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PSALM EIGHTY-NINE

[Pss 89:1] I will sing of the lovingkindness of Jehovah for ever: With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

[Pss 89:2] For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens.

[Pss 89:3] I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant:

[Pss 89:4] Thy seed will I establish for ever, And build up thy throne to all generations. Selah

[Pss 89:5] And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Jehovah; Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.

[Pss 89:6] For who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah? Who among the sons of the mighty is like unto Jehovah,

[Pss 89:7] A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones, And to be feared above all them that are round about him?

[Pss 89:8] O Jehovah God of hosts, Who is a mighty one, like unto thee, O Jehovah? And thy faithfulness is round about thee.

[Pss 89:9] Thou rulest the pride of the sea: When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

[Pss 89:10] Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; Thou hast scattered thine enemies with the arm of thy strength.

[Pss 89:11] The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: The world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them.

[Pss 89:12] The north and the south, thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.

[Pss 89:13] Thou hast a mighty arm; Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.

[Pss 89:14] Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne: Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face.

[Pss 89:15] Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: They walk, O Jehovah, in the light of thy countenance.

[Pss 89:16] In thy name do they rejoice all the day; And in thy righteousness are they exalted.

[Pss 89:17] For thou art the glory of their strength; And in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.

[Pss 89:18] For our shield belongeth unto Jehovah; And our king to the Holy One of Israel.

[Pss 89:19] Then thou spakest in vision to thy saints, And saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

[Pss 89:20] I have found David my servant; With my holy oil have I anointed him:

[Pss 89:21] With whom my hand shall be established; Mine arm also shall strengthen him.

[Pss 89:22] The enemy shall not exact from him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

[Pss 89:23] And I will beat down his adversaries before him, And smite them that hate him.

[Pss 89:24] But my faithfulness and my lovingkindness shall be with him; And in my name shall his horn be exalted.

[Pss 89:25] I will set his hand also on the sea, And his right hand on the rivers.

[Pss 89:26] He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.

[Pss 89:27] I also will make him (my) first-born, The highest of the kings of the earth.

[Pss 89:28] My lovingkindness will I keep for him for evermore; And my covenant shall stand fast with him.

[Pss 89:29] His seed also will I make to endure for ever, And his throne as the days of heaven.

[Pss 89:30] If his children forsake my law, And walk not in mine ordinances;

[Pss 89:31] If they break my statutes, And keep not my commandments;

[Pss 89:32] Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes.

[Pss 89:33] But my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

[Pss 89:34] My covenant will I not break, Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

[Pss 89:35] Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David:

[Pss 89:36] His seed shall endure for ever, And his throne as the sun before me.

[Pss 89:37] It shall be established for ever as the moon, And (as) the faithful witness in the sky.

[Pss 89:38] But thou hast cast off and rejected, Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

[Pss 89:39] Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant: Thou hast profaned his crown (by casting it) to the ground.

[Pss 89:40] Thou hast broken down all his hedges; Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.

[Pss 89:41] All that pass by the way rob him: He is become a reproach to his neighbors.

[Pss 89:42] Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries; Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

[Pss 89:43] Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword, And hast not made him to stand in the battle.

[Pss 89:44] Thou hast made his brightness to cease, And cast his throne down to the ground.

[Pss 89:45] The days of his youth hast thou shortened: Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah

[Pss 89:46] How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? (How long) shall thy wrath burn like fire?

[Pss 89:47] Oh remember how short my time is: For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!

[Pss 89:48] What man is he that shall live and not see death, That shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah

[Pss 89:49] Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, Which thou swarest unto David in thy faithfulness?

[Pss 89:50] Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; How I do bear in my bosom (the reproach of) all the mighty peoples,

[Pss 89:51] Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Jehovah, Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

[Pss 89:52] Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID AND ISRAEL'S AFFLICTION

INTRODUCTION

- I. The Davidic Covenant (vss. 3, 4).
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We are told in the superscription that Ethan the Ezrahite was the human author of Psalm 89. While we like such information in regard to the author of any portion of Scripture, it is not necessary to know who did the writing. The one big consideration is for us to know that the one who did the writing was inspired by the Spirit of God. Praise God we have absolute evidence that all Scripture is inspired of God.

The occasion for the writing of this psalm was the overthrowing of the Davidic throne, which we see set forth in verses 38-45. The question arising immediately is: To what overthrow of David's throne does this passage refer? Various answers are given to this query. In all probability the catastrophe was the one caused by the invasion of Palestine by Shishak, king of Egypt, in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon (I Kings 14:25-28; II Chron. 12:1-12). The reigns of both David and Solomon were most glorious. David had fought many wars, conquered mighty foes, and had established Israel as a kingdom among the nations of Western Asia. Solomon was a sovereign who loved peace, engaged in great enterprises of mining in the Wady Akabah south of the Dead Sea, and trade and commerce. Untold wealth flowed into his coffers. He established friendly alliances with many nations of the ancient world and cemented relationships by marriage. Thus the reign of Solomon was the most glorious of all during the history of Israel.

Upon the death of Solomon Rehoboam his son became his successor. But Rehoboam was not a man with the talents and abilities of his father. He was unable to evaluate the situation in which he found himself. The kingdom of Israel lost prestige immediately upon the death of Solomon. The days of prosperity ceased. Gloom and discouragement settled down over the land. The people who had been taxed so very

heavily during the prosperous reign of Solomon pleaded with the new sovereign to lighten the burden of taxation. Rejecting the advice of his father and adopting the unwise suggestions of the younger of the realm, Rehoboam bluntly declined to listen to the pleadings of the people. When he thus absolutely refused to consider their complaint, the people of the ten northern tribes recalled Jeroboam from Egypt and made him sovereign of the ten northern tribes, that formed themselves into the new kingdom of Israel. Thus only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained faithful to the Davidic house.

Further distress came upon the kingdom of Judah and the house of David when Shishak invaded the territory, overran the country, threw down the fortified cities, despoiled the country of all its wealth, and led the young king Rehoboam into Egypt with many Jewish captives. On the south side of the temple of Karnak at Luxor, Egypt, Shishak had the account of his conquest of Judah recorded and pictured on the stones of that wall, Rehoboam and his fellow-Jews being led as captives before the victorious Pharaoh.

In view of all the calamities that overtook the kingdom of Judah in the first four years of Rehoboam's reign, naturally the people were discouraged, despondent and downhearted. It appeared to them that the promises that had been made by the Lord to David concerning the continuity and perpetuity of his dynasty had absolutely failed. The king was in exile. The princes were likewise with him in bondage. The wealth of the realm had been seized by the foreign conqueror and taken down into Egypt. Desolation and waste were seen on every hand. The people were struggling to keep alive. Doubtless all of the evils that attend and follow a war of aggression came heavily upon the people. They could not harmonize the present situation with the promises of God.

To meet this situation and to clarify the atmosphere, our psalmist was inspired to write this most marvelous psalm. With all of the prophets and the psalmists, Ethan, the composer of this poem, was thoroughly convinced that God's loving-kindness endures forever, and that mercy will be built up unto all generations. He therefore began his poem with the following words:

"I will sing of the lovingkindness of Jehovah forever:
With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.
For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever;
Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens (Ps. 89:1,2).

God's loving-kindness is His grace, unmerited favor. The faithfulness of Jehovah is His loyalty, being true to His promises and to His very character. Thus concerning God's grace and faithfulness Ethan declared that he would sing. By revelation and by faith he looked out into the future and saw the desolations removed and the kingdom re-established in the land of the fathers, and the promises of God thus reaffirmed. The faithfulness of the Almighty is likewise emphasized as being built up in the very heavens-as well as on the earth.

I. The Davidic Covenant

"I have made a covenant with my chosen,
I have sworn unto David my servant:
Thy seed will I establish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations (vss. 3, 4).

The personal pronouns *I* and *my* of verses 1 and 2 refer to the human author, Ethan. But the same pronouns in verses 3 and 4 refer to God; for it is He who chose David and made the covenant with him to establish his throne forever. Thus, in verse 3 and 4, the psalmist is impersonating God or quoting Him, giving the language that He uttered to David: "Thy [David's] seed will I [Jehovah] establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." This language refers to the covenant into which God entered with David, as we find recorded in II Samuel, chapter 7.

A glance at this chapter shows that David proposed to build the Temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem and divulged his plan to the prophet Nathan, who immediately, without first consulting God in respect to the matter, gave assent to the royal design. That night, however, the word of Jehovah came to Nathan and told him that he had made a mistake in encouraging David to make further preparations for the building of the house of Jehovah. The reason that David was not permitted to do this was that he had been a man of war and blood.

Because David had purposed in his very soul to build the Temple to the praise and honor of God, the Lord made a promise to him, namely, that He himself would build a house to David. The house which David purposed to build was the Temple, the literal sanctuary at Jerusalem. The house which the Lord promised for David was a royal house, a dynasty of kings descending from David.

The Lord assured David that, upon his death, his son would be placed upon the throne of the kingdom, and that he would build the house of Jehovah. This kingdom was to be built up and established forever. In making this promise to David, the Lord called attention to the fact, if his descendants who would sit upon the throne should commit iniquity, He, the Lord, would punish such sin. He hastened, however, to assure him that, though they should go off into sin and wickedness, He would not take the kingdom from the Davidic house as He had taken it from the house of Saul. His throne and his kingdom therefore were assured by the Lord to David to continue forever.

"Moreover Jehovah telleth thee that Jehovah will make thee a house. When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David" (II Sam. 7:11c-17).

Thus in the Samuel account we see the entire Davidic dynasty in vision. Some of these kings, as history proves, were excellent and good men. Some, on the other hand, were wicked, evil persons. But in this promise, figuratively speaking, God turned the floodlight on the entire dynasty and we see the entire line of kings through the centuries to the coming of the Messiah in whom all prophecy will be fulfilled.

We see the Chronicles' version of the same promise in I Chronicles 17:10-14: "Moreover I will tell thee that Jehovah will build thee a house. And it shall come to pass when thy days are fulfilled that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will set up thy seed after thee, who shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; and I will not take my lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him that was before

thee; but I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom for ever and his throne shall be established for ever."

In this passage the floodlight is not used. On the contrary, the spotlight is focused on one of David's descendants "who shall be of thy [David's] sons," and who shall build the house of Jehovah and establish His throne forever. This one, according to the quotation, comes of David's "sons." Since a person can have only one father, and since this one is of David's "sons," we know that the word "sons" here is used in the sense of the Davidic dynasty. Since nothing is said about his committing iniquity, the inference is clear that he does not commit sins and wrong-doings. It is he who builds this Temple of Jehovah. When this passage is studied in the light of related ones, it becomes immediately evident that the one under the spotlight in the Chronicles passage is none other than the sinless, spotless Son of God, David's Greater Son, the Messiah.

In the two versions of the Davidic Covenant, which we have just noted, nothing is said about the removal of a disobedient king or the casting down of the throne even temporarily. Provision, however, for such an eventuality is hinted in the warning that, if one of his descendants should commit iniquity, he would be punished. The sin might, however, be sufficient to justify the overturning of the throne and the removal of the people from the land into exile.

On his dying bed, David gave his son Solomon a charge, urging him to be faithful and true to God, "That Jehovah may establish his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee," said he, "a man on the throne of Israel" (1 Ki. 2:4). From this language we understand that it was the will of God that the dynasty of David should remain intact throughout the centuries until He should come whose right it is to reign, namely, the Messiah of Israel. The inference of this passage is that, if any of David's descendants fail to take heed to their ways, there would fail one to sit upon the throne. We are not to understand that there would not be someone whose right it would be to sit upon the throne, but that the throne would not be in a condition for such a one to sit upon it.

On this subject Jeremiah spoke twice. To the people of Jerusalem and to the nation he declared that, if they would observe God's laws and be faithful to Him, "Then shall there enter in by the gates of this city kings and princes, sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain for ever" (Jer. 17:25). The same promise was again spoken in 22:4: "For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding on chariots and horses, he, and his servants and his people."

From all this data we see that it was God's "number one" plan for the Davidic dynasty to continue intact through the centuries until the Messiah should come and mount the throne and establish a reign of righteousness. But, as has already been seen, provision was made for the overthrowing of the throne in the event that the occupant of it proved unfaithful and untrue to God. Rehoboam was the first thus to disregard his duty to God and to sin so that the throne was overturned in his day and time. Psalm 89 was therefore written for the express purpose of explaining such a situation as arose when Rehoboam was carried off into captivity and desolation was left throughout the country. It likewise was to explain any subsequent national catastrophe when the throne would remain vacant and the people be left in the morass of a national disaster.

II. God's sovereignty portrayed

"And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Jehovah;
 Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
 For who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah?
 Who among the sons of the mighty is like unto Jehovah,
 A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones,
 And to be feared above all them that are round about him?
 O Jehovah God of hosts, who is a mighty one, like unto thee, O Jehovah?
 And thy faithfulness is round about thee (Ps. 89:5-8).

The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. In the verses just quoted, we catch a glimpse of the heaven of heavens where the throne of God is. We see Him seated upon this throne and around about Him are gathered the great "assembly of the holy ones." The question immediately arising here is, *Who are the holy ones mentioned in verse 5?* Two answers have been given to this question. One is that they are saved people who are in the presence of God, and who are rendering praise and adoration to the Almighty. The other is that they are the heavenly host, consisting of the seraphim, the cherubim, and all ranks and orders of angels. In other words, those taking this latter position interpret the holy ones as "the sons of the mighty" mentioned in verse 6. While we cannot be dogmatic in regard to these two interpretations I am less inclined toward the first one. My reason for this position is that, in the time when this psalm was written, the saved people were not in the presence of God. Prior to the victory which our Lord won on the cross, all people--both saved and lost--went upon death to Hades, or Sheol as the place of the departed was then called. After Christ's victory He released the saved who were in Sheol at the time of His ascension and led them to glory. If these statements are correct, this first position is untenable. We are in that event thrown back upon the second position: That these holy ones are the angelic host.

The Spirit of God gave the prophet a clear vision of the throne room of God in heaven. He saw the Almighty seated in majesty, surrounded by these vast hosts of spiritual worshipping beings. He declared, therefore, that there were none among the sons of the Almighty who in any way could compare with Him.

"Thou rules the pride of the sea:
 When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain;
 Thou hast scattered thine enemies with the arm of thy strength.
 The heavens are thine, the earth is also thine:
 The world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them.
 The north and the south, thou hast created them:
 Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.
 Thou hast a mighty arm;
 Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand (Ps. 89:9-13).

In these verses we see that the Lord Jehovah who is enthroned, as we just have seen, in majesty, glory, and power, is the Sovereign throughout the entire material universe. There was a time when the Triune God alone existed. As the ages of the past rolled by, the Lord created the celestial host--as we see in Job 38:7. Following that event He created the entire material universe. Since He is the Creator, He is the

Sovereign Lord of all. In verse 9 the psalmist therefore declared, "Thou rulest the pride of the sea: When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them."

Moreover, according to verse 10, He is the one who broke Rahab in pieces, "as one that is slain." He scattered all His enemies with the arm of His strength. The word, Rahab, sometimes applies to Egypt, but it certainly cannot in this instance. When we study this verse in the light of Psalm 74:13,14 (see the connection of the context) and then view it further in the light of Job, chapters 40 and 41, we conclude that Rahab is none other than the one that is the beginning of the creation of God, the king of the sons of pride, whom we know as the god of this world, the devil, the adversary of both God and man. This conquest of the devil, mentioned in Psalm 89:10, and his hosts is doubtless a reference to the victory which God won over Satan and his hosts when they originally rebelled against the Almighty and led a revolt throughout the entire universe. Thus the Lord put down this revolt and re-established peace throughout the vast realm of space. Thus He established His sovereignty in the heavens and on the earth and reigned supreme as King. The north, therefore, as well as the south, was created by Him and they are wholly and entirely depended upon Him. The Lord God has a mighty arm and a strong hand and wields indescribable power. He controls everything.

"Righteousness and justice are the foundations of thy throne:

Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound:

They walk, O Jehovah, in the light of thy countenance.

In thy name do they rejoice all the day;

And in thy righteousness are they exalted.

For thou art the glory of their strength;

And in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.

For our shield belongeth unto Jehovah;

And our king to the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 89:14-18).

According to verse 14 righteousness and justice are the foundation of the throne of God, together with loving-kindness--or grace--and truth. One should study the character of the Lord in the light of Exodus 34:6,7: "And Jehovah passed by before Him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation." Here is the sevenfold statement of God's character given by Himself.

It is a wonderful thing to know God personally. The individual who thus knows God, or the nation thus acknowledging Him, is indeed, as we see in Psalm 89:15, blessed. To have the proper appreciation of God and His character and one's relationship to Him is to be drawn closer and closer to Him in fellowship and communion.

The Psalmist declares in verse 16 that the nation thus appreciating God, which in this case is none other than Israel, the Chosen People, rejoices all the day in Him and in His righteousness.

He is the glory of their strength, the occasion of their strength. It is in His favor that Israel's horn shall be exalted. The word, horn, when used symbolically, either refers to power or to the ruler who in this case is

none other than Messiah. Thus Messiah will be established as the King of Israel and the Lord Jehovah, the Father, will be a shield to her when she accepts Him. Israel's protection belongs to Jehovah as well as her King, the Messiah of Israel and the Saviour of the world.

III. An exposition of the Davidic Covenant

A. David's personal reign

"Then thou spakest in vision to thy saints, And saidst,
 I have laid help upon one that is mighty;
 I have exalted one chosen out of the people.
 I have found David my servant; With my holy oil hath I anointed him:
 With whom my hand shall be established;
 Mine arm shall not exact from him,
 Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
 And I will beat down his adversaries before him,
 And smite them that hate him.
 But my faithfulness and my lovingkindness shall be with him;
 And in my name shall his horn be exalted (vss. 19-24a).

As we have already seen, verses 3 and 4 refer to the Davidic covenant. But verses 5-18 constitute a parenthesis in this psalm. Since the author, as he states in verses one and two, is to sing in this psalm of God's loving-kindness, faithfulness, and mercy, he looked toward the heavens and addressed God in verses 5-18. Having thus extolled Him by describing His absolute sovereignty throughout the entire universe, he in verse 19 returned to his subject, which he dropped in verse 4. Such a dramatic treatment of a subject is very common to the Scriptures, both with the prophets and with the psalmists.

In verse 19-24a our writer explains facts concerning the personal reign of King David. Verse 19 begins with the adverb *then*. What is the connection? This is to be found by looking back at verse three and four, which tell of God's having entered into covenant relationship with David and having promised him that He would establish his seed and his throne forever. It was therefore at that time--then--that God spoke to His saints and declared, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; With my holy oil have I anointed him ..."

God chose Saul when Israel clamored for a king. Although he warned the people against the type of king for whom they were clamoring, they insisted that their wish be granted. Saul was providentially selected to be elevated to the high office of sovereign of the Chosen People. He was doubtless the only one at that time who could fit into the plan and purpose of God. He failed the Lord, however, and had to be rejected by the Almighty. The Lord therefore sent Samuel to select one of the sons of Jesse. Beginning with the oldest, the father sent all of his sons before Samuel. All of them Samuel rejected. He then asked if there was still another, to which question an affirmative answer was given. David was brought and Samuel anointed him with oil to be sovereign of Israel. This ceremony symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the one thus anointed. Thus David was empowered to become king of Israel. When he was thus anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, he was established as king. God's hand and arm strengthened him for the task of each hour.

Many and great were the wars that David fought. The nations round about Israel were hostile toward the Chosen People and upon the slightest pretext war was launched against them. David therefore had to wage many defensive campaigns. He was never conquered in battle. Thus each victory strengthened him and his kingdom. The circumstances demanded that he, in the latter years of his career, wage some aggressive wars. These were launched to make the position of Israel secure among hostile people. It is to these facts that verse 22 and 23 refer. Though the victories are attributed to David in the historical books, it is clear that he fought in the strength and power of the Lord. If God had not been with him, he would never have succeeded. In this connection we need to remember what is said to us in Psalms 33:16: "There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: A mighty man is not delivered by great strength." Let us also remember that a man can receive nothing except that it be given him of God. This principle is true in the material as well as in the spiritual realm.

In verse 24a we have this language: "But my faithfulness and my lovingkindness shall be with him ..." The full significance of this statement is seen when we realize that God called Saul, who failed him. Then the Almighty withdrew His favor from him and chose David to take his place. When David was selected, the Lord immediately showed that He would not turn from David nor from his descendants at any time in the future, but that the Davidic house would remain the divine choice.

B. The Messiah's reign

"But my faithfulness and my lovingkindness shall be with him;
 And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
 I will set his hand also on the sea,
 And his right hand on the rivers.
 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father,
 My God, and the rock of my salvation.
 I also will make him *my* first-born,
 The highest of the kings of the earth.
 My lovingkindness will I keep for him for evermore;
 And my covenant shall stand fast with him (vss. 24b-28).

In these verses our writer ceases to talk about David personally and his victorious reign and leads us out into the future to see the glorious and wonderful reign of David's Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah and the Savior. That this position is correct is seen from verse 27, which declared, "I also will make him *my* first-born, The highest of the kings of the earth." This language cannot by any stretch of the imagination apply to the Davidic dynasty who have already sat upon the throne of Judah. Its majesty, scope, and glory far transcend any and everything that pertains to any earthly monarch and can be applied only to the divine Son of God. This interpretation is confirmed by comparing this prediction with parallel passages. But let us look at the wording more particularly.

The term *his horn* refers without doubt to this descendant of David, who is to reign over the kings of the earth and to be exalted above all. As we have already seen, horn, when used symbolically always refers to power or to a reigning monarch. In this connection it can refer only to one of David's descendants, who is, as we have already seen, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the quotation given above, we are told that this "horn

of David" is to be exalted in the name of God, the Father. Jesus came in the name of the Father when He was here 1900(+) years ago. He will come in the name of the Lord when He returns to take His position on the throne of David and to reign from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth.

The promise found in verse 25 is the same as that which appears in Psalm 72:6, 7, 8:

He will come down like rain upon the mown grass,
 As showers that water the earth.
 In his days shall the righteous flourish,
 And abundance of peace, till the moon be no more.
 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
 And from the river unto the ends of the earth.

His hand will be on the sea, that is, on everything that is in the sea, including the isles with their inhabitants. And it will also be on the rivers to the ends of the earth. In other words, He is to be the absolute Sovereign of the world.

We learn that, from verse 26, this future King and Sovereign of Israel will acknowledge God as His Father. This very thing the Lord Jesus did when He was here 1900(+) years ago. He was the word who became flesh and dwelt among us. He was perfect God and perfect man. He is thus recognized by the four Evangelists who preserved the Gospel Records to us. In the Gospel of John especially Jesus is presented to us as the God-man, with as much emphasis upon the fact that He was man as that He was God. Being thus the God-man, He constantly spoke of God as His Father. When He returns to mount the throne of David and reign in fulfillment of this prophecy, He will likewise recognize God as Father. At the same time, He will be acknowledged as "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). At the same time He will look to God the Father and recognize Him as "My God, and the rock of my salvation." When He does this, He is looking at himself as the God-man and recognizing the Father as His own God and the Rock of His salvation. When He was here 1900(+) years ago, He recognized this relationship and will continue to do so.

This one who was born in a manger and who worked out our redemption for us, when He was rejected by man and executed for the sins of the world, will be exalted to the highest position of all earthly monarchs. Hence He will be "the highest of the kings of the earth." He will be higher than any Sovereign has ever been. At the time here foreseen there will be no other king. He alone will be sovereign. We however, who are His, and who use our "talents" and our "pounds" in His cause, will be granted the privilege of reigning over cities, the extent of which rule will be commensurate with the service which we render here.

According to verse 28 God will keep His loving-kindness with the Messiah forever, "and my covenant will stand fast with Him."

C. The unalterable character of the Covenant

"His seed also will I make to endure for ever,
 And his throne as the days of heaven.
 If his children forsake my law,
 And walk not in my ordinances;
 If they break my statutes,
 And keep not my commandments;
 Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod,
 And their iniquity with stripes.
 But my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him,
 Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
 My covenant will I not break,
 Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
 Once have I sworn by my holiness:
 I will not lie unto David:
 His seed shall endure for ever,
 And his throne as the sun before me.
 It shall be established for ever as the moon,
 And as the faithful witness in the sky (Ps. 89:29-37). [Selah]

When the Messiah returns at the end of this age and mounts the throne of David, taking the government of the world in His own omnipotent hands, He will be established King forever, and His throne will endure "as the days of heaven." When we read verse 29 we see that the reign of King Messiah is to be "for ever," we must remember that the word *forever* in the English does not carry the exact connotation of the term in the original of which it is the translation. The English term *forever* means *without ceasing, never-ending*. The Hebrew expression carries the idea of *continuity or perpetuity* within any limits that may be set by the facts of the context. If there are no limitations thus imposed by the connection, we are to understand that this term means exactly what our English word *forever* connotes. But when we look at the second statement in Psalm 89:29, we see that "for ever" is to be limited by "the days of heaven." The days and nights of heaven are the result of the earth's rotating upon its axis. When the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ, mounts the throne of David, He will continue to reign in the city of Jerusalem so long as day and night continue. We know how long that reign will last. It will be for one thousand years, according to Revelation chapter 20. At the conclusion of the little period following the thousand years during which Satan is loosed, the present heavens and earth will pass away. This is seen in Revelation 20:11. When the judgment of the great white throne is set, the material universe passes away. After that the eternal heavens and the eternal earth, together with the eternal Jerusalem, will be brought into existence. Thus at the passing away of the present material order, the "days of heaven" cease. That date brings to an end the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the throne of David. This conclusion is confirmed by the statements of the Apostle Paul found in I Corinthians, chapter 15: "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject

all things unto him. And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all" (vs. 25-28).

In Psalm 89:30-37 the unalterable character of the Davidic Covenant is graphically set forth. As has already been seen, in the original record of the Davidic Covenant found in II Samuel, chapter 7, the Lord declared that, if any of David's sons committed iniquity, He (the Lord) would punish such violation. But He immediately assured David that He would not withdraw His loving-kindness from him as He had done from Saul. Thus those of Israel who read or heard this psalm sung could understand how it was that Rehoboam had been taken off into captivity and the desolations had been brought upon the nation which they were then witnessing. Those with spiritual understanding could comprehend the situation and know that the existing conditions were brought about by Jehovah Himself because of the iniquity of the Davidic dynasty.

In verse 33 the Lord again reassured the Davidic dynasty and the people of Israel that He would not utterly take His loving-kindness from them, nor would He suffer His faithfulness to fail. Moreover, He declared that He would not break the covenant which He had made with David, nor alter the thing which had gone out of His mouth: "Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David." He would therefore fulfill His promise. The seed of David should, according to verse 36, "endure for ever, And his throne as the sun" before the Lord. It would be "established for ever as the moon, And *as* the faithful witness in the sky," which is probably the sun. The Lord has a plan and purpose for the future. He will not vary it one iota, but will bring it to pass just as He has said. The language of our psalmist reminds us of a statement made by Jeremiah the prophet much later. Hear him. "For thus saith Jehovah: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to burn meal-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually" (Jer. 33:17,18). According to this promise David will never lack or want a man to sit upon his throne. After the overthrow of the nation in the days of Zedekiah there was always one of the Davidic dynasty ready to take his seat upon the throne. But the nation was not spiritually prepared for such blessing. Hence the throne remained overturned. Finally, the Lord Jesus came in fulfillment of the ancient prophecies. The nation then took such an attitude toward Him that it was impossible for Him to pour out the fullness of His blessing upon it. He must wait to be gracious to it. He is ready to mount the throne whenever Israel is spiritually in a condition to invite Him to come back and thus to occupy His rightful position as King of Israel and Sovereign of the world.

Before the Tribulation bursts forth upon the world, the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven to the air to raise the dead in Christ and to catch up the living saints. When He does that, He will return to glory with them. At the end of the Tribulation, however, He will return to this earth and mount the throne of David and establish His reign of righteousness. But from various passages of Scripture we know that He will not return to mount the throne until Israel acknowledges her national sin of rejecting Him. This is seen in such passages as Hosea 5:15-6:3: "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly. Come and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth."

When the Messiah came here the first time, Israel rejected Him and clamored for His execution, which was accomplished by the Romans. In their rejecting Him they committed an offense against Him. According to the prophet Hosea the nation of Israel must be given the facts concerning His rejection and must, being convicted of the enormity of her sin, plead for Him to return, acknowledging that in rejecting Him she sinned. Our Lord in weeping over Jerusalem foretold the same thing, as may be seen by an examination of Matthew 23:37-39: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

May you and I, dear friend, who have the truth concerning Israel's national sin, give these facts to her in order that she may see her sin, may repent of it, may confess it, and may call upon Him to return.

IV. The seeming failure of the covenant promise

"But thou hast cast off and rejected,
 Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
 Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant:
 Thou has profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.
 Thou hast broken down all his hedges;
 Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.
 All that pass by the way rob him:
 He is become a reproach to his neighbors.
 Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries;
 Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
 Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword,
 And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
 Thou hast made his brightness to cease,
 And cast his throne down to the ground.
 The days of his youth hast thou shortened:
 Thou hast covered him with shame (vss. 38-45). [Selah]

In verses 38-41 the psalmist laments the overturning of the throne of David, God's seeming abhorring the covenant, and His profaning the crown of David by casting it to the ground. He sees the land a desolation and a waste. All who pass by or go through the country commit all kinds of depredations, while the neighbors hurl reproaches at Israel in this downtrodden condition.

To the people of that day and time it seemed that God had exalted the right hand of their adversaries and had made their enemies rejoice. From one standpoint God had done that very thing, for He had used Shishak, king of Egypt, to punish His disobedient people. God often uses other nations with their sovereigns to punish the Jewish people. This is seen in the case of Sennacherib and the great Assyrian Empire, over which he reigned. The Lord called this monarch the rod of His anger and the staff of His indignation. Moreover, He said that He would use them in punishing His people, although Sennacherib

would be unconscious of his being used by the Lord to accomplish His purpose in punishing His disobedient people. (See Isaiah 10:5-8.)

When Israel was in fellowship with God, she was invincible. When she had broken the bonds of the covenant, she was powerless before her enemies. This fact is reflected throughout the history of the Jewish people. When Israel, therefore, was in covenant relationship with God, she was invincible. But when she was out of fellowship with Him, she was feeble and fell and easy prey to the surrounding nations.

V. A concluding prayer

"How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?
How long shall thy wrath burn like fire?
 Oh remember how short my time is:
 For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!
 What man is he that shall live and see death,
 That shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? [Selah]
 Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses,
 Which thou swearest unto David in thy faithfulness?
 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
 How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty peoples,
 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Jehovah,
 Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.
 Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen (vss. 46-52).

A. The brevity of life and the urgency of the situation (vss. 46-48)

Verses 46-48 deal with the brevity of the span of life and the certainty of one's passing out of this earthly existence into the great future beyond. In verse 46 the question is asked:

How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?
 How long shall thy wrath burn like fire?

This question as to how long until God takes hold of the situation and brings deliverance is repeated throughout the Psalter and is asked by many of the prophets. That is the question today. How close are we to the end of the age? How much longer will it be until God intervenes and brings the longed-for deliverance? We can see the day approaching. We dare not set any date. No man knows the day nor the hour when the Lord will return. But we can be absolutely positive from the signs of the times that we are in the very closing scenes of this age. It behooves us to be cautious and to be about our Father's business while we have time and opportunity.

The psalmist reminds the Lord that life is a very short period, even at best. Man has comparatively little time to prepare for the great future. What he is to be and to do through all eternity is contingent upon what he does here and the development and the progress that he makes. May we be faithful and true to the trust committed to our care.

B. Petition for deliverance (vss. 49-51)

In the concluding verses the psalmist offers a petition in behalf of the servants of God. He is very eager for the Lord to intervene and to bring the deliverance.

Concluding doxology (vs. 52)

In the closing verse the psalmist offers a doxology, blessing the name of God: Blessed be Jehovah for evermore.

Amen, and Amen.