves with one short excerpt from his excellent commentary.

This psalm is one of the beautiful psalms and a glorious prophecy about Christ, where David describes Christ's person and kingdom and teaches who Christ is; what kind of kingdom He has and how it is formed; where this King rules, namely, in all lands and yet in heaven; and the means by which His kingdom is founded and regulated, namely, only through the Word and faith, without sword and armor.^{ix}

With regard to the expression "Son of Man," George Stoeckhardt, whose commentary clearly presents the Messianic Interpretation, has this to say:

...Jesus often spoke of Himself in the third person referring to Himself as the Son of Man. That designation is evidently borrowed from Psalm 8. Jesus was very fond of being called the Son of Man. It was something extraordinary that He dwelt among men as a man. He had come from above and had assumed the flesh and blood of men. He took pleasure in being a man and living as a man.^x

In his General Remarks on this psalm following his verse-by-verse commentary, George O. Lillegard states:

In regard to the interpretation of this psalm, it may as well be frankly stated that hardly any writer of the present age considers it a direct prophecy of Christ. But over against the virtual consensus of modern commentators, we confidently place the directly Messianic interpretation given by the N. T., the ancient church, and the older Lutheran exegetes.^{xi}

He then mentions the Typical Interpretation as held by Franz Delitzsch, and shows why he cannot accept it, and also expresses his objections to the Modern Interpretation (referred to as Humanistic on p. 1 of this study).

We shall at this time read the entire psalm (9 verses in English, 10 in Hebrew), and then offer the following translation. It may be of interest to compare in various respects the translations of vv. 3–6 (4–7). Thereupon we shall very briefly summarize the opening verses, proceed to a more detailed exegesis of the four assigned verses, and again briefly summarize the last three verses, the last of which is a repetition of verse 1 (English) or 2 (Hebrew). The translation will here be numbered according to the HEBREW rather than the English system.

כִּי־אֲרָאָהּ שְׁמִיךָ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֶיךָ יְרַח וְכוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנִתָּהּ⁴
 מֵה־אֲנוּשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ⁵
 וְתַחֲסִרְהוּ מֵעַט מֵאֱלֹהִים וְכָבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ⁶
 תַּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֶיךָ כֹּל שֵׁתָה תַּחֲת־רַגְלָיו⁷

1. For the musical director, upon the Gittith, a psalm of David.
2. YAHWEH, our Lord, how magnificent is Your Name in all the earth, Who have placed Your glory upon the heavens!
3. Out of the mouth of babies and sucklings You have founded strength, because of Your adversaries, to silence the enemy and the avenger.
4. When(ever) I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, moon and stars that You have set up,
5. What is Man that You remember Him, or the Son of Man that You pay attention to Him?
6. For You make Him lack God a little while, then with glory and honor You crown Him.
7. You make Him Ruler over the works of Your hands, everything You place under His feet,
8. Sheep and oxen, all of them, and also the beasts of the field,
9. The birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, crossing the paths of the seas,
10. YAWWEH, our Lord, how magnificent is Your Name in all the earth!

We shall now offer only a few brief comments on the first three verses.

1. For the musical director, upon the Gittith, a psalm of David.

The first word refers to the musical director (KJV: chief musician), who was in charge of the musical part of the service. The second expression is variously taken as either the melody (Leupold: “After the tune of the treaders of the winepress,” p. 101) or as a musical instrument, probably one “ which originated from Gath, a city of the Philistines” (Stoekhardt, p. 26). The latter is the preferable interpretation. The last expression clearly indicates that the psalm was composed by David.

2. YAHWEH, our Lord, how magnificent is Your name in all the earth, Who have placed Your glory upon the heavens!

This verse begins with the name of God, best transliterated YAHWEH. followed by the title Lord, which expresses His sovereignty, and is very for this verse. The word literally means “broad,” “wide,” and has the meaning of “mighty” in Ugaritic. It can be rendered by “magnificent,” “majestic,” or “excellent.” The chief grammatical problem in this verse concerns the word תִּנָּה, which is taken various ways by the scholars. Time permits us only to state that we feel it best to take it as a form of the infinitive construct of נָתַן after the analogy of the form רָדָה from יָרַד in Gen. 46:3, as Delitzsch (p. 131) and Lillegard (p. 28) take it. In his excellent

commentary on this psalm Luther emphasizes proclaiming the glory of God. That naturally leads into the next verse.

3. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have founded strength, because of Your enemies, to silence the enemy and the avenger.*

The fact that this verse is quoted in the New Testament does not decisively make it a Messianic psalm, but it lends considerable support to the Messianic interpretation. The verses that follow clearly mark it as Messianic, since they are quoted in Hebrews 2. In turn, they help make a more cogent case for the Messianic nature of this verse. This verse is quoted in Matt. 21:16, which immediately follows upon the Palm Sunday incident. The New Testament quotation follows the Septuagint in using the word *αἶνον*, “praise,” for the Hebrew *זֶעַ*, “strength.” Admittedly “strength” or “power” is more general, and includes “praise,” but it is also more. Luther does not limit this verse to children in the chronological or physical sense, but refers it to “plain, simple, unsophisticated people, with simple faith” who “let themselves be led and directed by God like children.”^{xii} Luther, Stoeckhart and Lillegard take *בְּאֵיבֹיֵב* and *מִתְנַקֵּם* as referring to Satan, the Arch-enemy. The last word is a hithpa‘el participle and might well be translated as the “one exercising himself in vengeance,” in order to bring out both the intensive and the reflexive aspects of the hithpa‘el pattern. These brief remarks now bring us to the four verses that we shall give special attention to.

4. *“When(ever) I see Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, moon and stars that You have set up,”*

The vocabulary of this verse is relatively simple, but the thought is profound. The first word, *כִּי* when followed by the imperfect tense, is generally translated “when.” We have listed as a viable option “whenever,” because that is really what it means in this context. The second word is the 1 com. sing. imperfect qal of the verb *רָאָה*. Under the older terminology the form *רָאָה* is called “future,” which is a misnomer, and indicates what a mistake it is to restrict the concept of the Hebrew tenses to time. The essence of the imperfect tense in Hebrew is to present an action or a condition in progress or in repeated instances and as such it views it as going on or as in a state of development. This is in contrast to the perfect tense, which views an action or condition as completed, and in its totality.^{xiii} Whereas the imperfect is most frequently translated in future time and the perfect in past time in English, such is not always the case, The time must be determined by the context. Here the present time in English is the natural choice, since what is stated applies to past, present and future alike. The third and fourth words are best translated “the works of Your fingers.” Here we have an anthropomorphism. It is significant that, instead of “the works of Your *hands*” (indicating strength) we have “the works of Your *fingers*” (indicating skill). “The fingers are the instruments by which we construct a piece of work perhaps indicating *skill* rather than *strength*, and hence so used in respect to God, as it is by his skill that the heavens have been made.”^{xiv} The last four words of this verse stand in apposition to the two preceding words. Since there is no article on either word, we have rendered them “moon and stars.” However, because there is only one moon, it is justifiable to translate “the moon,” and then by implication also “the stars,” since He made them all. Those words are further described by the short relative clause *אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנָתָהּ*, “that You have set up.” The last word is a verb in the perfect tense. Here the present perfect in the English is the best manner of translating it, since it speaks of an event that is completed, having been done in the past, but having its results evident now in the present. The form is the 2 masc. sing. perfect pilel (polel) of the verb *כּוֹןֵן*, and it means “establish,” “prepare,” “set up.” The pilel is a form corresponding to the piel (intensive, sometimes causative) of certain irregular verbs. The vowel in the middle syllable is lengthened, in a pause form. The word has an

additional final ך, as is sometimes the case after a long vowel. This sentence is a dependent clause, forming the protasis of the one that follows.

In this verse God's wonderful creation is referred to. It is of interest that the moon and the stars are mentioned, but not the sun. That fact has led many commentators to regard this as a "night psalm."^{xv} At any rate, it does picture, the splendor of the heavens as they appear at night, and are reminiscent of Gen. 15:5, in which God tells Abram to look up into the sky and try to count the stars. Luther, who makes a few questionable identifications in this verse,^{xvi} has many interesting and worthwhile things to say on this verse. Speaking of the pollution of sin, he laments the weakness of nature now compared to the time before the Fall, but that in heaven the sun and moon will give much brighter light.^{xvii} No doubt he spoke figuratively, since he was surely aware of the fact that in heaven there will be no need of created light, as we read in Rev. 22:5.

It is interesting to note that, of the commentators who accept the direct Messianic Interpretation, most begin with the thought that the next two verses are speaking of man, but then relate that it is Man in a very special sense, the Messiah. Luther, however, from the outset relates the psalm to the Messiah. We shall now turn to the first of two particularly crucial verses in this psalm, and, with the help of God the Holy Spirit, try to arrive at the meaning.

5. "What is Man that You remember Him, or the Son of Man that You pay attention to Him?"

There is obviously an ellipsis at the beginning of this sentence. In order to connect it syntactically with the preceding verse, we would expect a phrase such as "I exclaim," "I declare," or a similar one. This verse, then, is an apodosis or a conclusion that corresponds to the protasis that is expressed in verse 4 (Eng. 3). It is the natural reaction of the Psalmist or speaker when he beholds the grand galaxy of the skies, a sight that must have been even more impressive to and Abraham than to us 2000 or 3000 years later when pollution of all kinds obscures our view of the grand universe that they behold so clearly. There is, therefore, no doubt that, along with the conclusion drawn in this verse there is also a striking contrast physically and externally from the greater to the lesser.

Before we take into account the Hebrew of this verse (which, incidentally, is not particularly difficult and ought not to be especially controversial), let us make a few remarks about the various translations. The Septuagint is basically in line with the Hebrew text. We might mention that it uses the same word, *ἀνθρώπος*, for two different Hebrew words, *אִנּוּשׁ* and *אָדָם* revealing a limitation in vocabulary on the part of the translators. It is significant that in translating the two verbs the Septuagint here shows itself to be less tied down to time than it usually is in its treatment of the Hebrew verbs, in that it uses the present tense instead of the future. The mood in the Greek is indicative. The Latin Vulgate also uses the present indicative, as do most of the other translations. The majority of English translations render the first verb "are (art) mindful of." Other translations, none of which differ materially, are: "take thought of," "spare a thought for," "think of," "keep in mind," "rememberest," "bother with," and "consider." The second verb, which corresponds to the first in synonymous parallelism, is translated in the King James Version "visitest," and also in several others by that form or the more modern "visit." However, a variety of other translations, most of them more easily understood by a modern reader, can be found, including "come and visit," "care(st) for," "take thought of," "heed," "inspectest," "thinkest of," "claim thy care," "take into account," "have respect to," and "pay attention to." We would feel that, in the translation of the nouns for "man," the *Good News Bible* and the *Living Bible* overstep the bounds in rendering the second expression "mere man" and "mere puny man" respectively. In its typical manner of expanding and contracting the text in accordion fashion, the *Living Bible* destroys the poetic parallelism by omitting the first member and translating it: "I cannot understand how you can bother with mere puny man, to pay any attention to him." (A commuting train is hardly the ideal place to produce a Bible translation.) In general, however, there is agreement among the versions in the meaning of the words of this verse.

Before we turn to a discussion of the interpretation of this verse, we must take note of the Hebrew text, and try to arrive at precisely what is stated. A look at the notes on the bottom of the page in the Hebrew Bible will inform us that there are very few variant readings on these four verses, and none of any great significance.^{xviii} No variant readings are found for this verse. This verse begins with a direct question. The first word is significantly **מָה**, “what” rather than **מִי**, “who,” thereby giving emphasis to quality rather than identification. It is implied, but not stated, in the second strophe of the verse. There the word **אִישׁ** lends a symmetrical balance. The first word for “man” is **אָנוּשׁ**. While like the other word, **אָדָם**, it means “man” in the sense of “mankind,” it has a different connotation, which is often borne out in its usage. The German word “Mensch” expresses it rather well. Delitzsch remarks that “according to the usage of the language, it describes man from the side of his impotence, frailty, and mortality (vis. cii. 15, Isa. li. 12, and on Gen. iv. 26).”^{xix} The last-mentioned passage significantly states that Seth named his son Enosh. That godly man had begun to see the toll that sin was already taking, and indicated such awareness by the name that he gave his son, who like all others except Christ was born in sin after the Fall. The other word for man is **אָדָם** which also means “man” in the sense of “mankind.” Related to the word for ground, **אֲדָמָה** and the word for “red,” **אָדוּם** (the soil has a reddish tinge), it expresses the means by which God created man, Gen. 2:7. It emphasizes the distinction of man from the other creatures, and as such it served well as the name for the first human being. In this verse the one spoken of is called **אָדָם-בֶּן-אָדָם** as well as **אָנוּשׁ**. We shall hope to show that those two expressions are very suitable for the One distinct individual whom we maintain is described here, but first we must come to grips with a few interpretations. The two verbs, each of which is the last word of a strophe, are identical in their identification: 2 masc. sing. imperfect qal with the 3 masc. sing. objective suffix, formed with the nun-energic, in which the **הו** of the suffix **הוּ** is assimilated into the **א** that follows. This can give the verb more emphasis and effect.^{xx} While according to the form of these verbs they could be either indicative or subjunctive, we prefer to take them as indicative, as do also most of the translators and commentators. As for the precise meaning of the verbs in the simple pattern (qal), the first verb, **זָכַר**, is given the following meanings in the lexicons: “remember,” “recall,” “call to mind,” “consider,” “think of.”^{xxi} The second verb, **פָּקַד**, has the following meanings listed: “attend to,” “visit,” “muster,” “appoint,” “look after,” “take care of,” “long for,” “commission,” “call to account for,” etc.^{xxii} Obviously that word has a variety of meanings. In this context, however, the first verb is helpful in establishing the meaning of the second. Most of the English translations are justifiable. The last verb has the connotation of turning one’s attention to someone, either to punish (e.g. Exod. 20:5) or to bless (e.g. Ruth 1:6). Hence the word “visit” in many English translations has both meanings. Since such is the case, it is better to translate this last verb with an English word such as “care for” or “pay attention to” or “show concern for.”

The rationalistic or humanistic interpretation of this passage makes it apply merely to humanity, and maintains that it has no reference whatever, either directly or indirectly, to the Messiah. It ignores the New Testament references, including Heb. 2:6–8, thus implying that it is irrelevant or a misquotation. Such is the case not only with this verse, but with those that follow, so we shall not repeat ourselves there. Since we cannot ignore Heb. 2:6–8, 1 Cor. 15:27, or Matt. 21:16, unless we assume those writers to have been either ignorant or guilty of deception, we must renounce the humanistic interpretation of this passage. We might add that we ought to refrain from using this verse as a proof text for the frailty and sinfulness of man, since it rather refers to that Man who took our place and who voluntarily assumed our human nature and in His state of humiliation refrained from using His divine powers (cf. Philip. 2:6–8) and who indeed was counted as the greatest sinner (2 Cor. 5:21) and underwent deep humiliation (Ps. 22:1–21; Is. 52:13–53:12; the Passion History) for us. A. L. Graebner’s *Doctrinal Theology* does not list this verse under anthropology (pp. 55,56), and Franz Pieper’s only reference to it in his *Christliche Dogmatik* is in reference to the humiliation and exaltation of Christ (II, p. 310),

where he cites it along with Is. 53 and Ps. 110. There are several passages that we can use to give scriptural proof for man's lowliness and sinfulness: Gen. 3:19, 1 Cor. 13:47, Eccles. 12:7, and many others.

Of those who maintain the Typical Interpretation of this passage, making it refer first to ordinary man and then to the Messiah, there are a number of varieties. We must here restrict ourselves to two: 1) Man in his primordial sinlessness and holiness, perfect man in Eden, which narrows it down to only two people: Adam and Eve, and no doubt for only a short time. Those who hold this view put much emphasis on Gen. 1:26, in which the language is strikingly similar to later verses in this psalm. We shall hope to point out, however, that there is one important difference between that verse and verse 7 of our psalm. 2) Man in his sinful fallen state. There are more advocates of this view than of the former. Some want to select various elements from each. Either of these views are held by all of those who want to make this psalm speak either entirely or in part of mankind. We are therefore treating it here in an attempt to refute both the Humanistic and the Typical Interpretation.

The first view is espoused by Leupold, a basically conservative Lutheran commentator who not infrequently manifested linguistic weaknesses as well as an overcautious attitude toward accepting the Messianic Interpretation of certain psalms. Both statements will, we are confident, be supported by what we have to say about his interpretation of this verse, and those that follow. Since Leupold is here talking about man in what he claims to be the state of primordial innocence, but states it under the next verse (Heb. 6, Eng. 5) we must turn to his comments on that verse in order understand what he means by "man" and "Son of man" in this verse. We find no fault with his translation of either of the two words: "mortal man" rather well translates the first; "son of man" is almost universal for the second. However, his exegesis of these two verses is shoddy, even contradictory. We shall quote a paragraph from his exegesis of verse 6, since it pertains to 5:

In any case, the writer views the account of the creation of man as asserting that man was placed so high on the scale of created beings (for he is himself the very image of God) that man "lacks but little of God"—as BDB renders the phrase. The reference is obviously to the primordial man, the first Adam before the fall, in the fullness of his powers and attributes, the very reflection of the majesty of the Almighty, who had patterned man after Himself. If someone might object that angels stood much, higher in the scale than man, it must be remembered that they were from the outset 'ministering spirits' (Heb. 1:14) whereas man, as the words following (vv. 6–8) in our psalm indicate, was assigned a position of rule and authority over all things in the world. Nowhere is man's dignity asserted more clearly and boldly than in this passage. But we again remind the reader that the reference is to man before the fall.^{xxiii}

Even if we were to ignore Heb. 2:6–8, we could find from the words for man in this verse evidence that would make Leupold's contention contradictory and impossible. We shall give two reasons, one in connection with each of the two terms used in this verse for "man."

1. The expression **שׁוֹנֵן** is NOT applicable to Adam in his state of innocence. To use that word of Adam or Eve in their original state of sinlessness would be out of keeping with the connotation of the word, and even contradictory. The word **שׁוֹנֵן** has the connotation of "weakness," "wretchedness," "mortality" that has come as a consequence of sin. While it could apply to Adam and Eve *after* the fall, it could not apply to them in their state of primordial perfection. On the other hand **אָדָם** was a very suitable name for the first man, since for at least a short time he was the only human being, and could also well be borne by him the rest of his life, the name **שׁוֹנֵן** would be a misnomer before the fall. Only after man had realized the toll that sin had taken on mankind did the name *enosh* become an appropriate appellative for a human being. Significantly it was Seth, a godly man, who had a consciousness of sin, who named his son *enosh* (Gen. 4:26).

2. The expression **בְּנֵי אָדָם** is equally inapplicable to Adam. In fact, it would have been ludicrous to name the *first man* "son of Adam" or "Son of man." He who had no earthly father or mother could *never* be

named that. Likewise, although in a unique sense Eve descended from Adam, she was by no means בֶּן־אָדָם, for in the singular no woman is ever to have been called “ben,” but always “bath.” She would have to have been בַּת־אָדָם, but without a mother. However, never is she referred to as a daughter of Adam, but as אִשָּׁה, which means “woman” and “wife.” We therefore conclude that it is impossible to relate this verse to sinless man in paradise. As we shall see in our exegesis of verse 7 (Eng. 6), the important word כָּל all-inclusive, whereas Gen. 1:26 does not include as much, but is limited to visible physical creatures.

As for attributing this verse to fallen, sinful man, to any or all human beings after Adam and Eve, we must readily concede that both expressions for man would be applicable to fallen man. However, the last half of the next verse and in particular the following verse would make that highly questionable. They apply only partially and imperfectly, since man’s dominion over nature after the fall diminished considerably. And in that respect, the quotation of v. 7 in I Cor. 15:27, as we see when we read that verse in context, makes such an identification highly improbable. And, of course, Heb. 2:6–8 ought to clinch the matter for anyone who takes seriously the relationship and harmony between the Old and the New Testaments. To deny that is to deny one of the basic hermeneutical principles: “Scripture interprets Scripture.”

Assuming that we adhere to that principle, we are in reality left with only one tenable interpretation of this passage and of the psalm as a whole: that these verses refer to the Promised Messiah, True God from eternity, who in the fulness of the time was born True Man: Jesus Christ, who preferred to refer to Himself as the Son of Man. While at first it may seem that He does not fit the designation *enosh*, in reality He does so in a remarkable manner. Even though He Himself was perfect, holy, sinless, without any frailty or weakness, as True Man in His state of humiliation Jesus took upon Himself all sins, assumed weaknesses and frailties, became subject to disgrace and abuse, and suffered and died for all. In that sense the word אָנוּשׁ—weak, frail, mortal, sinful man—fits our Savior very well in His state of humiliation. In Dan. 7:13,14 (from the Aramaic portion of the book) the Messiah is called בֶּר אָנוּשׁ, the Son of Man, the second word of which, though etymologically equivalent to the Hebrew cognate אָנוּשׁ, as a phrase corresponds to the phrase בֶּן־אָדָם in Hebrew, an expression that is found in the Hebrew portion of Daniel (eg. 8:17). The latter phrase is repeatedly used in the Book of Ezekiel, though obviously there it refers to the Prophet Ezekiel. And yet it points forward to the corresponding expression in the New Testament, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, “the Son of Man,” used of Jesus Christ 78 times. While it is used mostly of Jesus in His state of humiliation, it is also used of Him in His state of exaltation, e.g., in Matt. 19:28. There is therefore no point in talking about poor, frail, mortal man in the generic sense in these verses, but rather about the Messiah, who by His own free choice assumed our frailty, bore our sins, suffered and died for our salvation.

6. *“For You make Him lack God a little while then with glory and honor You crown Him.*

There is so much in this verse that it perplexes one how and where to begin, and what to say as well as what to omit. Again before studying the Hebrew words and conducting the exegesis, we ought to look at the versions, most of which, as you will soon discover, differ considerably from the above. The Greek Septuagint translation, which was good on verses 4 and 5, is unfortunately rather poor on this verse. It is wrong in expressing the Hebrew on one word, rather inexact on another, and open to misunderstanding on the third. We shall take them up in connection with the Hebrew words after a cursory evaluation of some of the translations. Essentially the same can be said of the Latin Vulgate, which generally leans heavily on the Septuagint. On this verse very few of the translations are acceptable. Many follow the Septuagint in rendering אֲלֹהִים “angels,” which in this context is untenable, particularly when we consider the meaning of the verb that introduces the verse. In this verse some translations import polytheism (*The Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible, Today’s English Version, New World Translation, Basic English, Gelineau, Anchor*), others say simply “divine,” and in

fact the minority translate it “God.” Beck follows the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew Bible in translating the verb. Except for stylistic differences, this writer would basically agree with the following translations of this verse: *Luther’s Bible*, *Stoekhardt*, *Lillegard* and *Luther* in Vol. 12. (The 1964 Revision of Luther’s Translation, does *not* represent Luther’s position, but the revisers.) We would differ with *Robert Young’s Translation* on the word “Godhead” (“God” would be better), with *Driver* on the expression “but little” (it is rather an adverb of time than of degree) and on the same expression with *Leupold*. Stoekhardt’s version (translated very literally in this case by H. W. Degner) is correct, but very awkward.

Just a few remarks about the tense in English of the two verbs would be in order before we look more closely at the words in Hebrew. You will soon notice that all three basic English time-tenses are represented: past, present and future. (Such is also the case in many of the verses in Isaiah 53.) When one is aware of the flexibility and fluidity of the Hebrew tenses time-wise, this is not strange. Since the one imperfect in verse 4 and the two imperfects in verse 5 are by most translators rendered in the present tense, that tense in English appears to be the best choice also for this verse as well as for the first verb in the seventh verse, which is also imperfect. The last verb in verse 7, a perfect in the Hebrew language, also appears to be best in the present. The only verb which we have translated in the past time is the last verb in verse 4, which clearly speaks of an event that took place in the past, but since its effects are still evident, the present perfect is the best time-slot in English. However, we feel that all of the other verbs can best be expressed in present time.

In spite of the wide divergence in interpretations that we find on this verse, the meaning of the six words is not particularly difficult. Even the first three words, each of which is translated and interpreted in numerous ways, ought not pose any great problem to one who carefully consults the Hebrew. It would be best to take the words in the order in which they appear.

וְתַחַסְרָהוּ is 2 masc. sing. imperfect piel with waw-consecutive prefix (the only one in this psalm) and 3 masc. sing. objective suffix, but not with the energetic nun as twice in verse 5, Note the retention of the daghesh forte in both the ת and the ס in spite of the ְ (shewa) under each. In the past we have felt that the presence of the waw-consecutive would make an English past tense preferable (and it no doubt is preferable to the future), but we now feel that it is justifiable to translate the verb in the present even with the waw-consecutive, since it does not necessarily indicate a temporal relationship but rather a casual relationship to the preceding. J. Wash Watts cite as examples of such a relationship 2 Sam. 14:5, Exod. 2:10 and Is. 53:1,2.^{xxiv} This verb, חָסַר, is found 23 times in the Old Testament, according to a concordance:^{xxv} 19 times in the simple qal, 2 times in the Piel (both causative), and 2 times in the hiphil (also causative). In the qal, the verb means “lack,” “be in want of,” as in Ps. 23:1. It may also mean “diminish,” “decrease,” as in Gen. 8:3,5. Both meanings are listed in two standard lexicons that we generally use.^{xxvi} However, in the majority of instances the meaning is “lack,” “be in want of,” “be without.” in the piel it means “cause to lack” and not “cause to be less.” Brown-Driver-Briggs on p. 341 translates the first half of this verse: “and thou didst make him lack little of God,” which may be ambiguous and which suggests degree rather than time, but it does express the meaning of the verb. Koehler-Baumgartner defines it as “cause to lack in comparison with” on p. 320. That also is only partly acceptable. The Greek (Septuagint) renders it ἡλάττωσας, which is rather weak and inexact, since it means “make less,” “make smaller,” “lessen,” “diminish,” “lower,” or “detract from.”^{xxvii} We are convinced that it is not the matter of comparison or degree, but rather that of lacking, being without, in the verb.

The next word, טַעַמָּה, is also variously understood and rendered. Some say “a little,” others “but little” or simply “little.” By way of contrast “a little” means something in comparison with nothing, whereas “little” or “but little” means little in comparison with much. However, in one respect they express essentially the same thing: the concept of *degree*. Now admittedly the word טַעַמָּה in its primary meaning expresses degree, as a study of the passages listed in the lexicons will indicate. However, there are a few instances in which the word expresses time, e.g. Is. 10:25, Is. 29:17, Hag. 2:6 and Job 24:24.^{xxviii} Also the expression כְּמַעַט in Ps. 2:12 is by most expositors taken as temporal. The Greek translation of the word in this verse is βραχύ τι, which might be

construed as either time or degree, preferably time. It literally means “something little” or “something short.” Greek lexicons list the word under space, time, quantity, and quality.^{xxix} Luther, Stoeckhardt, Lillegard, and Beck take the word temporally.

The third word is in itself clear: אֱלֹהִים. While it may at times be used of angels or other heavenly beings, there is no evidence whatever from the context that would substantiate or support such an interpretation or such a translation as in the Septuagint, which is echoed in many of the translations. Also unsatisfactory is the abstract term “Godhead,” as in Young’s translation (13). “A god” or “gods” is also unwarranted, for it is ruled out by the fact that the Bible clearly disavows the existence of such gods. Polytheism or even henotheism is foreign to the Old Testament. The expression “gods” is used only in condemning such figments of the imagination, as in the First Commandment and in other passages, for example in Isaiah. The only warranted translation of אֱלֹהִים in this passage is God. And so we translate it: “For you make Him lack God a little while.” Although his translation of these words is cumbersome, Stoeckhardt has some very perceptive insights and instructive words about it. He says:

The thought expressed here is this: “Thou hast caused him to want a little while away from God.” When we say, a man is wanting bread, he is in want from lack of having bread, not in want because of a lack of bread. The Psalmist is here saying that man lacks a little in the matter of having or possessing God, not lacking in being God. In Eccl. 4:8 a similar expression is used. “For whom do I labor and bereave my soul of good?” Literally, “... and caused my soul to be in want or be away from good.” When man is said to be “in want of God,” it means God has withdrawn from him, has withdrawn His hand from him, does no longer care for or protect him.^{xxx}

This first half of the verse expresses the humiliation of Jesus, but more specifically a certain “little while” during his deepest humiliation. In reality it does not refer to the greater period in His deepest degradation and suffering, when in a very special sense He was “without God,” forsaken by His heavenly Father, as was graphically predicted by David in Psalm 22, the opening words of which He spoke 1000 years later from the cross: “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” During those moments He suffered the worst punishment anyone could ever suffer: the very experience of *hell*, the worst of which is a separation from God, a being *forsaken by God*. That, we are convinced, is what these words express. In his inimitable manner Luther states that in his comments on this verse, of which we here select a few sentences:

David is talking here about this sublime, spiritual suffering, when Christ fought with death and felt nothing in His heart but that He was forsaken of God. And in fact He was forsaken by God. This does not mean that the deity was separated from the humanity—for in this person who is Christ, the Son of God and of Mary, deity and humanity are so united that they can never be separated or divided—but that the deity withdrew and hid so that it seemed, and anyone who saw it might say, “This is not God, but a mere man, and a troubled and desperate man at that.” The humanity was left alone, the devil had free access to Christ, and the deity withdrew its power and let the humanity fight alone.^{xxxi}

As you will notice from your sheet of translations on which also the quotation in Hebrews 2:6–8 is listed, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews precisely quotes the Septuagint on these verses. We mention it here because it is in the first half of this verse that the Septuagint substantially differs from the Hebrew text. That, of course, raises a question or two that can be puzzling and even disturbing to a student of the Bible: Is the Epistle to the Hebrews a legitimate part of Sacred Scripture? Or, is the Bible inerrant and infallible? First, while we admit that the Epistle to the Hebrews is generally listed among the *antilegomena* rather than the *homologoumena*, we would hasten to add that, in regard to their inerrancy and inspired nature, we

wholeheartedly accept both. We do not maintain a distinction in that respect. Furthermore, we do maintain with conviction that the Bible is inerrant and that there are no contradictions in it. In so saying, we do not deny that not every quotation from the Old Testament in the New Testament is verbatim. There are many instances in which quotations are approximate, but still express the truth that the Lord prompted the New Testament writer to inscripturate. The same Holy Ghost who inspired the Old Testament also inspired the New Testament. That is a general fact which can be verified by a comparison of such quotations as Rom. 10:18 with Ps. 19:4 and Matt. 2:6 with Micah 5:2. In addition to that apparent problem, however, there is the specific one in this text (Heb. 2:6) in comparison with the verse of our psalm (6). How can we justify the translation “angels” when the Hebrew clearly has “God”? First, we would do well to bear in mind that the Septuagint was a current no doubt *the* current version of the day, similar to the status that the King James Version holds today (and has held for centuries in the English speaking world). The people to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was specifically addressed no doubt were familiar with it. Also, we must remember the main theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews: *The Superiority of Jesus Over All Others and Everything Else*. In the early chapters the superiority of His Person is given the chief emphasis. In chapter 1 He is specifically declared to be far superior to the angels. Continuing that theme in chapter 2, our psalm is quoted, and is followed by an inspired exegesis, which is set forth in Heb. 2:8b–10 in which again the angels are mentioned. It therefore served the specific purpose of the unknown author to emphasize that during His humiliation Jesus was even made lower than the angels, consequently adopting not only the Greek word ἀγγέλους but also the verb ἡλάττωσας, which lends itself better to the meaning “made lower than” than the meaning “was without.” However, with Stoeckhardt, Lillegard, and Luther we maintain that the expression in Hebrew is as we have translated it. This adaptive type of quotation is neither uncommon nor objectionable when properly understood in accordance with the purposes of the sacred writers.

The last half of this verse also consists of three words. We need not devote much time or space to those words, since they are clear in meaning and there is general agreement in their translation. The word order in this verse forms a chiasmus: The verb comes first in the first half, and last in the last. Between them are the other parts of speech. כְּבוֹד, with the etymological meaning of “heaviness in contrast to what is light, fickle and trifling, is given various meanings in the lexicons, including “abundance,” “honor,” “glory,” “splendor,” “dignity,” “reputation.”^{xxxii} Generally the best meaning is “glory,” and that is how most of the translations have for the word in this verse. הִדְרָה is given the meanings “ornament,” “splendor,” “honor,” “majesty,” “dignity.”^{xxxiii} While any of the last four would be appropriate, we have followed most of the translations by using “honor,” partly since it connotes a deeper and less physically oriented quality. The final word in this verse is the verb תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ, which is identical in form with the first verb except it lacks the waw-consecutive. It is 2 masc. sing. imperfect piel with the 3 masc. sing. objective suffix. While this piel, like the first, may be classified as a causative piel, it would be better to regard it as a denominative piel; a verb formed from the noun root, just as in English we may say “dust” the furniture, “stack” the deck, etc. Regardless, however, it is clear what it means: “You crown Him.” Again David is addressing God the Father. He says “You crown Him with glory and honor,” or, as the word order suggests “With glory and honor You crown Him.” The Hebrew words כְּבוֹד and הִדְרָה are to be construed as accusatives. According to Gesenius, who takes the piel as a causative piel (which it could well be, or a denominative piel, both of which would express the same idea here), the verb at the end of this verse takes two accusatives: one of the person, expressed by the suffix of the verb, and the other of the thing, expressed by the words *glory and honor*.^{xxxiv} This kind of construction may also be called an adverbial accusative, which in an unidiomatic sort of English might be expressed: “You crown Him glorically and honorically.” The meaning is the same essentially.

Luther, who prefers the word “adornment” as a translation of הִדְרָה, states regarding this word:

The other decoration is **הָדָר**, which really means the adornment that comes from precious and glorious clothes. But here he is talking about the royal adornment by which Christ, crowned King, will be glorious in this world and in the world to come. Kings are usually adorned when they are to put on a spectacle. Thus Christ the King, says David, will be adorned, not merely of Himself in His natural body, but also for us in His spiritual body, which is His congregation. For He gathers His church through the preaching of the Gospel, and He adorns and decorates it with His Holy Spirit. This adornment is set in contrast to His ugly form, of which we spoke earlier on the basis of Isaiah 53. As though he were to say: “The Man, **אֲנוּן**, and the Son of Man has little adornment and little support in the time of His suffering. His own nation cries over Him, ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him!’ Yes, His own disciples rebel against Him and run away from him. But after His resurrection He will have the glorious adornment and the great following of many Christians on earth. That will be the beautiful adornment and beautiful dress with which He will be crowned in this world.”^{xxxv}

These words make us seriously consider revising our translation of the word **הָדָר** to “adornment” and “splendor.” We could do worse than be influenced by Martin Luther.

The last half of this verse stands in antithetic relationship to the first half, and introduces this psalm’s statement of the exaltation of Jesus, which continues to the end of the psalm. We find that truth beautifully stated in Philip. 2:9–11 and elsewhere, e.g. in several verses of 1 Cor. 15. Of this we shall further treat in the next verse, and then very briefly summarize the remaining three verses of the psalm.

7. *“You make Him Ruler over the works of Your hands, everything You lace under His feet.”*

Again notice the anthropomorphisms: hands, feet, to indicate the creative power of God the Father and the ruling power of God the Son, respectively, It was an ancient custom for conquering kings or generals to make their subdued enemies lie prostrate on the ground and to put their (the victors’) feet on the victims’ necks, or in some cases to lie supine and have the victors’ feet on their chests. The latter is illustrated in a relief carving from the Behistun Rock, in which Darius the Great (pictured much larger) places his left foot on the chest of a subdued enemy lying face up. That indicates complete conquest.

Except for the time-slot (past, present, or future), there is no material difference between most of the translations on this verse. Nor is there any great difference in what time-slot we put the verse, since this is prophecy and as such can be viewed in advance as completed (thus the past tense), or it can be stated as a prophecy of a future event which, as we know, takes place at the exaltation of Jesus (thus the future tense from David’s point of view), or it can be stated as a fact without special consideration of its pastness or futurity (thus the present tense). We have opted for the latter, as several have, without rejecting the others. The fact is that the first verb is in the imperfect and the last verb in the perfect. However, the difference does not here lie in the matter of time, but rather the state of verbal action as represented by the tenses Both can lend themselves well to the present in this verse.

הַמְשִׁילֵהוּ is the 2 masc. sing. imperfect hiphil (causative) with the 3 masc. sing. objective suffix. The psalmist is, as throughout the Psalm, addressing God the Father, who is the subject of this verb, **מֶשֶׁל**, which clearly means “rule,” “have dominion.” The one referred to in the suffix is God the Son, who is the object of the causative factor in the hiphil pattern, and in turn He is the subject of the verbal factor, “have dominion.” Here, as often, the verb **מֶשֶׁל** “have dominion” is followed by **כֹּ**. In this construction it means “have dominion *over*,” not merely “have dominion in.”^{xxxvi} It is used in that construction in Gen. 1:18; 3:16; 4:7 and in many other passages. The Septuagint uses the aorist for both verbs in this verse. For this verb it has *κατέστησας*, from *καθίστημι* or *καθιστάνω*. Arndt and Gingrich list the following meanings for this word: “bring,” “conduct,”

“take” someone somewhere; “appoint,” “put in charge,” “ordain,” “appoint” someone; “make,” “cause” someone to become something.^{xxxvii} The word in the Septuagint, therefore, approximates the Hebrew in meaning. The object of the verbal element in this verb is an expression we have already considered: “the works of Your hands.” That is all-inclusive, as we shall see. In the best manuscripts of the Nestle Edition of the Greek New Testament, this part of the verse is omitted. The next part, however, continues after the previous verse in the quotation in Heb. 2:8. It is also quoted in I Cor. 15:27, as we shall see.

The last stroke of verse 7 (Eng. 6) consists of four words. The word order is very emphatic, with the direct object coming first. Also, the word כֹּל is written with the holem and without a maqqeph, giving it greater emphasis. While it may often (through the translation) appear to be an adjective, it is a *noun: totality, everything, all*. It is collective in form, and in this case it is all-inclusive, embracing all of God’s creation, visible and invisible. It therefore is not to be equated with Gen. 1:26, the command and promise given to man before the fall. That was restrictive, whereas this is all-inclusive, and can therefore apply only to the Lord. Lillegard states:

The ‘kol’ is unrestricted; it encompasses all creation, even the invisible, (such as the angels) and extends from the dominion of the son of man nothing save Jehovah Himself. It makes the Son of Man not only the vice-regent of Jehovah, as was the first Adam, but His co-regent. And the term “under his feet,” suggests that this absolute rule ascribed to the Son of Man is the result of victory gained, and a subjugation accomplished. The term represents the Son of Man as a conqueror who has earned His crown in a holy war. Cf. Ps. 110:1 and I Cor. 15:25. Accordingly, St. Paul, in I Cor. 15:27 and Eph. 1:21ff interprets the ‘kol’ of our verse as comprehending in itself even Satan, death, and Hell; in fact, every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come. And this all-inclusive interpretation of the ‘kol’ is emphatically endorsed by Heb. 2.^{xxxviii}

The verb הִתְּשָׁ is the 2 masc. sing. perfect qal of the verb תִּשָּׁ, which is here used in its primary meaning of “set,” “place.” It has an added final silent ה, which is not unusual, particularly in poetry. The last two words are perfectly clear: “under His feet.” In the opening comments of this verse we gave the significance of that picture, which is also given in the expression “Until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” in Ps. 110:1. The Septuagint uses the verb ὑπέταξα in which also the verb includes the prefix “under,” so it could be rendered according to the Septuagint and the quotation in Heb. 2:8: “You have subjected under His feet all things,” or, more emphatically, “All things You have subjected under His feet.”

In I Cor. 15:27, Paul quotes this portion of Ps. 8:7 as He speaks directly of Jesus. He applies it to Him, and also speaks of God the Father in the third person. The Greek reads: πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ, which we can render: “Everything, in fact, He has placed under the feet of Him (Jesus).” In this passage, we must take into account the context. This verse is from the great Resurrection Chapter, I Cor. 15. This quotation falls into a portion of the chapter in which we must look at the context that precedes and that which follows. A six-verse passage should suffice. “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at his coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when he says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that he is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the one who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15: 23–28, NASB). Here we have one of many instances of inspired exegesis in the New Testament.

Another example of such inspired exegesis on this passage, including also the three previous verses (the assignment of this paper), is found in Heb. chap. 2, again from the Septuagint, as is the rest of this passage. The

explanation of that procedure (including the reading “the angels”) in the light of the emphasis given in the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been attempted previously in this presentation. We shall again quote the immediate context, before and after our verses, which are given in capital letters. “For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking But one has testified somewhere, saying, ‘WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU REMEMBEREST HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT THOU ART CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? THOU HAST MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; THOU HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAST APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; THOU HAST PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET,’ For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who has been made for a little lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste for every one. For it was fitting for Him for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons of glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Heb. 2:5-10, NASB).

On the basis of both of these passages, and their wider context, we surely conclude that these last verses in this psalm speak of Jesus Christ in His state of exaltation, in which as true God He makes use of His divine prerogatives and powers, also according to His human nature. While in regard to His Person, as the Son of Man, He is subject to His Father, as is stated in 1 Cor. 15:28, He is also, as True God, equal to Him. More specifically, it is according to His humanity that He is inferior to the Father, as we confess in the Athanasian Creed: “Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching His Manhood.” Luther emphasizes the first part of that statement when he says:

He says, “Thou wilt make Him Lord over the works of Thy hands” and “Thou hast put all things under His feet.” Thereby he testifies that Christ, true man, is also at the same time true God. For God does not make anyone Lord over the works of His hands nor put all things under anyone’s feet unless He is His equal, that is, unless He is God. God alone is Lord over the works of His hands and has all things under His feet. Since this Man Christ, who was forsaken of God for a little time, is to be made Lord over God’s works—heaven, angels, sun, moon, earth, men, air, water, and everything that is in heaven, on earth, and in the water—it follows that He is true God.^{xxxix}

However, as we clearly see from 1 Cor. 15:24–26, the dominion of Jesus Christ and the subjection of everything under His power will reach its full climax and consummation at the end of the world, when He will come to judge all the living and the dead, and when in a blaze of glory and splendor that is beyond our imagination or powers of description He will reveal Himself as the Lord of lords and King of kings. This will not be a prolonged earthly rule as Millennialists imagine, but it will be a rule forever where, after having abolished death as the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), He will reign in the Kingdom of glory in heaven. However, even now, He is the King and Lord over the entire universe, as He governs His Kingdom of Power, where He is in control of everything, a few examples of which are given in the next two verses, which we shall only briefly take up. And, of course, He rules in His Kingdom of Grace for the benefit of His believers.

8. *“Sheep and oxen, all of them, and also the beasts of the field.”*

In this verse are listed three kinds of creatures: First, the small and the larger domesticated animals, and then the word, in a plural form, for the beasts of the field, which in this context is no doubt broader than the usual, in which we think of animals like oxen, sheep, horses, donkeys and camels. All of these (and everything else not enumerated here) are under the Son of Man. What is listed in this and the following verse is only a small sampling of the creatures of this world under His dominion. Each of them a marvelous wonder in itself, they all join in the great song of praise that nature sings to our Lord and God, Creator and Redeemer.

9. “The birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, crossing the paths of the seas.”

This verse adds more creatures: the *birds*, literally chirping creatures; the *fish of the sea*; and everything crossing or traversing the routes of the seas. That would include not only marine life of all kinds, but also birds who fly over the seas. The participle appears to have a transitive meaning here, although it could be taken as intransitive but with no preposition following. We would differ with Beck on one point: he limits the participle עָבַר to the fish. It certainly must include other marine life as well as birds or any thing that traverses the seas.

10. “YAHWEH, our Lord, how magnificent is Your Name in all the earth!”

The psalm closes with the same words with which it opens in v. 2, following the superscription. This gives it the final grand doxology in the same words with which the Psalmist expressed His praise to God.

As we consider this psalm as a whole, we can see that the Messianic Interpretation is more justifiable than any other interpretation even from internal considerations, apart from New Testament quotations, as we have noted in certain verses. The New Testament quotations leave us no other choice than the Messianic Interpretation. It was of the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus stated: “They are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39.) Cf. also Luke 25:44–47.

Endnotes

ⁱ A. S. Peake, ed.: *A Commentary on the Bible*. (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, n.d.), p. 375

ⁱⁱ The Interpreter’s Bible. Exposition by J.R.P. Sclater, p.48.

ⁱⁱⁱ C. A. Briggs’ summary at the beginning of his treatment of Psalm 8 in *The International Critical Commentary*, Psalms, Vol. I, p. 61.

^{iv} John Calvin: *Commentary upon the Book of Psalms*, Vol. I, p. 105.

^v E. W. Hengstenberg: *Commentary on the Psalms*, Col. I, pp. 126, 127.

^{vi} H. C. Leupold: *Exposition of the Psalms*, pp. 100, 101.

^{vii} George Phillips: *A Commentary on Psalms*, Vol. I, pp. 94, 95.

^{viii} J. J. S. Perowne: *The Book of Psalms*, Vol. I, pp. 154, 155.

^{ix} Martin Luther: *Luther’s Works*, American Edition. Vol. 12, p. 98. (This translation is by Jaroslav Pelikan, as are also later quotations.)

^x George Stoeckhardt: *Lectures on Select Psalms*, p. 33. (The translation is by Hugo W. Degner.)

^{xi} George O. Lillegard: *Commentary on the Chief Messianic Psalms*, p. 34.

^{xii} Luther, Vol. 12, p. 108.

^{xiii} Cf. Willhelm Gesenius: *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*. (Kautzsch and Cowley), para. 47, Note, p. 125. Also cf. J. Wash Watts: *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, p. 55.

^{xiv} Robert Barnes: *Barnes on the Old Testament*, Psalms Vol. I, p. 70.

^{xv} Thus, for example, Briggs in *The International Critical Commentary*, p. 63.

^{xvi} For example, God’s finger as the Holy Spirit (p. 118) and the sun as Jesus Christ (p. 121) from Vol. 12 of *Luther’s Works*.

^{xvii} Page 119.

^{xviii} In verse 4, the Septuagint omits the suffix on the third word. In verses 4 and 7, the word יָמָא (plural in construct) as הָיָא (singular in construct) appears in many manuscripts. In verse 6, the waw-consecutive is omitted in the Septuagint reading.

^{xix} Franz Delitzsch: *Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. I, p. 153.

^{xx} Cf. *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar* (Kautzsch and Cowley), para. 58 i-1, pp. 157-158.

- xxi Brown-Driver-Briggs, pp. 269, 270., Koehler-Baumgartner, pp. 255, 256.
- xxii Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 823., Koehler-Baumgartner, p. 773.
- xxiii Leupold, p. 104.
- xxiv Watts, p. 110.
- xxv Gerhard Lisowsky: *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*, Stuttgart. Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1958. p. 515.
- xxvi Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 341., Koehler-Baumgartner, p. 320.
- xxvii Liddell and Scott: *Greek-English Lexicon*. p. 247. Arndt and Gingrich: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 247.
- xxviii Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 570. We could also add Exod. 17:4 and Ruth 2:7.
- xxix Liddell-Scott, p. 156., Arndt-Gingrich, p. 146.
- xxx Stoeckhardt, p. 29.
- xxxi Luther, Vol. 12, pp. 126, 127.
- xxxii Brown-Driver-Briggs, pp. 458-459.
- xxxiii *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- xxxiv *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Kautzsch and Cowley), para. 117 cc, p. 370.
- xxxv Luther, Vol. 12, pp. 129, 130.
- xxxvi Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 605., Koehler-Baumgartner, p. 576.
- xxxvii Arndt-Gingrich, p. 391.
- xxxviii Lillegard, p. 32.
- xxxix Luther, Vol. 12, p.131.

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