

PSALM 16

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 16

Michtam of David

This is a new title, not met with before, though it afterwards is prefixed to “five” psalms running, the fifty sixth, the fifty seventh, the fifty eighth, the fifty ninth, and the sixtieth psalms. Some take the word “michtam” to be the name of a musical instrument, as Kimchi on (³⁹⁰¹Psalm 4:1); others the name of one of the tunes, as Jarchi; and others the tune of a song which began with this word, as Aben Ezra observes, to which this psalm was sung; the Septuagint translate it “stelography”, or an inscription upon a pillar; such an one as is erected by conquerors, as Theodoret observes, having writing on it declaring the victory obtained; suggesting that the psalm, or the subject of it, the death and resurrection of Christ, was worthy to be inscribed on a pillar of marble; and the Targum renders it, “a right engraving”, that deserves to be engraven in a monument of brass: but what seems to be the best sense of the word is, that it signifies a work of gold, and may be rendered, “a golden [psalm] of David”; so called, either because it was a dear and favourite song of his; or from the subject matter, which is more valuable and precious than the most fine gold: the title of it in the Syriac and Arabic versions is,

“concerning the election of the church, and the resurrection of Christ;”

and certain it is from (³⁹⁶⁰Psalm 16:10), the resurrection of Christ is spoken of in it, as is clear from the testimonies of two apostles, Peter and Paul, who cite it in proof of it, (⁴¹²⁵Acts 2:25-31 13:35-37); and since there is but one person speaking throughout the psalm, and Christ is he that speaks in (³⁹⁶⁰Psalm 16:10), and which cannot be understood of David, nor of any other person but Christ, the whole of the psalm must be interpreted of him.

Ver. 1. *Preserve me, O God*, etc.] Prayer is proper to Christ as man; he offered up many prayers and supplications to Cost, even his Father, and his God, and as the strong and mighty God, as the word ^{f232} here used is commonly rendered by interpreters; with whom, all things are possible, and

who is able to save; (see ^{<817>}Hebrews 5:7 ^{<162>}Luke 6:12 ^{<159>}Matthew 26:39,42,44 ^{<871>}John 17:1); and this petition for preservation was suitable to him and his case, and was heard and answered by God; he was very remarkably preserved in his infancy from the rage and fury of Herod; and very wonderfully was his body preserved and supported in the wilderness under a fast of forty days and forty nights together, and from being torn to pieces by the wild beasts among which he was, and from the temptations of Satan, with which he was there assaulted; and throughout the whole of his ministry he was preserved from being hindered in the execution of his office, either by the flatteries, or menaces, or false charges of his enemies; and though his life was often attempted they could not take it away before his time: and whereas Christ is in this psalm represented as in the view of death and the grave, this petition may be of the same kind with those in (^{<127>}John 12:27 ^{<159>}Matthew 26:39,42); and put up with the same submission to the will of God; and at least may intend divine help and support in his sufferings and death, preservation from corruption in the grave, and the resurrection of him from the dead; and it may also include his concern for the preservation of his church, his other self, and the members of it, his apostles, disciples, and all that did or should believe in his name, for whom he prayed after this manner a little before his death; (see ^{<228>}Luke 22:31,32 ^{<871>}John 17:11,15,20,24);

for in thee do I put my trust: or “have hoped” ^{f233}; the graces of faith and hope were implanted in the heart of Christ, as man, who had the gifts and graces of the Spirit without measure bestowed on him, and these very early appeared in him, and showed themselves in a very lively exercise, (^{<127>}Psalm 22:7 ^{<129>}Luke 2:49); and were in a very eminent manner exercised by him a little before his death, in the view of it, and when he was under his sufferings, and hung upon the cross, (^{<206>}Isaiah 1:6-9) (^{<126>}Matthew 27:46 ^{<169>}Psalm 16:9,10 22:8); and this his trust and confidence in God alone, and not in any other, is used as a reason or argument for his preservation and safety.

Ver. 2. [*O my soul*], *thou hast said unto the Lord*, etc.] Some take these to be the words of David speaking to the church, who had owned the Lord to be her Lord, and had declared what follows; others think they are the words of God the Father to his Son, suggesting to him what he had said; but they are rather an apostrophe, or an address of Christ to his own soul; and the phrase, “O my soul”, though not in the original text, is rightly

supplied by our translators, and which is confirmed by the Targum, and by the Jewish commentators, Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi;

thou [art] my Lord; Christ, as man, is a creature made by God; his human nature is the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man, and on this consideration he is his Lord, being his Creator; and as Mediator Christ is his servant, and was made under the law to him, obeyed him, and submitted to his will in all things; so that he not only in words said he was his Lord, but by deeds declared him to be so;

my goodness [extendeth] not to thee; such who suppose that David here speaks in his own person, or in the person of other believers, or that the church here speaks, differently interpret these words: some render them, “my goodness [is] not above thee” ^{f234}; it is far inferior to thine, it is not to be mentioned with it, it is nothing in comparison of it; all my goodness, happiness, and felicity lies, in thee, (^{<49735>}Psalm 73:25); others, “I have no goodness without thee”: the sense is the same as if it was “I have said”, as read the Greek, Vulgate Latin, and Oriental versions, and so Apollinarius; I have none but what comes from thee; what I have is given me by thee, which is the sense of the Targum; (see ^{<5017>}James 1:17); others, “my goodness is not upon thee” ^{f235}; does not lie upon thee, or thou art not obliged to bestow the blessings of goodness on me; they are not due to me, they spring from thy free grace and favour; to this sense incline Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi; (see ^{<2170>}Luke 17:10 ^{<5115>}Romans 11:35); others, “thou hast no need of my goodness”; nor wilt it profit thee, so R. Joseph Kimchi; (see ^{<821>}Job 22:2,3,35:7,8); or the words may be rendered, “O my goodness”, or “thou art my good, nothing is above thee” ^{f236}; no goodness in any superior to God. But they are the words of Christ, and to be understood of his goodness; not of his essential goodness as God, nor of his providential goodness, the same with his Father’s; but of his special goodness, and the effect of it to his church and people; and denotes his love, grace, and good will towards them, shown in his incarnation, sufferings, and death; and the blessings of goodness which come thereby; such as a justifying righteousness, forgiveness of sin, peace, and reconciliation, redemption, salvation, and eternal life. Now though God is glorified by Christ in his incarnation, sufferings, and death, and in the work of man’s redemption, yet he stood in no need of the obedience and sufferings of his Son; he could have glorified his justice another way, as he did in not sparing the angels that sinned, in drowning the old world, and in burning Sodom and Gomorrah, and in other instances of his vengeance;

though there is glory to God in the highest in the affair of salvation by Christ, yet the good will is to men; though the debt of obedience and sufferings was paid to the justice of God, whereby that is satisfied and glorified, yet the kindness in paying the debt was not to God but to men, described in (^{496B}Psalm 16:8).

Ver. 3. [*But to the saints that [are] in the earth*, etc.] Who are sanctified or set apart by God the Father in election; whose sins are expiated by the blood of Christ in redemption, and who are sanctified or made holy by the Spirit of God in the effectual calling; and who live a holy life and conversation: these are said to be “in the earth”, not to distinguish them from the saints in heaven, to whom the goodness of Christ extends as to them, unless it be to distinguish them from the angels in heaven, who are called saints, (^{453D}Deuteronomy 33:2); as Aben Ezra observes; but to point out the place of their abode, scattered up and down in the earth; and to show that love, grace, goodness, and kindness of Christ reaches to them in the present state of things, notwithstanding all their meanness and imperfection in themselves, and their despicableness in the eyes of others; (see ^{483B}John 13:1);

and [to] the excellent; the same with the saints, who though reckoned by men the faith of the world, and the offscouring of all things, are in high esteem with Christ; they are “nobles” ^{f237} in his account, as the word is rendered in (^{481D}Jeremiah 30:21); they are princes in all the earth, and these princes are kings; they are made kings and priests unto God by Christ; they wear and live like kings, and have the attendance, power, riches, and glory of kings; they are guarded by angels, they have power with God, they are rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom;

in whom [is] all my delight; Christ’s delights were with these sons of men before the world was, and have always continued with them; they are his “Hepzbibah” and “Beulah”, as in (^{435D}Isaiah 62:4); hence he became incarnate, and suffered and died for them, and makes application of all the blessings of his grace and goodness to them.

Ver. 4. *Their sorrows shall be multiplied*, etc.] Not the sorrows of the saints and excellent ones, by seeing the idolatry of men, as Aben Ezra interprets it; but the sorrows of such

[that] hasten [after] another [god]; a false god, an idol, to serve and worship it; for, generally speaking, idolaters are more forward, eager, and

hasty to attend a false worship, than the worshippers of the true God are to attend his service: now their sorrows are many, even in their worship, by cutting their bodies with knives and lancets, as the worshippers of Baal did; and by sacrificing their own children, which, notwithstanding their rash and precipitate zeal, could not fail of giving them pain and uneasiness; and, besides temporal punishments inflicted on them for their idolatry by God, and stings of conscience, which must sometimes attend them, the wrath of God lies upon them, and they will have their portion in the lake of fire, and the smoke of their torment will ascend for ever and ever. Some render the words, “their idols are multiplied”; and so the Chaldee paraphrase,

“they multiply their idols, and after that hasten to offer their sacrifices;”

when men leave the true God, they know not where to stop; the Heathens had not less than thirty thousand gods, and the Jews when they fell into idolatry ran in the same way, (²⁴²⁸Jeremiah 2:28 11:13 ²⁸⁸¹Hosea 8:11). The word “god” is not in the original text, though the supplement is countenanced by the Jewish writers ^{f238}, who interpret it in this way; but I rather think the text is to be understood not of Heathen idolaters, but of unbelieving Jews, who, rejecting the true Messiah, hasten after another Messiah, king, and saviour; when Jesus the true Messiah came they received him not; but when another came in his own name they were eager to embrace him, (⁴¹⁶³John 5:43); and to this day they are hastening after another; and in their daily prayers pray that the coming of the Messiah might be **hdyhmb**, “in haste”, in their days ^{f239}; and the sense of the passage is, that the sorrows of the Jews, rejecting the Messiah and hastening after another, would come thick and fast upon them, until wrath came upon them to the uttermost, (⁴¹⁴⁶Matthew 24:6-8) (⁵¹¹⁶1 Thessalonians 2:16); and it holds good of all, whether Jews or Gentiles, that hasten after another saviour; that say to the works of their hands, that they are their gods, or go about to establish a righteousness of their own, or seek for life and salvation by their own doings; these, sooner or later, will lie down in sorrow, (²⁸¹¹Isaiah 50:11);

their drink offerings of blood will I not offer: meaning not the libations of the Gentiles, which were not wine, according to the law, (⁴¹⁵⁰Numbers 15:10); but blood, even sometimes human blood; but the sacrifices of the Jews, which were either got by blood, murders and robberies, and on that account were hateful to God, (²³⁰⁸Isaiah 61:8); or rather the sacrifices of

bloodthirsty persons, whose hands were full of blood, (^{<2011>}Isaiah 1:11-15); and such were the offerings of the priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, in Christ's time, who were the children of them that killed the prophets, and sought after the blood of Christ. Or it may be rendered, "I will not offer their drink offerings because of blood"^{f240}; meaning his own blood shed for the remission of sins, which being obtained, there remains no more offering for sin; and so the words may express the abolition of all legal sacrifices, and the causing of them to cease through the blood and sacrifice of Christ. This shows the person speaking to be a priest, and therefore could not be David, but must be the Messiah, who is a priest after the order of Melchizedek; and who had a better sacrifice to offer up than any of the offerings of the Jews, even his own self, by which he has put away sin for ever. He adds,

nor take up their names into my lips; not the names of idol deities, nor of their worshippers, but of the Jews that rejected him as the Messiah, for whom he would not pray, (^{<670>}John 17:9); and so as he refused to offer their sacrifices, he would not perform the other part of his priestly office for them in intercession; though this may also have respect to the rejection of the Jewish nation as the people of God; writing a "Loammi", (^{<300>}Hosea 1:9), upon them, declaring them to be no longer the children of the living God; leaving their names for a curse, a taunt, and a proverb in every place; expressing the utmost abhorrence of them, and showing the utmost indignation at them, as persons whose names were not worthy or fit to be mentioned, (^{<480>}Ephesians 5:3).

Ver. 5. *The Lord [is] the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup*, etc.] This is said by Christ as a priest, and in allusion to the Levitical priests, who had no inheritance in the land of Canaan with their brethren, but the Lord was their part and portion, and their inheritance, (^{<480>}Numbers 18:20 ^{<580>}Deuteronomy 18:1,2); and it expresses the strong love and affection Christ had for the Lord as his God, the delight and pleasure he had in him, and the satisfaction he had in the enjoyment of him and communion with him, and that it was his meat and drink to serve him, and to do his will; and though his goodness did not extend to him, yet his goodness and happiness as man lay in him: unless the sense should be,

"the Lord is he who gives me the portion of mine inheritance;"

meaning his church and people, all the elect of God, who are Christ's portion and inheritance, given him by the Father; (see ^{<630>}Deuteronomy

32:9 ^{<408>}Psalm 2:8); And assigns to me my cup, as of blessings, so of sorrows and sufferings, which being measured out, filled up, and put into his hand by his Father, he freely took it, (^{<481>}John 18:11);

thou maintainest my lot; that is, either his interest in God himself, as his covenant God, which always continued; or the lot of goods, of grace and glory, put into his hands for his people, which always remains; or rather the saints themselves, who, as they are Christ's portion and inheritance, so they are his lot; in allusion to the land of Canaan, which was divided by lot: these Jehovah took hold of, kept, preserved, and upheld, as the word ^{f241} signifies; so that they shall never totally and finally fall and perish; and this sense is countenanced by what follows.

Ver. 6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant [places]*, etc.] The allusion is to the measuring of land by lines, and appropriating each part to the proper owners; and lines design the land that is measured out by them, and here the church and people of God, the chosen ones who are given to Christ, as his portion and inheritance; and the sense is, that Christ's portion lies among or in pleasant persons; such as were so to him, as he saw them in his Father's purposes and decrees; and as they are clothed in his righteousness, and washed in his blood; and as they are adorned with the graces of his Spirit; and as they will be as a bride adorned for him in the New Jerusalem state, for rather persons than places are here meant: though as the bounds of the saints' habitations are set, and they are known to Christ, so they were pleasant to him, and he took delight and rejoiced in the very spots of ground where he knew they would dwell, (^{<408>}Proverbs 8:31); and the word "places" is supplied by Aben Ezra and Kimchi: but the former sense seems best, and agrees with what follows;

yea, I have a goodly heritage: so the Lord's people are called, (^{<408>}1 Peter 5:3); these are Christ's heritage, his peculiar treasure, his jewels, with whom he is greatly delighted and well pleased; more than men are with their gold and silver, houses and land, and their greatest wealth and substance: these persons are the inheritance with which he is contented and fully satisfied.

Ver. 7. *I will bless the Lord*, etc.] As prayer, so thanksgiving belongs to Christ, as man and Mediator; (see ^{<402>}Matthew 11:25,26 ^{<412>}John 11:42); and here he determines to praise the Lord, and give thanks to him for counsel and instruction:

who hath given me counsel; for though he himself is the Counsellor, with respect to his people, yet as man he received counsel from God, and the spirit of counsel rested on him, (^{<2310>}Isaiah 11:2); and fitted him for and directed him in the execution of his prophetic office; for the doctrine he taught was not his own, but his Father's; and he said nothing of himself but what his Father taught him, and instructed him to speak, (^{<416>}John 6:16 8:28 12:49,50). And he also gave him counsel about the execution of his priestly office, or about his sufferings and death, and drinking of the cup, which he, with submission to the divine will, desired might pass from him; but having advice in this matter, most cheerfully and courageously yielded to take it, (see ^{<469>}Matthew 26:39,42,44,46,50,53,54);

my reins also instruct me in the night seasons; when engaged in prayer to God, in which he sometimes continued a whole night together, (^{<412>}Luke 6:12 21:37); and especially in that dark and dismal night in which he was betrayed, when it was the hour and power of darkness with his enemies; then, his inward parts being influenced by the spirit of wisdom and counsel, directed him how to behave and conduct himself. Or "the reins" being the seat of the affections, and being put for them, may signify, that his strong affection for God, and love to his people, put him upon and moved him to take the steps he did, to deliver up himself into the hands of sinful men, in order to suffer and die for his friends, and obtain eternal salvation for them.

Ver. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me*, Not his fear only, or the book of the law, as Jarchi interprets it, but the Lord himself; or, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face", (^{<423>}Acts 2:26); as Christ is set before men in the Gospel, to look unto as the object of faith and hope, to trust in and depend upon for life and salvation; so Jehovah the Father is the object which Christ set before him, and looked unto in the whole course of his life here on earth; he had always an eye to his glory, as the ultimate end of all his actions; and to his will, his orders, and commands, as the rule of them; and to his purposes, and counsel, and covenant, to accomplish them; and to his power, truth, and faithfulness, to assist, support, and encourage him in all his difficulties and most distressed circumstances;

because [he is] at my right hand: to counsel and instruct, to help, protect, and defend: the phrase is expressive of the nearness of God to Christ, his presence with him, and readiness to assist and stand by him against all his enemies; (see ^{<468>}Psalms 109:31 110:5 121:5); so the Targum paraphrases it, "because his Shechinah rests upon me";

I shall not be moved: as he was not from his place and nation, from the duty of his office, and the execution of it, by all the threats and menaces of men; nor from the fear, worship, and service of God, by all the temptations of Satan; nor from the cause of his people he had espoused, by all the terrors of death, the flaming sword of justice, and the wrath of God; but, in the midst and view of all, stood unshaken and unmoved; (see ^{<2304>}Isaiah 42:4 50:5-9).

Ver. 9. *Therefore my heart is glad*, etc.] Because he had the Lord always in view; he was at his right hand, for his support and assistance, as well as because of what is expressed in the next verses: this is the same with rejoicing in spirit, (^{<2101>}Luke 10:21); it denotes an inward joy, and fulness of it, because of the Lord's presence with him; (see ^{<4123>}Acts 2:28);

and my glory rejoiceth; meaning either his soul, which is the most glorious and noble part of man, as Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech interpret it; or rather his tongue, as in (^{<4123>}Acts 2:26); the faculty of speaking in man being what gives him a superior glory and excellency to other creatures, and is that whereby he glorifies God; and so the word is often used in this book; (see ^{<3102>}Psalms 30:12 57:8 108:1); and here the phrase designs Christ's glorifying God, and singing his praise with joyful lips, among his disciples, a little before his sufferings and death;

my flesh also shall rest in hope; in the grave, which, as it is a resting place to the members of Christ, from all their sorrow, toil, and labour here; so it was to Christ their head, who rested in it on the Jewish sabbath, that day of rest, and that berth "in safety" ^{f242}, as the word used may signify, and in of his resurrection from the dead, as follows.

Ver. 10. *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, etc.] Meaning, not in the place of the damned, where Christ never went, nor was; for at his death his soul was committed to his Father, and was the same day in paradise: but rather, "sheol" here, as "hades" in the Near Testament, signifies the state of the dead, the separate state of souls after death, the invisible world of souls, where Christ's soul was; though it was not left there, nor did it continue, but on the third day returned to its body again; though it seems best of all to interpret it of the grave, as the word is rendered in (^{<0423>}Genesis 42:38 ^{<3318>}Isaiah 38:18); and then by his "soul" must be meant, not the more noble part of his human nature, the soul, in distinction from the body; for as it died not, but went to God, it was not laid in the grave; but either he himself, in which sense the word "soul" is sometimes used,

even for a man's self, (^{<912>}Psalm 3:2 11:1). For it might be truly said of him, God's Holy One, that he was laid in the grave, though not left there; or rather his dead body, for so the word "nephesh" is rendered in (^{<915>}Numbers 9:6,10 19:11,1-3); so "anima" is used in Latin authors ^{f243}: this was laid in the grave; for Joseph having begged it of Pilate, took it down from the cross, and laid it in his own new tomb; though it was the will of God it should not be left there, but be raised from the dead, as it was on the third day, before it was corrupted, as follows:

neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption; that is, to lie so long in the grave as to putrefy and be corrupted; wherefore he was raised from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures, before the time bodies begin to be corrupted; (see ^{<913>}John 11:39); and this was owing not to the care of Joseph or Nicodemus, in providing spices to preserve it, but of God who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory; and who would not suffer his body to be corrupted, because he was holy, and because he was his Holy One; that so as there was no moral corruption in him, there should be no natural corruption in him; so the Jewish Midrash ^{f244} interprets it, that

“no worm or maggot should have power over him;”

which is not true of David, nor of any but the Messiah. This character of “Holy One” eminently belongs to Christ above angels and men, yea, it is often used of the divine Being, and it agrees with Christ in his divine nature, and is true of him as man; he is the holy thing, the holy child Jesus; his nature is pure and spotless, free from the taint of original sin; his life and conversation were holy and harmless, he did no sin, nor knew any, nor could any be found in him by men or devils; his doctrines were holy, and tended to promote holiness of life; all his works are holy, and such is the work of redemption, which is wrought out in consistence with and to the glory of the holiness and righteousness of God; Christ is holy in all his offices, and is the fountain of holiness to his people; and he is God's Holy One, he has property in him as his Son, and as Mediator, and even as an Holy One; for he was sanctified and sent into the world by him, being anointed with the holy oil of his Spirit without measure. The word may be rendered, a “merciful” ^{f245} or “liberal” and “beneficent one”: for Christ is all this; he is a merciful as well as a faithful high priest, and he generously distributes grace and glory to his people.

Ver. 11. *Thou wilt show me the path of life*, etc.] Not the way of life and salvation for lost sinners, which is Christ himself; but the resurrection of the dead, which is a passing from death to life; and was shown to Christ, not doctrinally, or by illuminating his mind, and leading him into the doctrine of it, for so he himself has brought it to light by the Gospel; practically and experimentally, by raising him the dead, or by causing him to pass from death to life; and he was the first to whom the path of life was shown in this sense, or the that who ever trod in it, and so has led the way for others: hence he is called the that fruits of them that slept, the firstborn and first begotten from the dead; for though others were raised before, yet not to an immortal life, never to die more, as he was; now the view, the faith, and hope of this, of not being left in the grave so long as to see corruption, and of being raised from the dead to an immortal life, caused joy and gladness in Christ, at the time of his sufferings and death, as well as what follows;

in thy presence [is] fulness of joy: Christ, being raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and was received up into glory into his Father's presence, and is glorified with his own self, with his glorious presence, for which he prayed, (^{<407B>}John 17:5); and which fills his human nature with fulness of joy, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; (see ^{<442B>}Acts 2:28); and as it is with the head it will be with the members in some measure; now the presence of God puts more joy and gladness into them than anything else can do; but as yet their joy is not full; but it will be when they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, into the presence of God in the other world then everlasting joy will be upon their heads;

at thy right hand [there are] pleasures for evermore; Christ being entered into heaven is set down at the right hand of God in human nature, an honour which is not conferred on any of the angels, (^{<301B>}Hebrews 1:13); where the man Christ Jesus is infinitely delighted with the presence of God, the never fading joys of heaven, the company of angels and glorified saints; here he sits and sees of the travail of his soul; he prolongs his days and sees his seed, souls called by grace, and brought to glory one after another, until they are all brought in, in whom is all his delight; and which was the joy set before him at the time of his sufferings and death: or the words may be rendered "in thy right are pleasant things for ever"^{f246}, and may design those gifts and graces, which Christ, being exalted at the right hand of God, received from thence and gives to men, for the use and service, of his church and people, in the several successive ages of time; and so Aben

Ezra takes the words to be an allusion to a man's giving pleasant gifts to his friend with his right hand.