

## THE USE OF PSALMS 8 AND 110

### IN I CORINTHIANS 15:25-27 AND IN HEBREWS 1 AND 2

WILBER B. WALLIS, PH.D.\*

It is proposed in this paper to examine the striking parallels between the use of Psalms 8 and 110 in I Corinthians 15:25 and 27, and Hebrews Chapters 1 and 2. The citation of portions of these Psalms by Paul in I Corinthians 15:25 and 27 clinches his argument that Christ must conquer all His enemies, including death. Likewise, in Hebrews 2, the same theme is being pursued: Christ, through death, purposes to destroy the one having the power of death. In the course of the argument of Hebrews, Psalm 8 is quoted at length, but in conjunction with Psalm 110:1. I believe it can be shown that the exposition of these Psalms in Hebrews clarifies also the problem of the sequence of eschatological events in the Pauline apocalypse, I Corinthians 15:20-28.

The problem in I Corinthians 15:20-28 is in part whether Paul teaches that there will be one resurrection, or two. One class of students would hold that the sequence of events at and following the Parousia is of such a nature that the whole complex happens in a very brief time, so that no space can be found between the Parousia and the end for a millennium. The chiliast argues that Paul's language implies that he envisioned a millennium, and that the parallels from the Revelation and elsewhere clearly prove the case.

Geerhardus Vos is an example of the first-mentioned group of expositors. His chapter, "The Question of Chiliasm" in the volume *The Pauline Eschatology*, provides an instructive example of his school's handling of the problem. Vos approaches the Pauline Apocalypse with the strong presumption that the chiliastic interpretation is not sound. He lays appreciative emphasis on the "far-sweeping, age-dominating program of the theology of Paul," and argues that when Paul has been satisfactorily interpreted, the problems of the Revelation may be faced. Vos thinks, "the large mould of the Pauline eschatological teaching" should not be "reduced to the narrower, pictorial measures of the Apocalyptic vision." (p. 226). Vos pursues his analysis of the passage until he comes to the *eita* of v. 24, where the time-sequence implications of *eita* demand that the *telos* must follow the Parousia at some interval, greater or less. Vos refuses the possibility that the *eita* could envision sufficient time for a millennium. He recognizes the force of the *dei gar auton basileuein* of

\*Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

v. 25 and correctly reasons that if no time for the reign is found after the Parousia, the beginning of the reign must be found somewhere prior to the Parousia. In my opinion, Vos has done a great service to exegesis in setting the alternative clearly before us. Vos then finds what he considers satisfactory evidence that the reign contemplated could and did begin at the resurrection and ascension of Christ. I think Vos does not give sufficient emphasis to the fact that Paul's argument is based on the interlocking promises from Psalms 8 and 110. The necessity for Christ's reign rises from the fact that Psalm 110:1 promises that all His enemies will be put under His feet. Paul has added the word "all" in v. 25 in his allusion to the Psalm. Then the clinching and comprehensive promise of Psalm 8 is brought in, justifying Paul's addition of the word "all" in v. 25. The promise of Psalm 8:7 is that "all things" will be put under His feet. "The "all" is completely all-inclusive, excluding only the one who subjects all things to the Son. The "all things" must therefore include Christ's enemies, the last of which is death.

Paul therefore lays great stress on the completeness and finality of Christ's conquest of all enemies including death. If the argument can be made good that death is not completely conquered in the resurrection at the Parousia, then the complete conquest of death demanded by Paul's argument could be found in a second resurrection, as outlined in Revelation 20.

At this point, some reliance can be placed on the full literal force of the preposition *ek* when it is found in the phrase *anastasis ek nekron*. Christ's resurrection was *ek nekron* (I Cor. 15:12, 20), and the rest of the dead were not raised. Paul aspires to *ten anastasin ten ek nekron* (Phil. 3:11), and the discriminating language Paul uses of the resurrection of believers elsewhere looks like he has the same distinction in mind. It is "they that are Christ's" who are made alive at the Parousia (I Cor. 15:23). It is the dead in Christ who are to rise (I Thess. 4:16). Vos rejects this distinction. (*ISBE*, "Eschatology of the N.T., II, 9866).

There is good exegetical opinion that Paul did not mean to teach that death is wholly conquered at the Parousia. The remarks of T. C. Edwards, (*A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 417-418 and footnote) are very significant. He says, "Verse 26, *eschatos echthros*, an explanatory predicate: 'as the last enemy Death is destroyed.' Death has not, it appears from this, been destroyed at the second coming and at the resurrection of those that are Christ's. The Apostle seems, it must be acknowledged, to teach that there will be two resurrections, the former of believers only, the latter, of all others, when at last death itself will die. The first resurrection is the redemption of the body for which believers groan (Rom. 8:23). Similarly, the Apostle John says that the followers of Jesus will rise and reign with Christ a thousand years, and this is the first resurrection, but that the rest of the dead will not rise till the thousand years are ended..." Edwards continues in a footnote (p. 418) "I may add that my interpretation of the Apostle's words is

not the result of having adopted any theory on the general question. I know next to nothing of millenarian literature. But after reading Bp. Waldgrave's *New Testament Millennialism*... and Dr. Brown's *Second Advent*... , I am not convinced that the Apostle does not teach the doctrine of two resurrections. Neither of these writers, so far as I have observed, touches upon the argument that death is not destroyed at the Advent." Edwards would therefore argue against Vos' attempt to go back over the *eita* of v. 24, and back prior to the Parousia, to find a beginning of the reign in which enemies are conquered. Edwards feels the natural force of Paul's language, as implying that the conquest of the last enemy, death, comes after the Parousia. The *eita* and the *hoi tou christou* speak against a simultaneous resurrection of all the dead. Another resurrection is required to do justice to Paul's language, and John's disclosure of two resurrections with a millennial interval between, is an harmonious solution to the problem.

Let us turn now to Hebrews Chapters 1 and 2, where the same Psalms, 8 and 110, enter into the argument. Chapter one of Hebrews is noteworthy for the magnificent chain of Old Testament citations which illustrate the Divine glory of the Son. In each member of the series of quotations, the Son is set above and contrasted with angels. The concluding and climactic member of the series sharply and dramatically sets the Son high above angels, for in contrast to the Son who can sit at the Father's right hand, the angels are set forth as ministering spirits.

The supreme dignity of the Son provides the ethical motivation of the exhortation to give heed to the Gospel. Here is the first instance in the series of hortatory sections of the epistle, set between expository passages. The idea of subjection of enemies to angels was advanced rhetorically in Chapter 1:13, and rejected. Only the Divine Son is competent and worthy to have all His enemies put under His feet. Verse 5 of chapter 2 naturally resumes the line of thought, "Not indeed to angels did he subject the world to come, of which we are speaking." The assumption that the subjugation of the world to come of 2:5 is closely related to the subjugation of enemies in 1:13 explains both the resumptive reference to angels and the explanatory remark "about which we are speaking." This remark is natural if the idea has been advanced previously, and is now about to be illustrated by the parallel and confirmatory citation from Psalm 8.

It is interesting to note that the order of thought in Hebrews is parallel to the context of I Corinthians 15:25-27. The thought of Psalm 110:1 is advanced first and then confirmed by the climactic parallel from Psalm 8. Further, the same peculiar emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the subjugation promised is made in Hebrews 2:8 as was found in I Corinthians 15:27. In Hebrews, it is said that in the subjection of all things to the Son, the Father has left nothing that is not put under him. Similarly, in I Corinthians 15:27, the explanation is given that the one accomplishing the subjection, the Father, is obviously excepted. The

implication is of a total and complete subjugation of all things, the Father alone excepted. Just as in I Corinthians 15, where the theme was the conquest of all Christ's enemies, so here the same controlling redemptive theme was announced in the promise that all the Son's enemies will be put under His feet. Just as I Corinthians, Hebrews 2:9, 10, 14, 15 find the accomplishment of redemption in the conquest of death. Christ was made lower than the angels that He might taste death for everyone. It was fitting for Him, through whom and for whom all things are, to be made perfect through suffering. He took flesh and blood that through death, He might destroy the one who has the power of death, and deliver those in bondage.

There is yet another parallel between the Corinthians passage and Hebrews. In Hebrews 2:8, the corrective "not yet" is introduced. The promise of subjugation is universal, and all things will be put under the Son's feet, but "not yet" do we see the subjugation completed. The perfect participle *hypotetagenon*, looking at both ends of the action, would imply that the subjugation has not been begun nor has it been completed. Jesus Christ has resumed His place at the Father's right hand, and is waiting until His enemies shall be made His footstool, Hebrews 10:13. Parallel to and identical with the subjugation not yet begun nor accomplished is the subjugation of the world to come mentioned in verse 5, which in turn had its antecedent in the promise of 1:13, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet."

With the parallelism between the exegesis of the two Psalms in Hebrews and I Corinthians established, the two contexts mutually support and explain one another. Hebrews emphasizes the fact that the subjugation of all things is yet future, though a decisive point in the total redemptive plan has been reached in the suffering and death of the Son. Hebrews calls the situation in the future "the world to come." On the other hand, I Corinthians makes it clear that that situation is a time when Christ reigns and overcomes His enemies. I Corinthians also makes it clear that the time of reigning and conquest is *prior* to the stupendous eschatological end, the *Telos*, and *after* the Parousia. The indication in I Corinthians that the reign and conquest precede the *Telos* helps to interpret the *oikoumene* of Hebrews 2:5. Westcott says, "The word is used for the world so far as it is a 'seat of settled government,' 'the civilized world.'" (*Hebrews*, p. 42). This definition of *oikoumene*, and the fact that it can or needs to be subjected to the Son sharply distinguishes it from "the city which has foundations," "the heavenly fatherland" (11:10-16), the "continuing city" (13:14), where heavenly perfection would be totally incongruous with the presence of enemies to be subjected to the Son. Indeed, the choice of *oikoumene*, instead of *aion* seems particularly appropriate to a situation in which Christ would reign and judge. The word is used by Paul at Acts 17:31; "God has set a day in which He is going to judge the *oikoumene* in righteousness, by a man whom He has appointed." *Aion*, on the other hand, can and often does

mean the eternal state (as in Hebrews 6:5), a nuance for which *oikoumene* would be less appropriate.

It would appear that I Corinthians 15:20-28 and Hebrews, Chapters 1 and 2, through the use of Psalms 110 and 8, mutually support and explain one another. Vos correctly sees that Paul has a "far-sweeping, age-dominating program" outlined in his terse enumeration: "Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming; after that, the end, when the Son delivers over the kingdom. . . ." The ensuing eternal state is clearly implied. Hebrews fits comfortably into this outline, adding the corrective "not yet" as regards affairs in the present, and distinguishing from the eternal state, a period called "the coming *oikoumene*," which is to be subjected to the Son. Here then is the answer to the question as to the position of the reign indicated in I Corinthians 15:25; Christ must reign, but when? Is He now reigning in the eschatological sense intended, or will that reign commence at the Parousia? Hebrews gives a decisive answer in the *mellousan*, of 2:5 and in the *oupo* of 2:8: the reign and conquest of enemies must needs be, but it lies in the future, at and after the Parousia.