

EPHESIANS

# The Victorious Christ

Ephesians 4:8-10; Psalm 68

EWILIA up the stairs and he  
and me passing through. I had  
learned, there was a man named  
Zachariah, the son of a chief tax  
collector and was rich. I and he  
was seeking to see who Jesus was,  
but on account of the Jews he  
could not, because his work in  
Jerusalem. So he ran an ass and  
drove up with a system tree to  
sit him, for he was about to pass  
that way. I and he were going  
to the place, he looked up and said  
to him, Zachariah, hurry and  
come down, but I must stay at your  
house today. So he hurried and  
came down and received us and  
joyfully. I and he said, why say you  
to the servant of a man who is a  
sinner? And Zachariah said,  
and said to the Lord, "Blessed  
Lord, the half of my goods I give  
to the poor and if I have done  
any good, I thank you, Jesus the  
fourfold." I and Jesus said to him,  
"Indeed salvation has come to this  
house, because he also is a son of  
Abraham." For the Son of Man

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**John Piper,**  
***A Peculiar Glory***

**“The whole Bible,  
properly  
understood, has this  
divine purpose and  
effect: to  
communicate or  
display the glory of  
God.”**





# Martin Luther

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**“Scripture is the manger in which the Christ lies. As a mother goes to a cradle to find her baby so the Christian goes to the Bible to find Jesus. Don’t let us inspect the cradle and forget to worship the baby.”**

# Ephesians 4:7

## EPHESIANS

7 But to each one of us  
grace was given  
according to the  
measure of Christ's  
gift.



**NEXT WEEK!**

## Ephesians 4:8

## EPHESIANS

8 Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.”

# Questions to Address

## EPHESIANS

1. What is “It?”
2. What does Paul mean, “He led captive a host of captives?”
3. Why is Paul’s quotation different from the Psalm?

# What is “It?”

## EPHESIANS

- “It” is Psalm 68:18a, which reads:  
“You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men”



**Mike Vlach**

@mikevlach

Following



I'm studying all the quotations of the OT in the NT. The vast majority can be understood without too much angst. But the two hardest cases to understand in order are: (1) Jesus' use of Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34 and (2) Paul's use of Psalm 68:18 in Eph. 4:8. (IMHO).

2:10 PM - 5 Feb 2019

# What Does He Mean? EPHESIANS

“He led captive a host of captives”

- **2 Options:**

1. They were captives of Satan, sin, and death that were taken captive by Christ through his redemption.
2. They were the enemies of Christ, namely, Satan, sin, and death, and they were defeated by Christ's death.

## Put Another Way:

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1. “He led captive a host of captives” in an act of *liberation*.
2. “He led captive a host of captives” in an act of *conquest*.

**Let's Get Some Context!** EPHESIANS

Psalm

68:7-10, 15-18

# A Look at Psalm 68

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- 68:15 says, “A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan”
- “mountain of God” (*har 'elohiym*)
  - Possible translations:
    1. “mountain of God”
    2. “mountain of the gods”

## I Will Argue:

## EPHESIANS

Based on context, that it is meant to be somewhat ambiguous (more on this later), and in addition, I think this understanding helps us to better understand what Paul is saying in Ephesians 4:8.

# Two Mountains in Ps. 68 EPHESIANS

1. 68:8 – Mount Sinai (68:17 – Mt Zion)

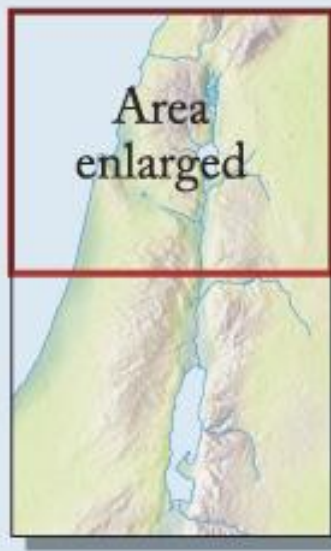
2. 68:15 – Mountain of Bashan

- In 68:16, the mountain of Bashan looks in derision at Yahweh's mountain: "Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many peaks, At the mountain which God has desired for His abode?"

# Canaan in the Time of the Ancestors

0 20 Miles  
0 20 Kilometers

*The Great Sea*



# Bashan in the OT (53x) EPHESIANS

- In Numbers 21, the Israelites defeat and kill Og, King of Bashan.
- The tribe of Dan is associated with Bashan in Deuteronomy 33:22, and Amos 4 condemns its idolatry.
- Outside of the Bible, Bashan is called “the place of the serpent.”
- The mountain of Bashan is Mount Hermon.

# Mount Hermon

## EPHESIANS

- In Judges 3:3 & 1 Chronicles 5:23, it is called “Mount Baal-hermon.”
- In the apocryphal book of Enoch, it is the place where the rebellious sons of God of Genesis 6 descended to earth.
- Later, a shrine to the god Pan in the Greco-Roman cult was constructed there.
- It was also viewed as the gateway to the underworld.

# Simply Put...

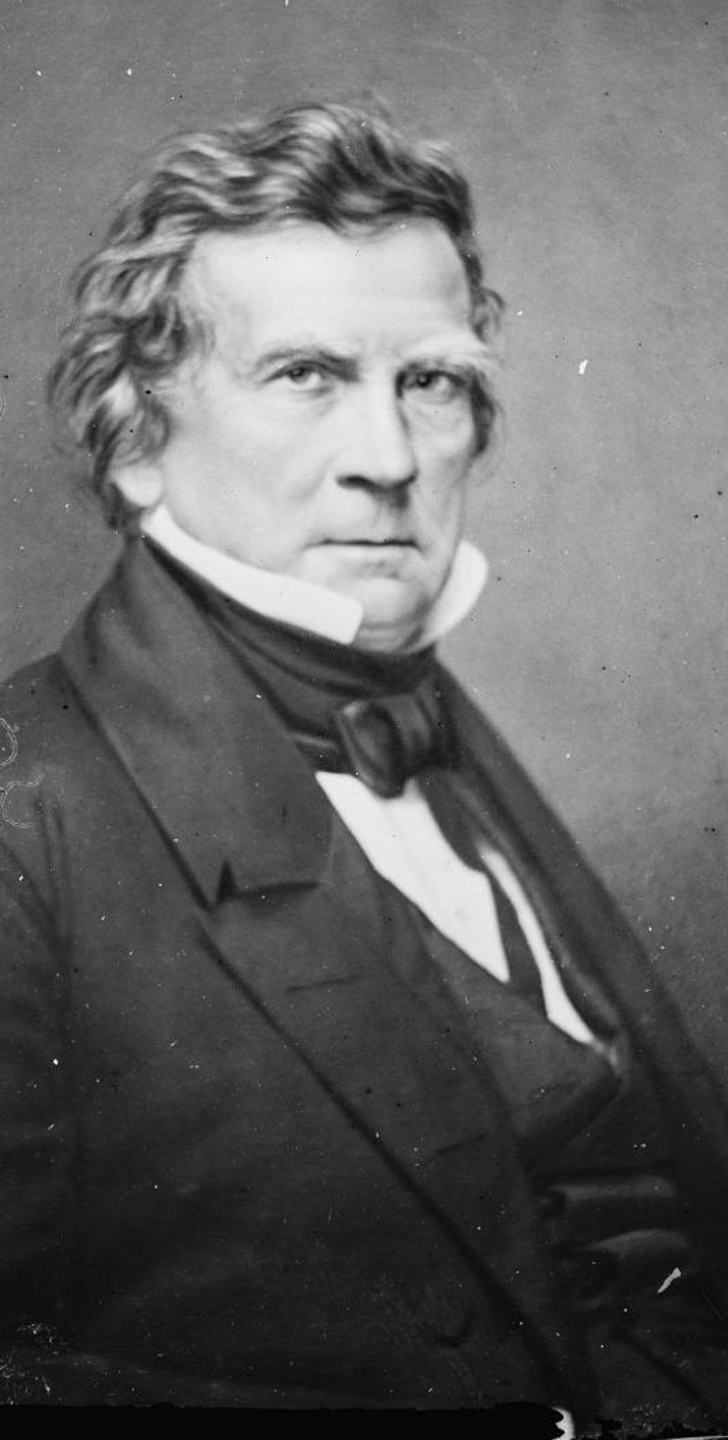
## EPHESIANS

- If you wanted to conjure up images of the demonic and death, you would refer to Bashan.
- However, in Psalm 68, Yahweh takes ownership of this wicked mountain.

Look at:

EPHESIANS

# Psalm 68:15-23



## William Learned Marcy

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**“To the victor  
belong the spoils.  
In a war or other  
contest, the  
winner gets the  
booty.”**



Meanwhile...

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- Back in Ephesians 4:8, the question for us this morning is:

How Does This Apply To  
Jesus?

# Christ's Victory

## EPHESIANS

### 1. The Transfiguration

- Where did it occur?
- Is that significant?

### 2. The Crucifixion

- Matthew 27 quotes Psalm 22 extensively describing the events of the cross.
- 22:12 – “Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of *Bashan* have encircled me.”

# Consider This:

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- The “captives” of Ephesians 4:8 are not being liberated; they are being conquered.
- Paul’s words identify Jesus with Yahweh, and in Psalm 68:18, it is Yahweh who is described as the conqueror of the demonic stronghold of Bashan.
- For Paul, it was Jesus, Yahweh incarnate, who as Colossians 2:15 states, puts the evil forces “to open shame, by triumphing over them in him [the cross].”

## In Other Words...

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If a military victor receives tribute and has the right to give gifts to those identified with him, then Christ, the victor over sin and death, has the right to give those people who belong to Him to the church as gifts.

**The Big Idea:**

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The “mountain of the gods” has become the  
“Mountain of God.”

**Sin and Death have been  
defeated by His Christ!**

# Why the Differences?

## EPHESIANS

### Ephesians 4:6

“When He  
ascended on high,  
He led captive a  
host of captives,  
And He *gave* gifts  
to men.”

### Psalms 68:18

“You have  
ascended on high,  
You have led  
captive Your  
captives; You have  
*received* gifts  
among men”

# Did Paul Change the Verb? EPHESIANS

- There is an ancient pedigree for Paul's reading, but I think the simplest answer is: Yes.
- Paul must be permitted some latitude in his citation, as he was inspired and his purpose was not to provide a formal and exact representation of the Old Testament phraseology, but rather to expound and apply the passage to the work of Christ as Lord of the church.

# Can Paul Do This?

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- Paul is applying an Old Testament truth in a New Testament context, and he is not claiming an exclusive fulfillment in this event.
- This happens frequently in the NT; let me give you some examples.

# For Example:

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### Hosea 11:1

“When Israel was a youth I loved him,  
And out of Egypt I called My son.”

### Matthew 2:15

He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:  
“Out of Egypt I called My Son.”

# And Likewise...

## EPHESIANS

- In Ephesians 4:8, the application of Psalm 68 to Jesus as the bestower of gifts for ministry within the church does not eliminate or contradict the Old Testament application of the words to King David or the victorious Yahweh.
- Paul is making a valid application of Christological significance in the New Testament from the Old Testament passage.

# Pulling It All Together EPHESIANS

- On the one hand, according to Psalm 68:18, God ascended Zion as a victorious king worthy of being the recipient of gifts of homage.
- On the other hand, according to Ephesians 4:8, Jesus also ascended to the heavenly Zion as the victorious Lord who lovingly bestowed on His church the gifts of ministry essential to her future well-being.

## Ephesians 4:9-10

## EPHESIANS

9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

## We Know from v. 8:

## EPHESIANS

- Christ's conquest results in the dispensing of gifts to His people *after* ascending.
- But this ascent was accompanied by a descent "into the lower parts of the earth."
- So, now our question is:  
What ascent and descent is he talking about?

4 Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!



# The Easy Part

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**“He who ascended far above  
all the heavens”**

## **Ephesians 1:19b-20**

**“These are in accordance with  
the working of the strength of  
His might which He brought  
about in Christ, when He  
raised Him from the dead and  
seated Him at His right hand  
in the heavenly places”**

1 Kings 8:27

EPHESIANS

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!”

## 2 Corinthians 12:2

## EPHESIANS

“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.”

# Possible “Descent” #1 EPHESIANS

1. The descent is the falling of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples at Pentecost in Acts 2.

- The Spirit is called the “Spirit of Jesus” in Acts 16:7, the “Spirit of Jesus Christ” in Philippians 1:19, the “Spirit of Christ” in 1 Peter 1:11, and the “Spirit of His Son” in Galatians 4:6.
- The gift of the Spirit began the empowerment of the Church.

## Possible “Descent” #2 EPHESIANS

2. Upon His death, Jesus descended into the “lower regions of the earth” (as the NASB, KJV, & CSB translate it).
  - In this case, the language speaks of Sheol or Hades.
  - This is possible because we see in 1 Peter 3:19 that Jesus “proclaimed to the spirits in prison.”

# Apostles Creed

## EPHESIANS

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. **He descended into hell;** the third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen.”

# Why I Don't Agree

## EPHESIANS

- Jesus is not the Spirit.
- There is never an indication in Scripture that Jesus “ascended” from Hades; in fact, Scripture does not give us much detail as to when Jesus would have gone to Hades.
- The place where Jesus achieved victory over sin and death was not in Hades but at the cross (Ps. 22).
- Hades is not mentioned by name here.

## Probable “Descent” #3 EPHESIANS

3. At His 1<sup>st</sup> Coming, Jesus descended into “the lower regions, namely, the earth,” which is how the ESV & NET render it.
  - In this case, the refers to Jesus’ incarnation, humiliation, and death on the cross, which put him in the grave, the lowest part of the earth.
  - Philippians 2:5-8 illustrates this well.

## Philippians 2:5-8

## EPHESIANS

**5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

# In John's Gospel:

## EPHESIANS

**3:13** No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

**6:62** What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?

**16:28** I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father.”

# John MacArthur:



## EPHESIANS

“To understand the phrase ‘the lower parts of the earth’ we need only to examine its use elsewhere in Scripture. In Psalm 63:9, it has to do with death, being related to falling by the sword. In Matthew 12:40, a similar phrase “the heart of the earth” refers to the belly of a great fish where the prophet Jonah was kept. In Isaiah 44:23 the phrase refers to the created earth. Psalm 139:15 uses it in reference to the womb of a woman where God is forming a child. The sum of these uses indicates that the phrase relates to the created earth as a place of life and death. In the majority of the uses it appears in contrast to the highest heavens.”

# I Think This View:

## EPHESIANS

- Presents a Complete Gospel:

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1. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, descended from the highest heaven, took on flesh and dwelt among us, living a sinless life.
  2. He was crucified, died, and was buried, thereby tasting death for us.
  3. He rose from the grave alive on the third day, declaring Himself the Son of God in power.
  4. 40 days later, He ascended to heaven at the right hand of the Father
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# Why? 4:10 Tells Us

## EPHESIANS

“so that He might fill all things”

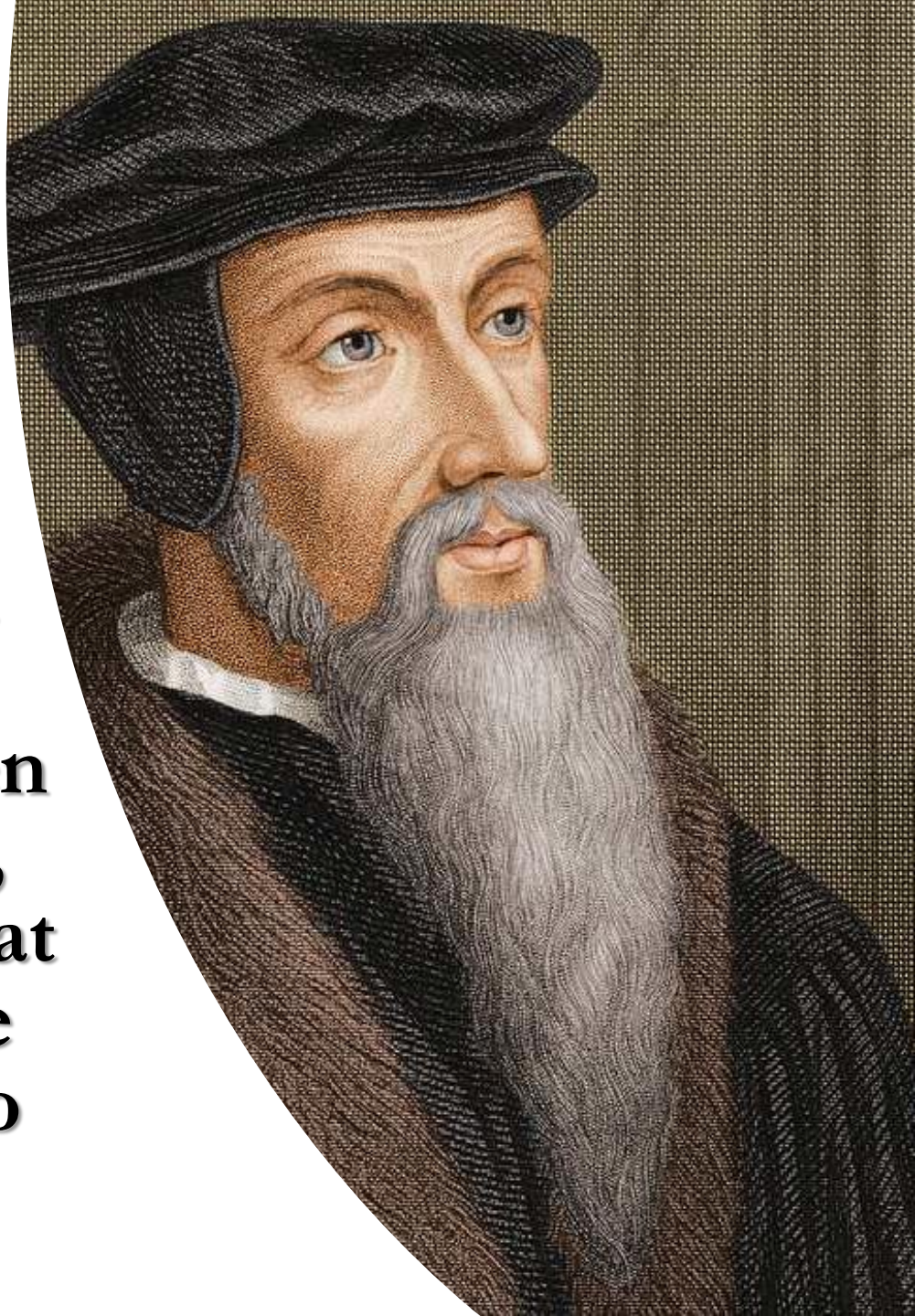
- “Fill” (*plēroō*) is used 23 times by Paul, 4 times in Ephesians.
  - In 1:23, he fills the church with His fullness.
  - In 3:19, we are filled with the fullness of His love.
  - In 5:18, we are filled with the Spirit.
  - Here, Christ is the victorious ruler and powerful sustainer of the “all things.

**20** and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, **21** whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

# John Calvin:

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“Christ, who was before enclosed in a narrow space, ascended to fill heaven and earth...In short, when he began to sit at the right hand of the Father, he began also to fill all things.”



And One Day...

EPHESIANS

He Will Fill All  
Of Creation With  
His Glory!



SOLI DEO GLORIA

# EPHESIANS