

Gospel Gleanings, “...especially the parchments”

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The Greater Solomon

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.? (Psalm 72:1-5)

The caption at the beginning of this psalm reads, “A psalm for Solomon.” The closing verse of the psalm reads, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” Obviously the psalm records David’s prayer for his son Solomon. As we read the full text of the psalm and compare it with the reign of Solomon in Israel, we quickly realize that Solomon didn’t fully live up to his father’s prayer. Matthew Henry’s commentary on verse 5 insightfully points us beyond Solomon.

“They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure. Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God were well kept up, for some time, under his government, but it did not last long; this therefore must point at Christ’s kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to and kept in the fear of God; for the Christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, Fear God, and give honour to him, Rev. 14:7.”^[1]

Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem and restored worship as the centerpiece of Israel’s culture. However, upon his death, his son Rehoboam increased taxes and forced a heavy-handed rule on the people that led to rebellion among the northern tribes. The nation divided into Israel (most of the ten tribes in the north) and Judah, along with the remnant of the ten tribes that migrated to the south rather than continue to live in the increasingly pagan northern kingdom.

Rather than viewing Solomon as the ultimate fulfillment of this psalm, we should view it as a prophetic psalm that predicted the godly rule of the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this setting we find the words that focus on our theme, “*They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.?*”

The godly response of righteous people to the rule of Christ is summarized by “They shall fear thee....” In this passage the word “fear” is translated from a Hebrew word

whose meaning varies from “fear, a state of great distress” to showing “high status and honor to one in authority” (*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew*). Vine’s dictionary expands the specific meaning that likely applies to the word in our study lesson.

“Used of a person in an exalted position, *yare?* connotes “standing in awe.” This is not simple fear, but reverence, whereby an individual recognizes the power and position of the individual revered and renders him proper respect. In this sense, the word may imply submission to a proper ethical relationship to God; the angel of the Lord told Abraham: “... I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Gen. 22:12). The verb can be used absolutely to refer to the heavenly and holy attributes of something or someone. So Jacob said of Bethel: “How [awesome] is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:17). The people who were delivered from Egypt saw God’s great power, “feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses” (Exod. 14:31). There is more involved here than mere psychological fear. The people also showed proper “honor” (“reverence”) for God and “stood in awe of” Him and of His servant, as their song demonstrates (Exod. 15).”^[2]

Paul echoes the sentiment of this verse in the New Testament. “Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:21)

Let’s catalogue the leading characteristics of Jesus’ rule from the psalm. As we study these traits, try to view the passage as primarily referring to His rule in our present world setting. No doubt the ultimate and absolute fulfillment shall occur in heaven, but do not overlook the impact of His rule among His people now.

1. He shall judge the people with righteousness and judgment, even the poor.
2. The people under His rule experience peace as if grown out of the ground where ever they are.
3. His dominion is equated with rain on fresh cut grass or a newly planted crop.
4. His dominion is not restricted to “our little world,” but extends “from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.”
5. He delivers poor and needy people, not just people who can return His favors.
6. He honors His role as a near kinsman-redeemer, delivering His people from the just debts that they incur.
7. He shall receive prayers and praise from His people.
8. His reign shall be perpetual.

For all of these reasons David sums up the impact of His reign in the terms of our focus verse. His people shall fear Him as long as sun and moon move through their

circuits. They shall “render him proper respect.”

How do we frame our personal conduct so as to truly “render proper respect” to the Lord Jesus Christ, the greater Solomon? Sadly in our post-Christian American culture, the life of faith for many people who sincerely profess to be Christians shows little or no distinction from people who openly claim no belief in God whatever. They practice similar business ethics as unbelievers. They participate in their church based more on convenience than conviction. They exhibit pride far more than godly humility. Morality for them is based on personal taste and preference, not on the specific teaching of Scripture. Jesus’ words confront this casual attitude, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). God looks at our actions, not at our words to assess our obedience or rebellion. At the end of the day it is not our personal view of ourselves, or even the view of others, that determines whether we please God or not. It is how fully we “render proper respect” to God in our conduct that measures our true faith.

I grew up in a rural southern culture. The churches in that region typically met one or two Sundays a month. Shortly after I was baptized at age 14, I began to hunger for more fellowship with my church family than once or twice a month. On a particular Sunday morning I was walking through our pasture with my father and asked him if we could attend one of our churches that morning. Dad dismissed my desire with a “too busy, don’t have extra money for the cost of gas to go” excuse. Since I owned a couple of cows and sold the milk separately, I offered to pay for the cost of the fuel to go. Dad still dismissed my petition. Soon I made arrangements with others to attend church every Sunday, and Dad started going with me. We cannot be selective in the Biblical commandments that we choose to obey. We manifest our discipleship by a conscientious effort to submit to all of God’s teachings and commandments in Scripture. I am grateful that most of these churches now meet at least once each week, and many of them meet more often. It is not our culture or personal convenience that should determine our conduct, but God’s teachings in Scripture. We manifest our fear of God by our compliance with the authority of Scripture.

A few years ago in performing a wedding ceremony for a couple whom I knew through my secular work I inserted into the ceremony a pointed suggestion that this couple should buy a Bible and spend regular time with it. I observed that the Bible is God’s “owner’s manual” for marriage, as well as all other honorable human relationships. Let’s become more familiar with God’s “owner’s manual” for our Christian life and thereby “maintain good works” (Titus 3:8).

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^[1]Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ps 72:2). Peabody: Hendrickson.

[2] Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W. (1996). *Vine's complete expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* (Vol. 1, Page 79-80). Nashville: T. Nelson.