

Ephesians 4:7 and 8

(7) But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

(8) This is why it says, “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (NIV)

1. Verse 8 is a quotation from the Old Testament, where the context is referring to what God did, so there are some who say that if the verse is applied to Christ, then Christ must be God. However, it is common for a verse to be interpreted one way in the Old Testament and then applied or interpreted differently in the New Testament. Examples of this are quite abundant, and this is not disputed by theologians. Thus, it is not unusual that an Old Testament quotation would be accommodated to Christ.

A lot has been written on the subject of accommodating Old Testament verses to New Testament circumstances, and we refer interested readers to any good theological library. One illustration of this is the title, “the First and the Last,” (see the notes on Rev. 1:17). Another is the prophecy in Hosea 11:1. Hosea is speaking of Israel coming up out of Egypt, but in Matthew 2:15 God accommodates the meaning to Christ coming out of Egypt as a child. Another good example is Jeremiah 31:15. In that prophecy, “Rachel,” the mother of Benjamin, was weeping because her children, the Israelites, were taken captive to Babylon. She was told not to weep because “they will return from the land of the enemy” (31:16). However, the verse about Rachel weeping was lifted from its Old Testament context and accommodated to the killing of the children in Bethlehem around the birth of Christ (Matt. 2:18).

Another example occurs in the accommodating of Psalm 69:25 to Judas. In Psalm 69, David is appealing to God to deliver him from his enemies. He cried to God, “Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head” (v.4). He prayed, “Come near and rescue me, redeem me because of my foes” (v.18), and he continued, “May their place be deserted, let there be no one to dwell in their tents” (v.25). Peter saw by revelation that Psalm 69:25 could be accommodated to Judas, and spoke to the disciples around him: “It is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his place be deserted, let there be no one to dwell in it’” (Acts 1:20).

Since it is clear that prophecies in the Old Testament are brought into the New Testament and accommodated to the New Testament circumstances, it is easy to understand that some prophecies of God working in the Old Testament are pulled into the New Testament and applied to Christ. That is completely understandable because now Christ has “all authority” and has been made Head over the Church. He has been set above all principalities and powers, and given a name above every name. So, when God accommodates a prophecy or a scripture about Himself to Christ, it does not mean that Christ is God any more than Hosea 11:1 being accommodated to Christ means that Christ is actually the nation of Israel.

2. For more information that pertains to God working through Christ and Christ taking on the responsibilities that were God’s, see Luke 7:16 (God “visited” His people through

Jesus), Luke 8:39 (God works through people) and Romans 10:13 (Jesus is given responsibilities that God had in the Old Testament).

Racovian Catechism, pp. 158-160

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