

Hidden Ones

11/28/2015

Psalms 83:3

By entertaining the speculation that the “hidden-treasured ones” in Ps 83:3 are raptured saints, Chuck Missler postulates that, in that case, the PS83 battle would be post rapture, but just before the *Battle of Gog and Magog* (BGM). Thus the sequence he suggests is Rapture-PS83-BGM.¹ However, even if the passage is describing church-age believers, his post-rapture postulation for PS83 fails miserably. The PS83 confederacy on Earth cannot reasonably be understood as conspiring to wage war against saints who have been raptured and taken to Heaven! This battle is limited to Earth. God’s enemies are not planning, in this passage, to ascend to Heaven and hunt down raptured saints. In ancient days, one way to protect your treasure was to hide it, by burying it in a field for instance (Mt 13:44). The passage is not saying that God already has hidden them like treasure **in Heaven**. Otherwise, His enemies would not be seeking to destroy them **on Earth**. Much of the passage can be explained by context, history, and poetry. As to the latter, consider the structure:

² *Your enemies make an uproar;*
and *those who hate You have exalted themselves.*
³ *They make shrewd plans against Your people,*
and *conspire together against Your hidden-treasured ones.*
⁴ *They have said, “Come, and let us wipe them out as a nation,*
that the name of *Israel* be remembered no more.” (Ps 83:2-4; TM)

The Hebrew poetry uses repetition to express the idea in multiple forms. In the above example, the opening statement regarding God’s enemies is expanded upon by four additional statements, each restating essentially the same idea.

The enemies who make an uproar are those:

- *who hate God and exalt themselves*
- *who make shrewd plans against God’s people*
- *who conspire together against God’s hidden-treasured ones*
- *who say come let us wipe them out as a nation.*

Repetition is used multiple times concerning God’s enemies. Yet multiple groups of enemies are not being posed. Rather, various things are being said about this one group, denoted as God’s enemies. Similarly, multiple things are being said about the group of people being aspired against.

The group being plotted against is identified as:

- *God’s people*
- *God’s hidden-treasured ones*
- *a nation*
- *Israel*

The poetic structure is not suggesting two groups being conspired against, but one. God’s people are His hidden-treasured ones, namely, the nation of Israel. This singular group is being described in multiple ways. The nation of Israel

¹ The Hebrew word for hidden-treasured ones in Ps 83:3 is *tsaphan*. (The LXX simply translates it as *saints*.) The use of *tsaphan* in Psalms includes the idea of hiding for the purpose of protection (Ps 27:5; 31:20). Nevertheless, *treasure* is also a reasonable rendition (Ps 119:11; cp. Prov 2:1; NAS). Also, posing a *treasure hidden for protection* is a popular counter to those who believe it means *hidden via rapture* in this context. Therefore, since both opponents and proponents can agree on this basic meaning of *hidden treasure*, and since BDB gives *hide* and *treasure up* as the basic meanings of the verb, *hidden-treasured ones* is the rendition adopted herein, as given by Missler. See Chuck Missler, “Q&A Are Hidden Ones in Psalm 83 Raptured Saints?” Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCGyaQuKSHQ>. Accessed 10/15/2015.

is thought to be the apple of God's eye (Zech 2:8). So describing Israel as His treasure, which is hidden as such, is presumed to be the singular intent of the passage by some of those who object to the idea that the hidden ones refer to the church. Even so, the immediate context, historical imagery, and poetic structure can only take us so far. Genre must also be considered. This material is prophetic.

Prophetical Duality

The most glaring weakness with this *historical-grammatical-contextual* (HGC) objection to the rapture proposition is that this HGC protest fails to consider the possibility that hidden-treasured ones might be used prophetically in a dual sense. In prophecy, one may encounter double fulfillment (aka, double reference), or even multiple or pattern fulfillment.² Bill Salus picks up on this possibility, to a limited extent, by posing that the hidden ones represent both (1) the present nation of Israel and (2) the future faithful remnant of Israel.³ Unwittingly, by posing a future group, Salus opens up his entire timing of the PS83 battle to a rebuttal by Wayne Croley, who counters that the PS83 battle takes place in the future, during the tribulation, when the faithful remnant actually is hiding, as problem prone as that antithesis would be.⁴

Potential versus Actual Duality

Salus original thesis would be better served by considering the possibility that the hidden-treasured ones are secondarily the faithful remnant among the church, currently residing on Earth. As I have explained in my book, *The Outer Darkness*, both Israel and the church are chosen to be God's special treasure. The OT affirms that God's people *will be* His holy nation in the future if they obey Him (Ex 19:6; LXX).⁵ Thus a future potentiality is held forth, contingent upon their present performance for its realization. Yet they already *are* His holy people even actually now in the present (Dt 7:6; 14:2; LXX). Nevertheless, with an eye toward the future, in both passages they are chosen *to be* His *special treasure*.⁶ Notwithstanding the future orientation, they are now declared *to be* His *special treasure*, but it is because of their promise to perform as He has directed (Dt 26:17-18).⁷ Being God's *special treasure* is conditioned on the performance of His people in the OT.

Soteriological versus Misthological Duality

Moving to the NT, we find Peter making a similar statement: "You *are (to be)* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special treasure" (1Pet 2:9; TM).⁸ One might be tempted to think that Peter is speaking exclusively misthologically. Misthology refers to the doctrine of rewards. Given the OT background cited above, one would anticipate that Peter simply is conditioning their being God's special treasure on their performance and thus making their being God's special treasure a form of treasure in Heaven. Jesus repeatedly taught His disciples to lay up treasures for themselves in Heaven. In this passage, we have one of Jesus' disciples, Peter, telling believers that in doing so they themselves can become God's special treasure in Heaven. So, is Peter taking about being God's treasure exclusively in terms of rewards? Probably not.

Soteriology refers to salvation from eternal damnation, which the Bible makes clear is received as a gift by grace through faith. This type of salvation is not a reward won by perseverance. Ruling out a soteriological dimension to this treasure, as Peter has articulated it, is difficult because Peter immediately proceeds to explain: "You once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (1Pet 2:10). Peter has just affirmed that they have been redeemed (1Pet 1:18) and born again (1Pet 1:23) and are to approach his

² See my discussion in *The Outer Darkness*, for example.

³ Bill Salus, "Is the Church identified in Psalm 83?" Available at <http://prophecydepot.blogspot.com/2010/08/is-church-hiding-in-psalm-83.html>. Accessed 10/15/2015.

⁴ Wayne Croley, "Another Look at Psalms 83: The Hidden Ones." Available at <http://www.prophecyproof.org/2010/09/another-look-at-psalms-83-the-hidden-ones>. Accessed 10/15/2015.

⁵ Compare Ex 23:22 in the LXX as well. The LXX is the Greek OT, which was the translation commonly used by the people of Jesus' day.

⁶ In Dt 7:6, they are chosen *to be* (present infinitive of *eimi*) His *special treasure* (Heb. *segullah*, Gr. *periousios*). In Dt 14:2, they are chosen *to be* (aorist infinitive of *ginomai*) His *special treasure* (Heb. *segullah*, Gr. *periousios*).

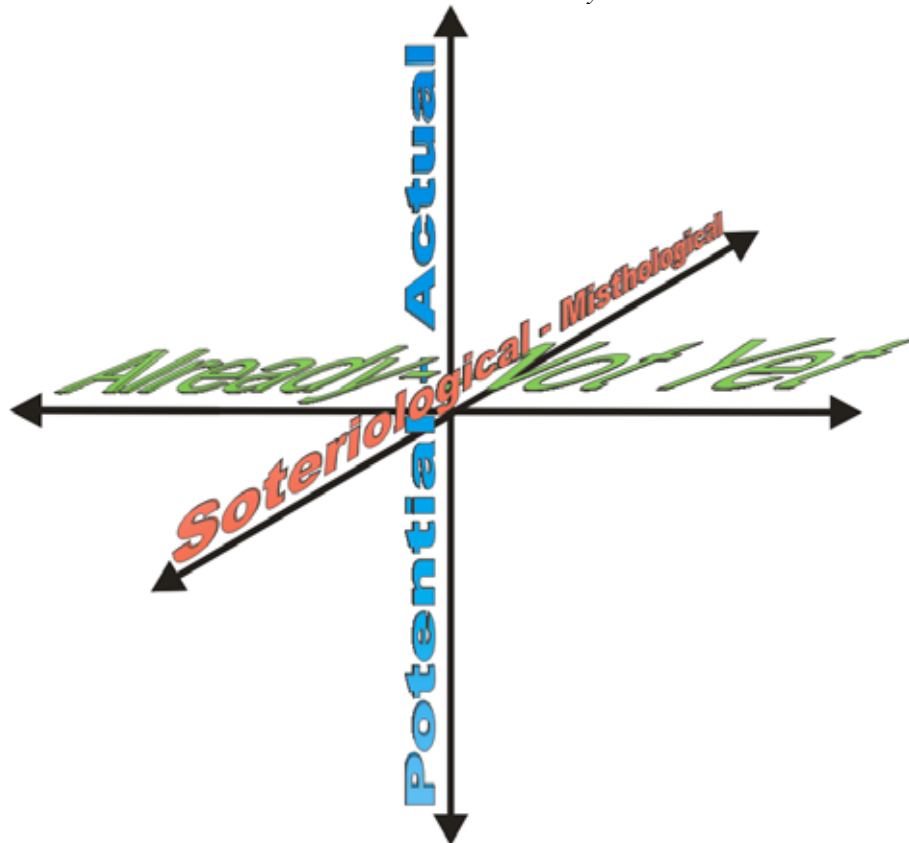
⁷ They are now declared *to be* (aorist infinitive of *ginomai*) His *special treasure* (Heb. *segullah*, Gr. *periousios*) because of their promise to perform as He has directed (Dt 26:17).

⁸ Granted, the word Peter uses for *treasured possession* in 1Pet 2:9 is *peripoiesis* (rather than *periousios*). Still, this word choice reaches out to encompass Mal 3:17, where God's children who serve Him are His special treasure (Mal 3:18). Undoubtedly, Peter intends to draw upon this rich OT material with this combined phraseology. Nevertheless, two questions must be posed. First, is Peter referring to being God's special treasure presently or futuristically? His leaving out the copula allows his readers to insert both dimensions from the OT background. Dual dimensions are intended by the biblical text.

exhortation as newborn babies (1Pet 2:2). Surely, in this NT context they are people of God because they are children of God by virtue of soteriological mercy and by means of spiritual birth. They would be expected to understand that they are God's special treasure, at least to some extent, simply because of their relationship with Him as their Father (1Pet 1:17). Nevertheless, they are warned that the full realization of being God's special treasure is yet future and is contingent upon their performance. If this dual soteric-mistholic perspective is correct, then the Petrine perspective parallels the Pauline perspective. According to Paul, all believers are God's special treasure soteriologically (Eph 1:14). Nevertheless, they are exhorted misthologically to acquire salvation and glory as their special treasure (1Thess 5:9; 2Thess 2:14). A soteric-mistholic duality is seen. Sensing a soteric bedrock upon which to build the mistholic superstructure also accords with Paul's affirmation elsewhere: "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us [soterically] from every lawless deed and [through practical sanctification] purify for Himself a people for His own *special treasure*, zealous for good deeds" (Tit 2:14; TM). Misthologically qualifying as God's special treasure is conditioned on the redeemed believer's behavior. So here, being God's special treasure is a reward.

In some passages, God's people are God's treasured possession despite their performance, not because of it. See my book, *The Outer Darkness*, for additional citations and more thorough explanations.⁹ Being God's special treasure is not conditioned on being His obedient child in some OT contexts; rather, all His redeemed children qualify in those texts. Peter certainly has such passages partly in mind in 1Pet 2:9. His OT allusions are not limited to the misthological arena but encompass the soteriological spectrum as well.

Illustration 1. 3D Duality



Already versus Not Yet Duality

The multidimensional duality can be summarized using the following translation, "But you are (to be) a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special treasure" (1Pet 2:9; TM). These NT believers already are chosen soteriologically so that they might be chosen misthologically in the future. They already are royal provisionally so that they might become royal misthologically. They already are holy so they are to be holy. They already are God's special treasure soteriologically, but they can become God's special treasure misthologically. The duality is multidimensional: (1) already versus not yet, (2) soteriological versus misthological, (3) potential versus actual. Because of this duality, my use of 1Pet 2:9 (within *Sealed and Secure*) in defense of unconditional security is justified. Yet misthological conditionality is also part of the scope as demonstrated here.

⁹ Marty A. Cauley, *The Outer Darkness*, vol. 2 (Sylva, NC: Misthological Press, 2012), 986-987, n. 104.

Multiple Vantage Points

Therefore, in conjunction with my earlier analysis in *Darkness*, I would posit that the hidden-treasured ones may be understood from several vantage points, each one conceptually consistent with the broader OT and NT context, even more so since the present passage under discussion in Ps 83:3 is prophetic. The present-day Muslim action against both Jews and Christians, which will soon culminate in an attack against Israel, appears to have been anticipated by this OT prophecy. Both Israel and the church are God's treasured ones. The Bible is crystal clear on that matter. The NT uses passages from the OT to affirm that the treasured status of Israel is applicable to the church. Moreover, the duality is carried over from the OT into the NT. Both OT and NT faithful believers are especially treasured within some contexts.

Zephaniah 2:3

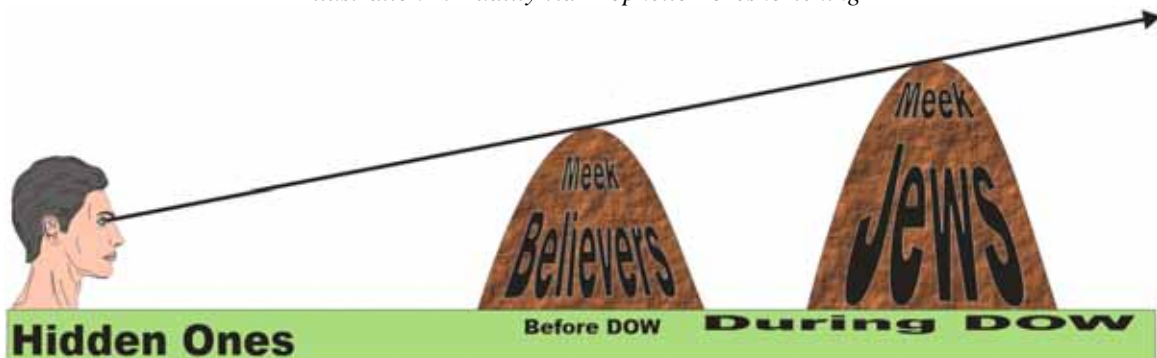
Indeed, Douglass Berner calls our attention to a prophetic passage that seems to focus upon faithful believers of the church age as God's hidden ones:

A contrasting focus is made in a call to the meek of the earth to seek God in repentance and righteousness as "it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zeph 2:3). Who can be hid from God's anger just before or right at the beginning of the Day of the LORD? None of the Gentile nations can be hid from God. Neither can Israel be hid from God's anger at this time. They are all objects of God's judgment and intervention for the purpose of magnifying His own holy name. The only people who could qualify as the meek of the earth at this point in time, whose relationship to God's righteousness also qualifies them to receive God's judgment against the nations, is the believing body of Christians—the church. The church will be raptured and taken to heaven to be hid during the entire day of God's anger upon the earth. This is an argument for the rapture of the church to take place before or at the very beginning of the Day of the LORD.

There could be an interesting triple meaning in this passage.¹⁰ (Emphasis his).

Berner's full discussion should be consulted, as he provides plausible grounds for concluding that the PS83 battle occurs just before the rapture and the *Battle of Gog and Magog* (BGM), which commences the *Day of the Lord* (DOL). His proposed sequence is thus: PS83-Rapture/BGM/DOL.¹¹ The gap of time between the PS83 battle and the rapture is very short, consisting of only days or hours, within his model. Even though, like Missler, Berner poses that the hidden ones refers to raptured saints, Berner's model is not subject to the same criticism as was launched at the beginning of this discussion against Missler. For Berner is true to the future tense of the verb as expressed by Zephaniah. The passage is enjoining God's people to seek Him and be meek so that perhaps they "**will be hidden** in the day of the LORD's anger." Whereas PS 83:3 pertains to believers who *potentially* are qualified to be considered God's hidden ones *presently*, Zephaniah is holding out the possibility of *actualizing* that hidden status *futuristically*. When will they be hidden if they are meek? In the fast approaching DOL. Berner wisely allows the possibility that the passage is applicable to both Israel and the church. As it pertains to the church, he envisions that it means be raptured to Heaven.

Illustration 2. Duality via Prophetic Foreshortening



¹⁰ Douglas Berner, *When God Intervenes: The Beginning of the End* (USA: CreateSpace, 2013), 253-254. The Hebrew word for hidden ones in Zeph 2:3 is *sathar*. The LXX make the contingent nature of being hidden clearer: "Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth who have carried out His commands; seek righteousness, seek meekness *in order that* you may be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger" (TM).

¹¹ For my online discussion, see "The Outer Limits of the Outer Darkness Part 5 – Blood Moon Aftermath." Available at <https://youtu.be/Kc-R9LOhW18>.

Berner is certainly not the first to make the connection between the hidden ones and the rapture in Zeph 2:3. When I did a Google search for *Zephaniah Rapture* on 10/21/2015, it resulted in 60,400 hits. The first article was in favor, noting that J. R. Church made this connection back in the October 1998 edition of “Prophecy in the News.”¹² The second hit was a very supportive article by David Cooper, entitled “The Rapture in the Prophecy of Zephaniah.”¹³ A simple reconciliation between the manner in which Berner and Cooper have expressed this connection is to suggest prophetic foreshortening (which is a specialized form of duality). The ones hidden at the **beginning** of the *Day of Wrath* (DOW) are meek church-age believers, and the ones hidden **during** the DOW are the meek Jewish remnant hidden during the second half of the tribulation, thus during the last 3 ½ years of the DOW. Zeph 2:3 sees both groups being hidden, though he may not have clearly perceived the distinction, just as the *nation* in Zeph 2:1 can apply to both the nation of Israel and church, as Berner already suggested in his discussion.¹⁴

Meek Hidden via Rapture

A seeming weakness with Berner’s rapture proposition is that Berner correctly notes that the rapture is unconditional. All believers, even the unfaithful, will be raptured. Splendid! Cooper seems to adopt this perspective as well, which is all well and good. Yet neither Berner nor Cooper explains how Zephaniah’s exhortation to be meek and seek meekness, as a means to be hidden, can apply to a church that will be raptured even if it is not meek. Does this mean that believers must be meek if they hope to be raptured? No, because the rapture for the church is not conditioned on meekness.¹⁵ Does this mean, then, that all believers are meek? Hardly! Nevertheless, such observations do not mean that the Zephaniah-Rapture model is unfeasible. The extract above from *Darkness* already provides the grounds for anticipating that believers may be a hidden-treasure in multiple senses. Perhaps Zephaniah’s exhortation is meant to encourage believers to be faithful so that they might be hidden in the **fullest sense**.

In other words, after being raptured, when believers stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ (i.e., the Bema), the question is, “Will they qualify to be God’s special treasure in the misthological sense in terms of rewards within Heaven?” Entrance into Heaven is freely given to all believers as a soteriological gift. Rulership within Heaven is earned as a misthological reward and entails rulership over Earth during the millennial kingdom and is limited to meek believers. As Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt 5:5).

Revelation 3:10

This understanding of Zeph 2:2-3 finds a NT counterpart in Rev 3:10: “Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.”¹⁶ Like Zeph 2:2-3, this passage in Rev 3:10 seems to be saying that the reason these believers will be raptured is because they have been faithful. Yet, along with Berner, I would contend that this is a colossal misunderstanding of the passage. As demonstrated in *Darkness*, Rev 3:10 is not teaching a conditional or partial rapture. To summarize in terms of the present discussion, the promise in Rev 3:10 is a litotes promising faithful believers that they will be God’s special treasure—mighthologically—especially during the 10 years of wrath being poured out upon the Earth via the DOL (cp. Rev 2:10). All believers will be raptured to Heaven, but only faithful believers will be a misthological treasure within Heaven. Apparently, Zeph 2:2-3 provides the OT backdrop for Rev 3:10. Be meek, believer,

¹² See “The Pre-Trib rapture in Zephaniah,” which is an online letter describing the article by J.R. Church. Available at http://www.choicesforliving.com/spirit/prophesy/prophesy/!SSL!/WebHelp/February_17_2000_1.htm.

¹³ David L. Cooper, “The Rapture in the Prophecy of Zephaniah.” See <http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page479.html>.

¹⁴ The third article I read was opposed to perceiving the rapture in Zephaniah. This article was weak. For example, it objected that “the Church is not a nation and is not shameful.” Really? Did this objector not recall that the status of Israel as a “holy nation” is applied to the church by the NT (1Pet 2:9)? Additionally, the NT repeatedly accuses the church of shameful (1Cor 6:5; 15:34; Phil 3:19; 1Jn 2:28; Rev 3:18). The Bride of Christ is mighthologically shameless, to be sure, and this faithful remnant of the church will be blameless (Eph 5:27). But such observations are what one would expect in the Zephaniah-Rapture hypothesis.

¹⁵ See my book, *Destined for Salvation*.

¹⁶ Another article using Zeph 2:3 to argue for a pretribulational rapture led off with the connection between this verse and Rev 3:10. See http://www.relevantbibleteaching.com/site/cpage.asp?cpage_id=140037573&sec_id=140001239. However, this article failed to explain how meekness and perseverance could seemingly be made contingencies for the unconditional rapture. This is a common weakness found among those holding to an unconditional pretribulational rapture. Notwithstanding, I strongly affirm a full, unconditional, pretribulational rapture (see *Destined for Salvation*). Since I already have provided a solution for Rev 3:10 (see *The Outer Darkness*) and find no problem doing so here for Zeph 2:3, I find the connection between Zeph 2:3 and Rev 3:10 to be a strong argument for the pretribulational rapture.

not so that you will be raptured but so that, when raptured, you will be hidden from God's Bema wrath and be found to be His special treasure in terms of the rewards you receive. Historically, they hid their treasure in the earth. Mithologically, God's treasure will be hidden by inheriting the Earth.

Conclusion

When I first read Berner's hypothesis regarding the rapture being described in Zeph 2:3, I was skeptical. After all, the OT is silent about the church, right? The parallel in Ps 83:3 is about Israel, is it not? In standard dispensational thought, the church is at most a parenthetical omission from the timeline in Daniel 9, isn't it? On the other hand, even I would have to admit that Ruth typologically represents the Bride of Christ, the faithful among the church age who will be God's special mithological treasure. A soteric-mithologic duality is seen in body-Bride imagery in the NT: All believers are a part of the Body of Christ; faithful believers will be a part of the Bride of Christ. Peter makes it clear that NT believers are dually God's actual-potential treasure. And he uses the OT to prove his point. Why not allow Berner (and others) the same latitude? Once I realized that the principle of duality that I already had researched in other capacities would confirm Berner's thesis, along with some other research that I was doing regarding the applicability of his model to the midnight cry, so as to pose a rapture-return duality in that regard, I was able to fully accept the reasonableness of his proposal.¹⁷ These passages from Zeph 1:14 and 2:3 contribute greatly to the probability of his model: PS83-Rapture/BGM/DOL.

¹⁷ Again, see "The Outer Limits of the Outer Darkness Part 5 – Blood Moon Aftermath." Available at <https://youtu.be/Kc-R9LOhW18>.