

PSALM 133

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 133

A Song of degrees of David.

This psalm was penned by David, as some think when all the tribes of Israel united and chose and anointed him king over them, (^{<108>}2 Samuel 5:1-3); but, according to others, when the rebellion of his son Absalom was quelled, and all the tribes of Israel strove who should first bring back the king, and show the greatest zeal and loyalty to him, (^{<109>}2 Samuel 19:9,10,14); Theodoret supposes it to be prophetic, and to have respect to the union of the tribes after the Babylonish captivity, who had been disunited in the times of Rehoboam, but now were no more two nations and kingdoms, but one; see (^{<110>}Ezekiel 37:16-22); and others carry it further still, even to the first times of the Gospel, when the Christians were of one heart and of one soul, (^{<111>}Acts 4:32); it may indeed be applied to any community, civil or religious, that is in peace and unity: and no doubt the design of David was to promote peace and harmony among his subjects; and love and affection in his family, among his children, brethren one of another, and of Solomon; who was to be his heir and successor, and under whose government it would be well for them to live peaceably and quietly. Kimchi and Ben Melech refer the psalm to the times of the Messiah, and take it to be a prediction of the peace and concord between the King Messiah and the priest, of which Zerubbabel and Joshua were types; see (^{<112>}Zechariah 6:13). The inscription of the Syriac version is,

“it is said of Moses and of Aaron, who dwelt in the tabernacle, in the house of the Lord; and there is an intimation in it of the perfect people,”

the Christians in Gospel times.

Ver. 1. *Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is]*, etc.] Aben Ezra thinks the word thing should be supplied; the thing is what follows;

for brethren to dwell together in unity: which the Targum interprets of Zion and Jerusalem, as two brethren; Aben Ezra of the priests; Kimchi of

the King Messiah and the priest; and Jarchi, and Kimchi's father, of the Israelites; which is best of all, especially of those who are Israelites indeed; for this is not to be understood of all mankind, who are in some sense brethren, being all of one blood, and among whom peace is to be cultivated; nor merely of those of the same nation, under one and the same government, who should endeavour to live peaceably and quietly; nor of brethren in a strict natural state, who belong to the same family, and are of the same parents, and should be kindly affectioned one to another; but rather of such who are so in a spiritual sense, who have God for their fatherly adoption and regeneration, are related to Christ the firstborn among many brethren, and are members one of another, in the same church state; all which are a reason why they should love as brethren, and endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, (~~123~~ Matthew 23:8 ~~403~~ Ephesians 4:3,6) (~~1017~~ 1 Peter 2:17 3:8 ~~533~~ Hebrews 13:1); and "to dwell together in unity"; even as one man, as if one soul actuated them all; it is not only to dwell and abide in the house of God, where they have all a name and a place; but to associate together there, to go up to the house of God in company, and with delight to join together in acts of religious worship; to serve the Lord with one consent, with one mind and mouth to glorify God, and to be of one accord, having the same love; and to do all kind and good offices one to another in the most hearty and cordial manner; serving each other in love, bearing one another's burdens, sympathizing with each other in all circumstances, forgiving each other offences committed, praying with one another, and building up each other in their most holy faith, stirring up one another to love and to good works: now this is both "good" and "pleasant"; it is good, as being according to the will of God, the new command of Christ; what evidences the truth of regeneration, and of being the disciples of Christ; what makes the communion of saints comfortable and edifying, and without which a profession of religion is good for nothing: and it is pleasant to God and Christ, to angels and men, to the ministers of the Gospel, and to all about them and in a connection with them; and it is this which makes any particular dispensation in time delightful and agreeable; as the first times of the Gospel, and the latter day glory, the Philadelphian church state, which has its name from brotherly love; yea, it will be the glory and delight of heaven. Now this is ushered in with a note of attention and admiration, "behold", and with a note of exclamation, "how"; the psalmist pointing at some instance or instances of this kind, which were very amiable, and worthy of imitation; and suggesting that such a case is rare and wonderful,

and inexpressibly good, profitable, and pleasant. Gussetius^{f1796} renders it, “how good is the sabbatism of brethren, even gathered together”; for the exercise of religion, prayer, praise, etc.

Ver. 2. [*It is*] *like the precious ointment upon the head*, etc.] The composition which Moses was ordered to make of the principal spices, and therefore called precious; and which was poured on the heads of kings and priests, when they were anointed with it, (^{<123>}Exodus 30:23-25);

that ran down upon the beard, [even] Aaron’s beard; this was put upon the head of Aaron when he was anointed, and so on any other high priest, and trickled down to his beard; (see ^{<123>}Exodus 29:7). The reasons Kimchi and Ben Melech give, why the anointing of Aaron and other priests is mentioned, and not the anointing of a king, or of David himself, are, because the anointing of Aaron was first, and also more public and better known by the people;

that went down to the skirts of his garments; or, “the mouth” or “opening of his garments”^{f1797}; not the extremity of them, as our version inclines to; for not so great a quantity of oil was poured upon him; nor would it have been decent to have his clothes thus greased from top to bottom: but the upper part of his garment, the top of the coat, on which the beard lay, as Jarchi; the neck or collar of it, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; the hole in which the head went through when it was put on, about which there was a band, that it might not be rent, (^{<123>}Exodus 28:32 39:23); where the Septuagint use the same word as here. Suidas^{f1798} says, David means the superior aperture of the garment, that which we call the neck or collar band; and so Theodoret: and the Arabic version renders it, the “aperture”, or opening of it; and hitherto the ointment came. This was typical of the grace of the Spirit, the unction from the Holy One; which has been poured on Christ, the head of the church, without measure; and with which he has been anointed above his fellows; and from him it is communicated to all his members; to every one of which is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ; and who from his fulness receive, and grace for grace: and particularly brotherly love is compared to this ointment; because of the preciousness of it, which is true of every grace; and because of the extensiveness of it, reaching to head and members, to Christ and all his saints, the meanest and lowest of them; and because of its fragrant and sweet odour to all that are sensible of it; and because of its delightful, cheering, and refreshing nature; like ointment and perfume it rejoices the

heart; yea, the worst things said, or reproofs given, in brotherly love, are like oil, pleasant and useful, (^{<279>}Proverbs 27:9) (^{<415>}Psalms 141:5); and is as necessary for the saints, who are all priests unto God, to offer up their spiritual sacrifices; particularly that of prayer, which should be “without wrath”, as well as without doubting; and to do all other duties of religion, which should spring from charity or love; as the anointing oil was to Aaron and his sons, in order to their officiating in the priest’s office.

Ver. 3. *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion,* etc.] Hermon was a very high hill beyond Jordan; the Sidonians called it Sirion, and the Amorites Shenir, (^{<688>}Deuteronomy 3:8); hence Shenir and Hermon are mentioned together, (^{<208>}Song of Solomon 4:8); and sometimes Sion or Seon, (^{<648>}Deuteronomy 4:48); and is the Zion here intended; for the dew of Hermon could never descend on the mountain of Zion near Jerusalem, which was a hundred miles distant; besides Zion was but one mountain, these many. Hermon was remarkable for its dew, which still continues: a traveller^{f1799}, one of our own country, and whose fidelity is to be depended on, lying in tents near this hill one night, says,

“we were sufficiently instructed by experience what the holy psalmist means by the dew of Hermon; our tents being as wet with it as if it had rained all night.”

The mountains of Zion were those that were near to Zion, and not the mountain itself, those that were round about Jerusalem, on which the dew also fell in great plenty; and to which unity among brethren is here compared, because it comes from God in heaven, as the dew does. Saints are taught of God to love one another; contentions and quarrels come from lusts within, but this comes from above, from the Father of lights; and, because of its gentle nature, this makes men pure, and peaceable, and gentle, and easy to be entreated; as the dew falls gently in a temperate and moderate air, not in stormy and blustering weather: and because of its cooling nature; it allays the heats and animosities in the minds of men; and because it makes the saints fruitful, and to grow and increase in good works;

for there the Lord commanded the blessing; either in the mountains of Zion; so Kimchi: and if Mount Zion is meant by it, the church, often signified thereby, is the dwelling place of the Lord; here he records his name and blesses; here his word is preached, which is full of blessings; and

here ordinances are administered, which are blessed of God to his people. Theodoret thinks some respect is had to the pouring down of the Spirit on the apostles in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost: but rather the sense is, where brethren dwell together in unity, there the God of love and peace is; the Gospel of the grace of God is continued; and the ordinances of it made beneficial to the souls of men, they meeting together in peace and concord; (see ~~471311~~ 2 Corinthians 13:11). God is said to “command the blessing” when he promises it, and makes it known to his people, or bestows it on them, (~~194508~~ Psalm 105:8 44:4);

[even] life for evermore: the great blessing of all, which includes all others, and in which they issue, the promise of the covenant, the blessing of the Gospel; which is in the hands of Christ, and comes through him to all his people; to the peacemakers particularly, that live in love and peace; these shall live for ever in a happy eternity, and never die, or be hurt of the second death.