

The Alphabetical Scriptures; or the Divine Acrostics

by H.J. Vine

H.J. Vine explores the significance of the Alphabetical Scriptures, emphasizing their divine design and the role of Christ as the Alpha and Omega in revelation.

Scripture: Psalm 9:1, Psalm 24:8, Psalm 25:15, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 37:30, Psalm 111:9, Psalm 112:5, Psalm 112:8, Psalm 119:123, Psalm 145:9, Psalm 145:15, Proverbs 31:26, Lamentations 1:16, Lamentations 3:25, Nahum 1:2, Revelation 1:8

Topics: "Divine Inspiration", "Jesus Christ"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches about the divine design and inspiration of Scripture, highlighting the intricate structure of the Alphabetical Scriptures, such as the Divine Acrostics, which point to the greatness and beauty of God's works. The Scriptures reveal the authority, work, and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing His role as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Through various acrostics in Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, and Nahum, the preacher showcases the divine guidance and purpose in the inspired order of the Bible, culminating in the testimony to the sufferings and salvation brought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Containing testimony to the Divine Design and Inspiration of Scripture

and to the Authority, Work, and Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prefatory Note

Some time ago one of the beautiful acrostics of the Bible (Prov. 31:10-31) was much spoken of. It is a scripture of great grace and comeliness, and has been highly valued by pious women of old. Its interesting structure and poetic elegance are not indicated, however, in every translation. A saint of God remarked to me, at the time referred to, "I wonder why that Scripture is arranged alphabetically?" I was set searching, and praying, and comparing scripture with scripture. The rare fruit I gathered gave great delight to my soul. I saw that these few, but famous, Bible acrostics, which have puzzled the sceptical critics, have their ALPHABETICAL arrangement explained for us by the Spirit of Truth, in the "ALPHA AND Ω" of the last book of the Bible; where, in all Scripture this expression occurs but three times, and with three distinct meanings, as we shall presently see.

It occurred to me that it would be of use to the believer, who heeds the apostolic injunction, "Give attendance to reading," to have a clear outline of these precious acrostics with their teaching. I have endeavoured, therefore, to give this, as I am not aware that anyone has undertaken it previously; though with the means God has provided any diligent believer might have done so.do."

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Introduction

One of the wonderful works of the Spirit is seen in the significant structure of the Alphabetical Scriptures--the Divine Acrostics. They stand out strikingly amidst the instructive scenery of the Old Testament, like trees richly laden with ripe fruit.

The Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of these Scriptures is He by whom the shining heavens were garnished; and who, at the beginning, moved over the face of the dark waters of the earth to produce order and beauty, out of chaos and desolation. It was by the same Spirit that holy men of old spake and it is by Him believers are now sealed and indwelt. He sheds abroad God's love in their hearts the love which is "commended to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; and He is here in this world today, to bring livingly before us, the Father and the Son, and the things which are theirs; so that our thoughts may be formed rightly, and our hearts filled with ineffable joy.

The spiritual man, knowing this, minds the things of the Spirit, and not the things of the flesh. He knows that the mind of the Spirit is life and peace and God has graciously given to us the holy scriptures for our learning, that these things might be made known to us; He has also given to us the Spirit who inspired their writing. May He lead us into the right understanding of their divine design; and give us ability to appreciate their beauty and excellence; strengthening and establishing us in the all important truth that "EVERY SCRIPTURE IS DIVINELY INSPIRED" (2 Tim. 3:16, N.Tr.).

While others vainly seek for errors, may it be ours to diligently garner spiritual treasures.

An Example: Psalm 119

All translations should at least show the structure of scripture as inspired by God. We may be thankful that Psalm 119 is partly preserved for us thus in the Authorised Version of the Bible. Full of gladsome meaning, it is an attractive example, having 22 sets of 8 verses each; and in an ordered manner a separate letter characterizes each set of 8, in which every several verse begins with the same letter. Thus 8 verses commence with A; 8 verses with B; and so on; whilst the structure rises regularly upward, till the whole Hebrew alphabet has been used in this striking manner by the Spirit 8 times over. So constructed, in its completeness, this eightfold new-covenant Psalm shows us the way the law will be written in the heart and mind of the godly Jewish remnant; so that eventually, having been brought to own Jesus as the Christ, all sins being forgiven and forgotten, the soul sings experimentally, "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

"8" is well known to be the "New" covenant number; and this is doubtless the significance of its eightfold structure. The "10" words of the law are also represented in this Psalm by "10" different words being used

to express it; such as "law," "commandments," "testimonies," etc. and it is interesting to note that it is spoken of in this way in every verse except two; thus telling the tale, in its own way, that the millennial state on earth will not be absolutely perfect. Another striking detail which should be noticed is that the address, "The LORD" ("JEHOVAH") occurs just 22 times; this being the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

At the time when this Psalm will be fulfilled in connection with the remnant of Israel, as we have said, the Lord Jesus Christ will be owned by them as their Messiah; but we must also remind ourselves that the writing of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts today is "CHRIST." He is, indeed, the spirit of the new covenant, so that, though we are not "under the law, but under grace," yet we delight in it; and fulfil its righteous requirements, as we walk according to the Spirit. The believer can even now sing, "Oh, how love I thy law!" for he is brought to rejoice in the One who has magnified it; in the One who has borne for him its curse upon the tree; in the One who has secured the blessings of the new covenant, and in resurrection and ascension brought the believer, according to divine purpose, along with Himself, into the unchanging grace of God, who has "TAKEN US INTO FAVOUR IN THE BELOVED."

"His perfect love has cast out fear,

His favour shines upon us here!"

We shall add a few more words as to this Psalm (119) when we come to it, in its proper order. But enough has already been said to indicate its divine design and witness to Christ the Surety and the Mediator of the new covenant.

The Alphabet

A few words will now be necessary as to the Alphabet; for, accustomed to it from childhood, we are apt to lose sight of its immense importance. We never cease to use it and the whole of the inspired literature is founded on it.

We constantly make known our thoughts by its means. It is the foundation of our verbal communications, spoken or written. The A B C we learned as children is always necessary. We cannot forsake this fundamental means of expression, however high our thoughts may rise. Did we attempt to do so we should expose our folly, as those do who forsake the foundations of faith, the deity, authority, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, "the A and the Ω" Such vainly think to advance and to rise. Their distressful disaster will be dire indeed. Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God (2 John 9, New Trans.). An old believer once said to another, "Don't you find as you get older you go back to the simple foundation truths?" "No," replied the other, "I never left them." That was true wisdom. The divine means used by God to make Himself fully and finally known to us, is His beloved Son, as we read: "No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18); and He said . . . "I HAVE DECLARED THY NAME."

He has become the language of God to us. In its expression, and in its teaching, He is truly the Alpha and the Omega.

The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Aleph (א); its numerical value is "1," and it signifies an "OX." The last letter is Tau (ט); its number "400," and it signifies a "CROSS." All the other twenty letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with their value and meaning, lie between these two.

The "Ox" as an offering was of the highest order ("1") as we see in Leviticus; and there can be no entrance into the holy things of God until the sinner has accepted for his own soul the perfect offering of our Lord Jesus Christ to God (■). Neither can there be known any abiding joy in these things until the crucifixion of our old man (400) at the "CROSS" (■) is also accepted (Rom. 6). Every true believer on our Lord Jesus Christ is forgiven and eternally justified, because of His perfect offering. It is another question, however, how much we have grown. The Corinthian saints were blessed "in Christ"; but they were nevertheless stunted--they were spiritual dwarfs (see 1 Cor. 3:1). Christ has indeed "died for us"; and it is also true that we have "died with Christ" (Col. 2:20); but this has to be accepted in a practical way if we are to make real advance. The truth of "Christ crucified" was pressed upon the Corinthians to this end. Not so much His dying "for" us. "Crucified" involves a death of shame. And that is what a cross meant to a Jew; and the last letter of his alphabet speaks of that.

There is, doubtless, a wonderful witness to the work of Christ upon the Cross in these letters; and what we have said as to the first letter of the alphabet, will raise no difficulty in the mind of the simplest believer; but all may not at once understand that which we have said as to the last letter. Let Romans 6 be carefully and prayerfully read; let the truth of the "CROSS" as unfolded in verse 6 be grasped: "KNOWING this, that our old man has been crucified with Him"; then the force of ■ equals "CROSS" and "400" will be seen.

In contrast to the "new man" (Eph. 2:15), which is formed of all true believers, "in Christ" risen; the "old man" is the state and condition in which all the children of fallen Adam were found universally. "4" represents this universal aspect, so we read of the four winds, the four corners of the earth, etc. "10" is the number of responsibility as seen in the "ten" commandments, and in this man has completely failed (Rom. 3:19). "10" also stands, in the Bible, as in other literature, for an entire, yet almost limitless multitude, "ten times," etc. (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11). Let these figures be thus placed: $4 \times 10 \times 10 = 400$; and then it is clearly seen that they represent man universally, in his responsible sinful state and condition, as an entirety--our old man.

We have good reason to thank God that the "CROSS" has severed judicially our connection with the old man, that practically "we should no longer serve sin," but have entrance in Christ risen, by the Holy Spirit, into the things of God.

The Alpha and the Omega

We must now consider the three references in Revelation which have been mentioned before we can proceed properly. They are doubtless placed there by the Spirit of Truth, in keeping with other reasons, to direct us in the discovery of the divine design of the Old Testament acrostics; and thus to make God Himself and His things better known to our hearts. In these three scriptures (Rev. 1:8; 21:6; and 22:13; 1:11 being a mistake) the Spirit wrote the divine Name thus: "■ ð Α κα■ τ■ Ω"; showing how distinctly the alphabet is referred to.

Of the inventor of the particular alphabet from which all others have developed, it has been said: "The inventor of the Semitic (Hebrew) alphabet . . . is to be ranked among the greatest benefactors of mankind." But from whom did it emanate? Who was its true Inventor? Who first used it to make Himself known to us?

1. Our first scripture (Rev. 1:8) tells us that God Himself is, in its meaning, the completeness of the alphabet; as well as what it reveals. "I am Alpha and Omega, says the Lord God, He who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (New Trans.). It should be noticed here that the Old Testament Names of God are used: the Lord, Jehovah, Almighty, He who is, and who was, and is to come. He is the Α and

the Ω; and though others may be used to introduce this to men, still He is the Originator, the One from whom it emanated (like every good thing), as well as being the One who is pre-eminently made known by its use. And, by the way, what a testimony we have in this scripture to the deity (not simply the "divinity") of our blessed Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, seen as He is, in the immutability of the Godhead.

It used to be said, "Ab Aleph (Α) usque ad Tau (Τ)," to denote "entirely," "completely." This is what God is in Himself; this is what Christ, who is God, is in revelation. He is the image of the invisible God. It is a significant fact, that the Israelite spoke of the Shekinah Presence of God as "ΑΑΑΑ"; because these two letters comprehend the complete alphabet; and so, fittingly expressed the Presence of Him, to whom the High Priest drew near, through sacrifice and blood-shedding, with the "Urim and Thummim" (Light and Perfection), the God-provided means for divine communications; that His mind might be known. "Urim" commences with the first letter Α; "Thummim" with the last Τ. Does not this point to the Light and Perfection which was to come in Christ, our Apostle and High Priest, in whom the mind of God has been fully made known? He is the Α and the Ω; in revelation. Has anyone else ever thought, or dared, to claim this divine title? Is it not suitably disclosed at the terminus of the inspired literature? With what grace, patience, and wisdom, our blessed God has wrought amongst fallen and ignorant mankind, to lead up to the full revelation of Himself, in the One who could say to Him, in the hearing of His own, when here on earth: "I HAVE MADE KNOWN UNTO THEM THY NAME" (John 17:26).

Only One who was God and Man could do this. No one less than God could declare God; yet, none but a Man could make that declaration both intelligible and effectual to man.

2. We will pass on to Revelation 22:13. The Old Testament acrostics not only speak of the blessed God Himself; they also tell us of His thoughts concerning the coming Kingdom and glory, and it is in reference to this that Revelation 22:13 is given. "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." As the context shows, our Lord Jesus Christ is here seen returning to reward the wicked and the righteous, according to their work. Then He says: "I am Alpha and Omega"--the complete revelation of the thoughts of God. But more--"the Beginning and the End" of all that subsists; not only its Author and Finisher, but its Start and its Finish. And more also--"the First and the Last"; for there was none before Him, and there is no one to come after Him. Happy, indeed, is the believer who has found finality in Him, his blessed Saviour and Lord, Advocate and High Priest; in the Christ who is the exalted Head of the assembly. This gives rest, peace, and joy; individually and collectively. In this scripture, we learn that He is the one essential, whether in revelation; in being; or in order. He is all; in all; and all stands in ordered relation to Him, as all numbers do to the first and the last.

3. The other scripture (Rev. 21:6) with its context takes us beyond the period of the millennial, mediatorial reign of Christ, to the last step in the ways of God, and then out into the vast forever. "And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

God speaks from the throne The divine declaration is heard "Behold, I make all things new" (v. 5). Again, "It is done!" And, again, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End." The overcomer inherits all things; God is to him God; he is to God son (v. 7); and whilst the believer drinks of the very Fountain of the water of life freely; the unbelieving have their eternal existence, away from the life of God; and so it is called the second death. All is marked here by final and eternal fixity.

THESE THREE SCRIPTURES show us then: (1) That "the Lord God, He who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty," as named in the Hebrew scriptures, is "the A and the Ω" in Himself; (2) That our Lord Jesus Christ, the Returning One, the Rewarder of righteous and wicked, the Introducer of the Kingdom of God, in power and glory on earth, is "the A and the Ω" in revelation; (3) That when God's ways are ended; when time ceases; when final fixedness is reached; there is no change in the blessed God Himself; He is still the same as revealed in Jesus, "A and the Ω."

There no stranger God shall meet us! The God of the scriptures; the God of creation; the God of redemption; the God of revelation--the God made known in Jesus; who suffered, died, and bled to make us His; telling out the love of God in so doing; He shall welcome us there.

"He who to His rest shall greet thee,

Greets thee with a well-known love."

We will now examine our Old Testament acrostics; and, though they may not rise to the fullness contained in the last scripture we have just considered, yet they point onward, most blessedly, to HIM who brings it all to pass in perfection.

The Five Psalms

Psalms 9 and 10 are the first two. They are most interesting and instructive, both in structure and teaching. Their alphabetical order is not shown in all translations. This is a loss; and more especially so, because, unlike others which are regular, these are very irregular; part of the alphabet being used in one, and part in the other. Therefore, some sceptical critics, and some well-meaning scholars too, have tried to patch them together, to show regular alphabetical order. They have all alike failed. The fact is, divine design and method are here, as elsewhere, even where disorder seems to prevail.

Both Psalms show us the godly remnant of Israel looking on to the time when Christ shall introduce the Kingdom of God on earth publicly; when "He shall judge the world in righteousness" (9:8, and Acts 17:31); and "the Lord is King" (10:16). Before that time, our Lord Jesus Christ said "Another shall come in his own name" (John 5:43). Nothing of the Alpha and the Omega will be seen in him. His "own name" will characterize him, and the number of man "6"; as we read in Revelation 13. It is in this last book also, we have "the number of his name" which is "666." The remnant of these two Psalms will understand this name and number at the time spoken of, when he appears on the scene. All right order will be overthrown then. So here, where the Spirit describes him, the alphabetical order is disturbed.

From verse 2 of Psalm 10, where this wicked man is described, exactly 6 letters are missed out. This is, indeed, very significant, for at verse 12 (answering to 9:19, under the same letter ■), where the Lord is again introduced, the alphabet flows regularly on to the end. It should be remarked that "wicked" is in the plural in 9:17; but it is singular in Psalm 10, for the "wicked one" is there described. Who knows, but that the believing remnant may find his very name in the 6 omitted letters?

Psalms 25 and 34 are the next two. They are both similar in structure and order, and both have 22 verses. It is striking that they should leave out a letter which is duplicated in Psalm 9, the letter Vau (■ equals "6") and that they should add to the last verse the letter P■ (■ equals "80"), which is the sixth from the end in the alphabet. Both of these final verses speak of redemption; and $8 \times 10 = "80,"$ which signifies the new ("8") way this redemption will be brought about for Israel under God's government ("10"). The "wicked one"

will then have been destroyed, and this may be the significance of omitting the ■ equals "6".

In Psalm 25 we have the first acknowledgment of sins; but it is to Him whose pleasure it is to "teach sinners in the way" (v. 8). This is very beautiful and most suitable. How graciously we see it exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospels, in Him who called, and received, and instructed sinners in the way of righteousness. How true is verse 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

In Psalm 24 God's government in favour of the righteous is seen; thus in 1 Peter, which recognizes that government, we have quoted verses 12 and 13 of this Psalm for the guidance of those who have accepted Christ. And if we compare verse 20 with John 19:36, we see that the truly Righteous One, who instructs the remnant in righteousness, in the last days, is our Lord Jesus Christ. God watched over Him when He was here in all His divinely dependent path; right on to the Cross; as He then told out fully who and what God is. Not a bone was broken. Meek, lowly, dependent, He indeed was; and yet, that blessed, holy One, was the outshining of God's glory, and the exact expression of His substance. WHAT A WONDERFUL SAVIOUR FOR SINNERS! JESUS, THE SON OF GOD.

Psalm 37 is the last of the five. It is regular in its structure; having two verses to each letter of the alphabet, except in one case. Here we see that God, who governs in favour of the righteous, is against the wicked; so, to the godly it is said, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers" (v. 1); "Trust in the Lord"; "Delight thyself also in the Lord"; yea, "Rest in the Lord" (v. 7). The important principle of departing from evil and doing good is therefore emphasized again in verse 27, from the previous Psalm 34:14; and, significantly, under the same letter ■. This active and practical pursuance of what is good in separation from evil, was seen in its perfection, in the altogether "Perfect Man" (v. 37); in the One whose wonderful ways, and works, and words made our blessed God and Father fully known, both in His nature and in His character.

These five interesting and instructive acrostics all clearly carry conviction of divine design with them; and point us unwaveringly to the Lord to the One who shall reign in righteousness; to the One whose authority is to be owned; and if the Holy Spirit speaks of the wicked one in the first two, He only emphasizes more strongly, by deliberately omitting the use of the acrostic order in the description of him, the fact, that its proper use is to direct us to the Lord, and what is of Himself.

A Summary of the Divine Acrostics

The above FIVE PSALMS are all we have in the First Book (1 to 41), where the Name of Jehovah is prominent; and the truth of His government in grace (signified in the number 5, as also in $2 \times 5 =$

10), in favour of the righteous remnant. This comforts them in their affliction and Christ is seen in connection with them; so we have more of the personal history of Christ here than in any other of the five books of Psalms.

Seeing that so many sincere believers read the Psalms, a note of guidance from the pen of another may prove helpful at this point: "To misapply the Psalms themselves (is to) lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the Gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be, introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them."

There are FOUR PSALMS more set in acrostic order (111, 112, 119, and 145); and it is remarkable that they are all in Book 5 (107 to 150). It is there, in this last book, we have introduced the general, triumphant

burst of praise at the very close, following the last acrostic Psalm (145), where the Beloved, the true Messiah, sings in the great congregation; having brought about universal order, denoted in the number "4." There are thus nine alphabetical Psalms altogether.

The other acrostics are: PROVERBS 31:10-31 giving us the worthy wife, after the words of the King, devoted to God; next, LAMENTATIONS, showing us the sorrowing one, in a unique way; then NAHUM 1:1-10, describing the greatness and majesty of God.

We must, however, remark a very interesting fact to complete this summary. In the BOOK OF ESTHER; where God's people are seen so far from Him that they do not even name His Name (so neither "Lord" nor "God" is mentioned); where we see, nevertheless, His faithfulness working behind the scenes for their preservation and deliverance, it has been pointed out that His divine Name Jehovah (יהוה) is found interwoven acrostically into the Hebrew text, in such verses as verse 4, etc. This may be explained; but the whole book shows that though the people of God may not have Him in their thoughts, yet they are always in His. "God is faithful!" Sceptics have often tried to upset young Christians as to this book of Esther; but they themselves are baffled before the above touching facts. God's ways are not our ways. IT IS GOD'S GLORY TO CONCEAL A THING: IT IS ROYAL HONOUR TO SEARCH IT OUT (Prov. 25:2). True noblemen search God's word in faith, because they receive it as God's word (see Acts 17:11). It is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is IN CHRIST JESUS.

"In Him we trust, the great Amen

Jehovah's pledge to sinful men,

Confirming all His word!

Doubtful no promises remain,

For all are Yea, and all Amen,

In Him, the faithful Lord."

It is thought by many that these acrostics were thus constructed to aid the memory of the pious Jewish readers of the holy Scriptures. There is no reason why this thought should be questioned; but surely there is a deeper reason than this. The Holy Spirit would unfold to us, in "all the Scriptures," the things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. The intelligent instructor of the young today very commonly uses acrostics exactly in this double sense. He wishes to aid the memory; but his main object, in all his labour of love, is to bring Christ before the dear little ones.

It is the same with the four gospels. Why not one? We have graciously given by God a full fourfold view of, and witness to, the Christ, the Son of God, in whom He is fully and finally made known. The true Messiah, in His divine right the diligent Servant, in His divine faithfulness the perfect Man, in His divine grace; the eternal Word, who was God, in His personal glory; such is the order and witness of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in their testimony to Him, "in whom all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell"; to Him who brought grace and truth here; to Him who called and forgave sinners; to Him who blessed the bairns; to Him who healed the sick and raised the dead; to Him who having wrought redemption, and glorified God on the cross, is now Himself glorified on the throne. It is to Him we sing:

"Thou wast the Image, in man's lowly guise,

Of the Invisible to mortal eyes

Son of His bosom, come from heaven above,

We see in Thee incarnate, 'God is love'."

There is abundance of treasure to be found in the fruitful land of inspiration; and there is, doubtless, much more, even in the parts we are surveying at present, than we shall be able to gather now. There are, figuratively speaking, mountains and trees and rivers all ready to yield us their bounteous store. When the sceptical critic enters this wealthy land, he is quite unhappy, because it is not one flat plain. He sees a rugged mountain rise abruptly before his view; and he immediately thinks that it should be levelled out. He sees the strong, jutting branches of a fruitful tree and only thinks of having all cut down and planed. An apple tree is found among the cedars of the wood; he would remove it, to have uniformity. The rushing and roaring waters of the winding river he would endeavour to make into a still lake. He seems to be incapable of appreciating the distinct and yet relative beauties of the whole. Boasting in minute scholarship, he often exposes his own pettiness. Truly, we need the spiritual microscope, as well as the telescope, to behold the wonders of the Word yet we need the wisdom and faith of the simple, pious fishermen of Galilee to understand them aright. "Knowledge" does not always keep company with "Wisdom" and "Understanding"; but, puffed up, it often struts about with "Pride" (1 Cor. 8:1). No one need be surprised at the signal failure of the rationalist to read the writing of God, the Holy Scriptures. Daniel gives us principles that obtain during the times of the Gentiles; and in chapter 5 the utter inability of the scholars to read the writing, or make known the interpretation thereof (v. 8) is strikingly illustrated. The forgotten believer, in whom was the Spirit, alone was able to give the reading and interpretation.

If we are led by the divinely-given Guide, we shall find "in all the Scriptures" things concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit who inspired, is here to instruct and to lead hearts to the Son of God; who was Himself, altogether what He said in words (John 8:25); and could Himself say to the Father, "The words which Thou hast given Me I have given them."

The Four Psalms

Psalms 111 and 112 are an interesting pair of exceeding beauty. Both are filled with choice and cheering expressions. They have but 10 verses each, yet both employ the whole alphabet with striking regularity.

They stand in complete contrast to the first pair of Book 1, which are very irregular, as we have seen: these are both regular. The first two speak of the Lord and the wicked these speak of the Lord and the godly.

The first of our present pair (111) praises Him who is in Himself the true Alpha and Omega, whose works and ways are wonderful, veritable, honourable, and durable; the second (112) takes character from the first; showing us the godly man, who is consequently righteous, also gracious, and prosperous; but the wicked melt away. It is in the Lord the godly remnant of Israel find righteousness when they turn again to Him, not in their own works. They will say soon, "JEHOVAH TSIDKENU," "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." We find a most wonderful illustration of this in Jeremiah 23:6, and 33:16. In the first scripture we read that "the Lord our righteousness" is "His name," and in the second, that it is "the name wherewith she shall be called."

This principle explains Proverbs 31 also for us; and today the assembly puts on Christ; so that He becomes everything and in all. He is made unto us righteousness from God (1 Cor. 1:30); as well as wisdom, sanctification, and redemption. The man of faith says, "not mine own righteousness . . . but that which is through the faith of Christ" (Phil. 3:9).

Having this peerless pair printed side by side, we shall be better able to understand the Holy Spirit's definite design in these two inimitable Hallelujah songs. It is because the new covenant is eternally established in Christ, through His work at Calvary, that Israel by-and-by, and ourselves now, come into righteousness; and this explains the two lines under ■ in verse 9. The one follows the other. But, in considering these Psalms, the lines of ■ and ■ should also be carefully compared in verses 3 and 4. The relation of the one to the other will then be clearly seen in the way we have already indicated.

Psalm 111: The Lord is Praised

1. Hallelujah!

■ I will praise the Lord with my whole heart,

■ In the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.

2. ■ The works of the Lord are great,

■ Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

3. ■ His work is honourable and glorious:

■ And His righteousness endureth for ever.

4. ■ He has made His wonderful works to be remembered:

■ The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion.

5. ■ He has given meat unto them that fear Him:

■ He will ever be mindful of His covenant.

6. ■ He has showed His people the power of His works,

■ That He may give them the heritage of the heathen.

7. ■ The works of His hands are verity and judgment;

■ All His commandments are sure,

8. ■ They stand fast for ever and ever,

■ And are done in truth and uprightness.

9. ■ He sent redemption unto His people:

■ He has commanded His covenant for ever:

■ Holy and reverend is His Name.

10. ■ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom:

■ A good understanding have all they that do His commandments:

■ His praise endureth for ever.

Psalm 112: The Godly Man is Blessed

1. Hallelujah!

■ Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,

■ That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

2. ■ His seed shall be mighty upon earth:

■ The generation of the upright shall be blessed.

3. ■ Wealth and riches shall be in His house:

■ And His righteousness endureth for ever.

4. ■ Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:

■ He is gracious, and full of compassion, and RIGHTEOUS.

5. ■ A good man showeth favour, and leadeth;

■ He will guide his affairs with discretion.

6. ■ Surely he shall not be moved for ever.

■ The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

7. ■ He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:

■ His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.

8. ■ His heart is established, he shall not be afraid,

■ Until he see his desire upon his enemies.

9. ■ He has dispersed; he has given to the poor;

■ His righteousness endureth for ever:

■ His horn shall be exalted with honour.

10. ■ The wicked shall see it, and be grieved;

■ He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away;

■ The desire of the wicked shall perish.

Psalm 119 comes next. We have already noticed the main features of this interesting eightfold new covenant Psalm. It is, however, necessary to add here, that the covenant of which it speaks is not only secured by the blood of Christ, but it is abidingly established in Christ raised from the dead and exalted to God's right hand. It is, therefore, called, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the everlasting covenant." There we also learn that He is its Mediator, as well as its Surety. Indeed, Isaiah tells us that He Himself is the Covenant (40:6 and 49:8); and thus the A and the Ω of God's gracious and glorious thoughts concerning it. Israel will consequently be blessed; the earth established; and light shine forth for all the nations because of our Lord Jesus Christ; because of who He is; because of what He has done on the Cross and because of what He will do on the throne.

Psalm 145 is a beautiful and fitting finish. It is the sweet song which shall be raised by the victorious Messiah, after the new covenant is established with Israel, and ordered government is set in the earth. It will then be sung in "the great congregation."

It is entitled, "David's (the Beloved's) praise." It is the fulfilment of Psalm 22:25-28. The cross is passed! The Crown is His The enthroned and triumphant One sings His song! He begins! But Israel is then tuned to join in the praise! The sons of men are also reached, and catch up the joyful strains! The earth, too, becomes vocal with this song of gladness! The loud chorus is rapturously echoed by all; until, in full and happy harmony, "all flesh bless His holy Name for ever and ever!"

The song is received from Christ. He strikes the note. He gives the pitch. Therefore the song is right. It is tuneful and true, sweet and harmonious. Hebrews 2:12 is doubtless put on this wide ground, so as to embrace Israel by and by. It is God's Name which is there declared; not exclusively the Father's Name, as in John 17:26, which is special and peculiar to those who are His own now; to those given to Him by the Father, while He is rejected from the world. There is no Psalm to express the praise and worship which that special declaration produces. Consistent with this fact, it will be noticed, there is a verse missing in our Psalm. There are only 21 instead of 22 verses. The letter ■ (nun) is not here. The heavenly company, with its heavenly note, is wanting. That is only heard in heavenly glory. The earthly praise to "God, the King," will, indeed, be glad and great and glorious; but there is a richer, sweeter, loftier song; yea, the richest, sweetest, loftiest of all; its sacred strains are all heavenly; its holy harmonies blend in blessing, to sound in GOD THE FATHER'S EARS, THE PERFECTION AND PRECIOUSNESS OF HIS BELOVED SON, WHO HAS MADE THE FATHER KNOWN TO US, CAUSING OUR HAPPY HEARTS TO SING WITH MELODIOUS MUSIC OF SUPERLATIVE SWEETNESS.

It seems almost superfluous to say how distinctly the definite design of divine inspiration is seen in these four beautiful acrostics; and how unmistakably they bear witness to the work and worth of our wonderful Saviour, our adorable Lord, the Mediator of the new covenant, the Leader of the universal song. Much more might be said as to our nine Psalms; but having outlined them, we will now pass on to the consideration of the other alphabetical scriptures.

Proverbs 31, Lamentations and Nahum 1

PROVERBS 31:10-31, is truly of exceptional excellence. Its order is perfect. Each succeeding letter of the alphabet, literatim, regularly commences each following verse. It is to be particularly noticed that this acrostic, describing the woman of worth, the virtuous and industrious wife, immediately follows "the words" of the king consecrated or devoted to God.

In verse 1 we read, "The words of King Lemuel" ("devoted to God"); and the two parts of the chapter give, first the King; then the worthy wife. As the assembly does from Christ (Eph. 5); as Israel does from their Messiah (Isa. 53:11 and 43:17, end); so here, the wife takes character from the man. God is the A and the Ω, in Revelation 1; Christ is, in Revelation 22, as we have seen; and if the alphabet is here applied to the woman, it is surely to denote the truth which is stated tersely elsewhere in scripture: "The woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man" (1 Cor. 11:7-8).

Where this most important principle is understood, proud ecclesiastical boastings as to the church are dropped; for where such glorying habitually obtains, we find not that which is real, but peacock's feathers instead, covering a false bird. The true assembly glories in "the Christ, the Son of the living God"; not in herself. Thus the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel and Epistle, speaks of the One who gives abiding and prevailing constitution to the assembly; but He does not speak of herself, of "the assembly" as such; the term is not even mentioned. Here, in Proverbs 31, the woman's husband trusts her, and praises her; it is hers to trust Him and praise Him, surely not herself. "Her husband is known in the gates"; it is not God's way for the woman to be there. She keeps and guides the house. Truly it is said, in the last verse, "Let her own works praise her in the gates"; and thus also shall it be when the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated publicly; for we read, "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. 19:8, New Trans.). Nevertheless, she will be conscious that it is all the result of His own grace.

If the assembly is called "the Christ" characteristically (1 Cor. 12:12), it is because our Lord Jesus Christ is "the Christ" personally; if Israel is called "the Servant" nationally, in Isaiah 2, it is because Jesus, their Messiah, is "the Servant" personally. So also He is personally the True Vine, and personally the Son; Israel being the national vine and the national son. May it be ours to bear the true assembly character now, as we wait and watch for the day when He shall return. In the coming day of display He shall be "glorified in His saints, and wondered at in all that have believed" (2 Thess. 1:10). It will be the outshining of Himself, and all the golden letters of glory, seen in the bride, will correctly spell "CHRIST." HE IS GOD'S IMAGE AND GOD'S GLORY; HE IS THE A AND THE Ω. Even now, it is ours to sing to Him:--

"In Thee most perfectly expressed,

The Father's self doth shine

Fullness of Godhead, too; the Blest,

Eternally divine."

This singularly striking acrostic of Proverbs 31, following as we have seen "the words" of the King, gives one more remarkable testimony to the true Messiah, the true King, the Christ of God; whose glory is seen, not only in the use of the alphabet, but also in the worthy wife to whom that alphabet is attached so significantly here.

LAMENTATIONS--This little book of five chapters is full of suffering, sadness, sorrow and desolation. It is quite unique; and like one bereaved of every loved object, it mourns all alone. It is apart, and truly sits solitary (1:1). There is nothing else like it in all the scriptures. The divinely designed acrostic order in it is most marked however, being very distinct and definite.

The first two chapters, and the last two, have each 22 verses, the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; whilst the centre chapter, the third, it will be noticed, has three times 22, making 66 verses; and these are arranged thus: three verses, each beginning with א, three verses, each beginning with ב; and so on to the end. Chapters 1, 2 and 4, are also alphabetical; having one verse to each letter. They are, as we have said, all five filled full of affliction, and mourning, and sorrow; indeed, the cup of bitterness flows over; and when the final lament is reached in the last chapter, the soul seems so overcome in the presence of God, that the alphabetical order is altogether forsaken and forgotten, although in the number of verses, 22 is still retained; so this fifth chapter ends thus: "Thou hast utterly rejected us; Thou art very wroth against us." To this sad and solitary soul all seems to be lost in hopelessness and helplessness.

But God remains, and He has His own wonderful way in working. He may come down in the person of Jesus seeking fruit; He may curse the fruitless fig tree, He may destroy the rebellious husbandmen; but in a new way, in Christ, of the seed of David, raised from among the dead, when Israel turns to Him, He will bring forth fruit from the same nation; and His vineyard shall yield its increase.

It is the Spirit of Christ which is seen in the prophet of Lamentations. He enters into all the afflictions of Jerusalem, of the temple, and of the people of God. Such suffering was endured perfectly by the One who wept over Jerusalem, by Him who would have gathered and governed them aright; but they would not. Different to the prophet, in whom we see imperfection, our blessed Lord entered into all their affliction in His own personal perfectness. Truly there was no sorrow like unto His sorrow (1:12), for He went underneath all at Calvary's Cross, alone. The waves of suffering and sorrow surged about the head of the Forsaken and Afflicted One then, as none other ever knew, or could endure.

Although the prophet finds God's presence in the last chapter, yet he closes the book apparently without a ray of hope. The crown is fallen. Zion is desolate. The heart is faint. The eye is dim. Rejection and wrath are theirs. But here again, Christ who fully entered into all, is different to the prophet. He looked to the moment of resurrection for Himself personally first; then to the national resurrection and restoration of Israel, He could say to God, "Thou wilt show me the path of life" (Ps. 16:11). He knew that the sufferings preceded the glory.

And this is doubtless the secret significance of the third, the 3 fold chapter. It is there, in that centre chapter (where we have the 3 and the third, denoting resurrection), that the man of affliction of verse 1, speaks of "HOPE" three times, in verses 21, 24, and 29; the word being "wait" in verse 26. But wait for what? The salvation of God, which is secured in Christ raised from among the dead, for Israel, and for ourselves also. "It is good that one should both wait, and that in silence, for the salvation of the Lord" (v. 26). Saved by grace already, we shall know its fullness when our risen and glorified Saviour returns; and so too shall Israel afterwards. Wonderful, indeed, is the inspired order discerned in this small, choice book; more wonderful still, may we say, is its sweet testimony to the sufferings and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NAHUM 1:2-10 is the last of these most interesting acrostic scriptures. And here, once more, as in our first two, we find a very instructive irregularity. The glorious greatness of God is to be described; the surpassing splendour of whose majesty and might, and changeless character, the prophet seems to realize, is so beyond his comprehension, that he fails to put it into ordered words; and so breaks down in the alphabetical structure; as much as to say: His infinite and immutable perfections so tower up like immeasurable mountains to the skies, beyond my feeble ken, that words fail to describe them.

We are here told that the wicked, who had imagined evil against the Lord; and Nineveh, full of lies, and robbery, and blood, are to be overthrown, distressed, and desolated. Slow to anger, and great in power, with the clouds as dust beneath His feet, none can stay the great God. The sea and the rivers dry up at His rebuke! The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt away! Like fire, His fury is poured out! The rocks are rolled down before Him! Who can stand when His indignation awaketh? None, surely.

But in verse 7 the prophet adds, "■" equals 9; 3 x 3; and that out of the regular alphabetical order. But it seems as if hasting to comfort the believing heart, he says, "■ The Lord is good, a Stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows them that trust Him" (v. 7).

It is just such a verse as this; so suddenly introduced under the letter ■ which makes the heart enquire, whether the truth of this goodness, is preserved in other acrostics by the Holy Spirit, under the same letter.

We will go back over our scriptures, and see what is to be found in them as to this.

Nah. 1:7. ■ "The Lord is good" Ps. 119:65-72. ■ "Teach me good judgment." ■ "Thou art good and doest good." ■ "It is good."

Lam. 3:25-27. ■ "The Lord is good"; ■ "It is good." ■ "It is good." Ps. 112:5. ■ "A good man showeth favour."

Prov. 31:18. ■ "Her merchandise is good." Ps. 34:8. ■ "O TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD."

Ps. 145:9. ■ "The Lord is good." Ps. 24:8. ■ "GOOD AND UPRIGHT IS THE LORD."

Clearly and distinctively then, is traced here before us the divine guidance given, in the order and in the design of these remarkable scriptures; written by different and diverse human instruments, with long years rolling between them. Yet, plainly, one Spirit guided and pervades all.

In Conclusion

Let us notice just a few other verses, to confirm these important facts of which we have just spoken.

Ps. 60:19. ■ "Arise, O Lord" Ps. 34:14. ■ "Depart from evil and do good"

Ps. 10:12. ■ "Arise, O Lord" Ps. 37. ■ "Depart from evil and do good"

We have seen the striking use of the letter ■, put to the last verses of Psalm 25 and 34, speaking of redemption. It is also used in the same way in Psalm 111:9: "He sent redemption unto His people."

This letter ■ (p■), signifies "mouth." Does the Holy Spirit recognize such significance? Let us see.

Ps. 37:30. ■ "The mouth of the righteous." Lam. 2:16. ■ "All opened their mouth."

Ps. 119:131. ■ "I opened my mouth." Lam. 3:46. ■ "All our enemies have opened their mouths against us."

Prov. 31:26. ■ "She openeth her mouth."

The letter ■, signifies "eye." Let us notice the Holy Spirit's use of this also.

Lam. 1:16. ■ "I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down." Ps. 119:123. ■ "Mine eyes fail."

Lam. 3:49-51. ■ "Mine eye"; ■ "Look down." ■ "Mine eye." Ps. 112:8. ■ "Until he see his desire."

Lam. 4:17. ■ "Our eyes failed." Ps. 34:15. ■ "The eyes of the Lord."

Ps. 145:15. ■ "The eyes of all wait upon Thee." Ps. 25:15. ■ "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord."

We might trace the Holy Spirit's order in many other ways; but we will limit ourselves. Take one more instance, viz., the letter ■. Mark its use in connection with righteousness.

Ps. 34:17. ■ "The righteous cry." Ps. 119:137-144. ■ "Righteousness art Thou"; "Thy testimonies . . . righteous"; "Thy righteousness"; "Everlasting righteousness"; "The righteousness"

Ps. 37:32. ■ "The wicked watcheth the righteous." Ps. 145:17. ■ "THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS."

Ps. 112:9. ■ "His righteousness endureth forever." Lam. 1:18. ■ "THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS."

To say that all this has happened by chance is folly and puerility; showing wilfulness, or ignorance of the Holy Spirit's ways in inspiration. The divine design is distinct, definite and clear; and when we remember that all things are brought into being for God's glory; that all things are created by Him and for Him; we need not wonder that the alphabet should be so used by the Spirit of God. Not one jot or tittle is to fail of His purpose in it. The very first letter (■) is nearly always used in these acrostics to point to Him; indeed, God's first Name in the Bible also begins with it. Let us take as instances of the use of this letter ■, the first and the final acrostic.

Psalms 9:1 and 2 Nahum 1:2

■ "I will praise Thee, O Lord." ■ "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries."

■ "I will show . . . Thy works."

■ "I will be glad . . . in Thee."

■ "I will praise Thy Name, O Thou, most High."

Again we are reminded of what Revelation 1:8 tells us: the Lord God Almighty of the Old Testament is the A and the Ω in Himself; as our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is in revelation. And may we not now ask, in the presence of these patent and proved facts of the inspired literature, What can the sceptical critic say? The believer says, from a grateful heart: Thanks be to God for His Holy Scriptures, which so perfectly point to Him, in whom He is made known to us, our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are some who complain of the human instruments used by God in writing the Bible. They point to the sins and the weaknesses of these instruments. They do not see that these very facts enrich and enhance the wonderful work of the Spirit of God in inspiration. Let us illustrate. An admiring crowd stand before a masterpiece of art; a picture of superlative loveliness and beauty. It excels all others in the gallery, and attracts a continuous stream of wondering and delighted observers. But when they are informed that the artist was in such severe straits that he only had the poorest of materials to produce this surprising result, this magnificent and enchanting picture, would they, I ask, consider the wonder of the work greater or less, because of this fact? The reply is obvious to all.

That God should inspire to be written for us such a Bible; making known to us such a Saviour; and to do it in the way He has done it, surely calls forth to Him abundant praise and thanksgiving from every true heart whom grace has given to know Him. Oh, that there were an awakening amongst believers, who have been so bountifully blessed in Christ, to gather and garner the true treasures of Holy Scripture, "The things concerning Himself"; for vain are the attempts of man to find God apart from Him.

Wallace, the able scientist, in his well-known book entitled, "Man's Place in the Universe," arriving (though it seems unwittingly) at the Bible's position concerning this great question, concludes by commending to his readers the following passage from the pen of the late R. A. Proctor "Science is in presence of the old, old mystery; the old, old questions are asked of her--'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?' And science answers these questions as they were answered of old--'As touching the Almighty we cannot find Him out'" (Job 11:7-8; 37:23). That is true testimony; He cannot be found by the searchings of science, any more than by the reasonings of rationalism. Man's boastful attempts are all alike futile. But, blessed be His Holy Name, He has been graciously pleased to reveal Himself fully in the One to whom all Scripture points,--in the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the foregoing facts, not only demonstrate the Holy Spirit's inspiration; but, that being true, they also establish THE AUTHORITY, WORK, AND DEITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR; "THE α AND THE ω , THE BEGINNING AND THE END, THE FIRST AND THE LAST" (Rev. 22:13); "THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD" (Col. 1:15)

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