



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 21

Bishop Youssef



# Introduction

- The title of this psalm is: *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David*
- Psalm 20 was a prayer for success; this Psalm is a thanksgiving prayer after victory
- In regard to its occasion, some think it was written to celebrate the victory obtained over Sennacherib
- Others, that it was made on the recovery of Hezekiah, and the grant of fifteen years of longer life; Psalm 21:4



# Introduction

- Others consider it a song of rejoicing composed by David for his victory over the Ammonites which ended in the capture of the city of Rabbah, the crown of whose king David put on his own head, Psalm 21:3
- And many think that it is to be wholly referred to the victories of the Messiah
- There are several expressions in this Psalm which apply to our Lord than to David, or to any other person
- The people, probably a chorus, meet the returning hero, with their shouts of praise to God (Psalm 21:1-7)





# Introduction

- The king is then addressed, perhaps by the leader of the procession (Psalm 21:8-12), and the whole crowds again unite in a prayer of praise to God at the end
- Before the Christian time, this Psalm was certainly used in the temple worship
- And for several generations, it was truly used by the liturgical Christians in the celebration of the feast of Ascension, as a celebration and commemoration of the return of our Lord to His glory, and to His role as our Greatest High Priest



# Introduction

## Psalm Outline

- A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7
- Confidence of Further Victories 21:8-13

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- The prayers of Psalms 20 have been answered
- The victory is achieved and the king rejoices
- *The king shall have joy*, The future is used to give the idea of continuance, "The king rejoices, and will go on rejoicing"
- David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength and in His salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies
- He also directs the people to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained



# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- But this verse speaks of Christ who prevailed over the powers of darkness; David's victories were but shadows
- *The king*, The ancient Jewish Targum (the Chaldean version of the Old Testament) and Talmud translate the word *king* in verse 1 by *melek mashiach* (King Messiah), which means that the Jews in an early period understood these words to be spoken of the Messiah
- A change came in the Middle Ages as a result of a judgment by Rabbi Solomon Isaaci, known as Rashi (born 1040 B.C.)

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- He endorsed the early view but suggested it be dropped, saying, ‘Our old scholars interpreted this psalm of King Messiah, but in order to meet the Schismatics [that is, the Christians] it is better to understand it of David himself.’
- We can say that Psalm 20 is the song of the King in the garden of Gethsemane, as He enters into the battle of the cross – the day of tribulation – to deliver His life a burnt offering
- The Father responded to His supplication and His atonement intercession on behalf of all His believers
- Now, (Psalm 21) the praise of the resurrection is sung, being the song of the King, the Conqueror over death, and the Grantor of Joy to all those who enjoy His resurrected life



# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- David has not rejoiced in his own throne, nor in the strength of his army; but in the strength of the Lord, and in His free salvation
- We, as well, being united with the Son of David, should reign upon our lusts, to live by His resurrected life, as conquerors and victorious
- As St. Paul says, *“But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.”* (2 Corinthians 2:14)

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- The *strength* and *salvation* of God came to David in response to both the *desire* of his heart and his spoken prayers, *the request of his lips*
- St. Augustine refers the whole Psalm to Christ; he says, “He desired to eat the Passover, and to lay down His life when He would, and again when He would to take it; and it has given to Him. “And hast not deprived Him of the good pleasure of His lips.” “My peace,” says He, “I leave with you:” and it was done.”
- Whatever Christ's heart desired, or His lips requested, has been given Him

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- That desire He eagerly pursued when He was on earth, both by His prayer, His actions, and His suffering
- He showed that His heart longed to redeem His people
- The desires of the Lord Jesus were from His heart, and the Lord heard them
- If our hearts are right with God, He will also fulfil the desires of them that fear Him
- *Selah* Here is a pause and is very properly inserted that we may venerate the victory of the king's prayers



# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- We take this *Selah* as an opportunity to thank God for the *strength* and *salvation* He has shown in our lives, and for the glorious way He answers prayer
- *For You meet him with the blessings*, According to the Hebrew text it came as, “*For You preceded him with the blessings of goodness*”
- God gave him blessings before he asks, and more than he asks
- Assuredly God the Father preceded His Son with blessings
- Before He died, believers were saved by the anticipated merit of His death

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- And before His Incarnation, believers saw His day and were glad, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* (John 8:56)
- No one has sought a Savior, yet, out of God’s love, the initial promise that the offspring of the woman will strike the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15) was attained
- God’s gifts to men were all initiated by His love and goodness; before we even existed, or came to know Him
- It is mentioned that David, as the result of one of his wars, did actually take the crown of the conquered king, which was a crown of gold, from off the king' s head, and place it upon his own head (2 Samuel 12:30)

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- But this is barely what is intended here
- Seeing, by the eye of prophecy, our Christ, crowned on the cross as a King, David cried out, saying, *You set a crown of pure gold upon his head*
- On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory
- Jesus wore the thorn-crown, but now wears the glory-crown
- It is a *crown*, indicating royal nature, majesty, glory, and triumph



# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- Applied to David it means, he prayed for the preservation of his life as he was going to war, and now he celebrated the answer to that prayer
- In the life-and-death danger of battle, David was given life and *length of days*
- So, the first words may suit King David, but the length of days *forever and ever* can only refer to the King of Kings Jesus Christ
- In the full sense the promise was, of course, Messianic, being fulfilled only in Christ, the God-Man, who alone of David's successors lives *forever and ever*

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- *His glory is great in Your salvation*, David felt indeed that his condition as king, and as to the prospects before him, was one of great *glory* or honor
- But at the same time, he felt that it was not in himself, or for anything that he had done; it was only in the *salvation* which God had conferred upon him
- Speaking of Christ, the Father has glorified the Son
- For our sake He *“emptied Himself of His glory”* (Philippians 2:7), and for our sake He was glorified
- Jesus Christ *received from God the Father honor and glory* (2 Peter 1:17), the glory which He had with Him before the worlds were, John 17:5

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- Christ was delivered from all His troubles and sorrows, and out of the hands of all His enemies; when He was raised from the dead, and was set at the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honor
- Or the sense is, that His glory is great in the salvation of His people by Him
- *Honor and majesty You have placed upon him*, In exalting Him at His right hand above all creatures and things
- In giving Him all power in heaven and in earth and in putting all the gifts of the Spirit into His hands, which He also gave to men, and in ordaining Him Judge of the living and the dead



# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- The glory of the Lord is in the salvation He provided for us
- We (the Christians), are His inheritance
- God has magnified Him above all others
- *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*  
(Philippians 2:9-11)

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- David knew the exaltation that came to kings and victors in battle; but here he declared that this *glory*, this *honor*, this *majesty* he enjoyed came from God and not from himself
- David proclaimed that he was *most blessed forever*, but it was the *presence* of God Himself that was his greatest blessing and gladness
- David was more thrilled with the *presence* of God than with the crown of royalty or victory
- Relating it to Christ, He is most blessed in Himself, for He is God over all, blessed forever; but this relates to Him as our Mediator, in which blessedness is given to Him for His people

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- He is an overflowing source of blessings to others
- As all mankind were blessed in Abraham (Genesis 12:3,18:18,22:18), in his seed, so were they all blessed in David' s seed
- He is set for this, ordained, appointed, made incarnate with this very design, that He may bless the sons of men
- *You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence, Jesus, as Messiah, for the joy that was set before Him, of redeeming a lost world by His death, endured the cross, and is forever set at the right hand of God*



# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- Even though Jesus was a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), yet at the same time He was a man who knew what it was to be *most blessed forever* and *exceedingly glad*
- He was the Prince of Peace, even when He was despised and rejected by men
- In verse 7 David declared his trust in the *mercy* of God, and that it would continue to preserve and bless him in the future
- It was not by his skills that he has gained this victory, but by faith in the strong protecting, and conquering arm of God
- All these blessings have resulted from his confiding in God, and looking to Him for His protection

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- *And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved, David's prosperous state shall not be moved*
- His faith and hope in God shall not be shaken
- But this is best understood of Him who was David's prototype, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- His throne, kingdom, and government, shall remain forever
- Jesus trusted in the Lord for His support as man, for assistance and help in His time of trouble, and for deliverance out of it

# A Thanksgiving Prayer for Victory 21:1-7



- He trusted in the Lord that He would hear Him for Himself, and for His people and that He would glorify Him with all glory, honor, majesty, and blessedness
- The mercy of the *Most High* (the divine goodness, power, and dominion) is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears



# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- David recognized that even though he was victorious in battle, God was not done finding and judging His *enemies* if they seek to hide themselves or flee away from Him
- The Right Hand of God (Jesus Christ), has defeated His enemies and our enemies
- He defeated sin on the cross and defeated death when He rose from the grave
- Satan was defeated on the cross by Jesus Christ our Lord
- Our protection from such enemies if we are a Christian, is the name and the blood of Jesus Christ

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- The expression, *the time of Your anger*, reminds us that as now is the time of His grace, so there will be a set time for His wrath
- God's enemies, those who deny His Son, His Hand shall find them out wherever they are when trying to flee from justice
- There is no escaping God's punishment, no going out of the reach of His hand; rocks and mountains will not be good shelter
- They would be wholly consumed
- On His ultimate coming, the Lord will completely destroy their kingdom

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- He will make them as a *fiery oven* for themselves, *in the time of His anger*; namely, on the day He comes for His final judgment
- Some suppose verse 9 is a reference to the event mentioned in 2 Samuel 12:31, "*He (David) made them (the Ammonites) to cross over the brick-works;*"
- But the expression "*fiery oven*" is probably not intended to be taken literally, but metaphorically
- Severe suffering is continually compared in Scripture to confinement in an oven or furnace (Deuteronomy 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Isaiah 48:10; Jeremiah 11:4; Ezekiel 22:18,20,22; Malachi 4:1)



# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- The wicked would be consumed "as if" they were such a burning oven; as if they were set on fire, and burned up
- The wrath of God does not imply any hate or a desire for revenge, but it is the wicked who, choosing for themselves and refusing to enjoy a place in the divine bosom, they set themselves by their own will to reject the mercies of God to partake of His glories
- Hell, is the share of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- David returns to the temporal extent of God's punishment of his enemies in verse 10
- He is saying that even their children shall be cut off, and thus their memorial shall perish
- *You shall destroy*, This is in accordance with the statement so often made in the Scriptures, and with what so often occurs in fact, that the consequences of the sins of parents pass over to their children, and that they suffer in consequence of those sins, Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Leviticus 20:5, 26:39
- Their life's works and all their toil that in which they prided themselves shall be forgotten; their very names shall be wiped out

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- *You shall destroy from the earth*, The truth taught here is, that the wicked will ultimately be destroyed, and that God will obtain a complete triumph over them and the kingdom of righteousness shall be at length completely established
- The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same destiny, and the whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be put down
- *For they intended evil against You;* Why the severe judgment?
- Because they intentionally rebelled against God and His people, even though their plans were bigger than their ability to perform  
*They devised a plot which they are not able to perform*



# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- Their destruction is brought upon them by their own selves
- They plot against God and His people
- Men are justly punished by God for their wicked intentions, although they be hindered from the execution of them
- *They devised a plot which they are not able to perform*, Not the death of Christ; that was indeed in itself an evil means of theirs and they did perform it
- They expected His name would then perish, and they should hear no more of Him: but rather it achieves His resurrection from the dead

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- They could not prevent His Resurrection, though they took all imaginable care
- And when they found He was really raised from the dead, they planned a wicked plot to stop people from believing it but in vain, Matthew 27:63
- And God's enemy, formed many plans and done all they can to root the Gospel of Christ out of the world, but have not been able to perform it, *"On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* Matthew 16:18

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- The enemies of God are described as running away on the field of battle, with their *back* turned against the advancing armies of God and to hide themselves from the wrath of God and of the Lamb
- They may for a time make bold advances, and threaten to overthrow everything, but as soon as they confront God they run away
- Those who rejected and fought Christ instead of having Him rule and save them, shall find that even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them, to eternity, *a fiery oven* to themselves



# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- The judgment of God is actually near against those who reject Him
- It is only His *great mercy* that prevents the release of His arrow of judgment against them
- This is why it is a great sin that man ignores this great mercy
- The psalm ends, as it began, with the praise of God for the blessings of victory, deliverance, and answered prayer
- *Be exalted, O LORD*, This is the ultimate desire of all God's people, that He might be exalted above all and that He might so triumph over all His enemies

# Confidence of Further Victories

## 21:8-13



- *We will sing and praise Your power*, After the direct statement of praise, David expressed the determination that he and the people of God would *continue* to praise God, and to do so in song
- How little can the strength of man avail when the Lord *make ready His arrows on His string toward their faces* and grant victory to His children
- His children, therefore, may safely trust in Him, for “*the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it, and are safe.*”  
Proverbs 18:10



# Discussion

- How did David begin this Psalm? What sort of circumstance led to this Psalm being written?
- As he looks back on his experiences, for what specific things is David grateful in verses 2-6?
- What outcome does David's gratitude produce in his faith? What might this look like in David's life?





# Discussion

- Who are the ones that this King will destroy? How are they described in verse 8?
- What 2 things did Jesus defeat at the cross, and at the resurrection?
- How do you typically respond to answered prayer? David and his people responded with thanksgiving. What answered prayer will you thank God for? How will you face the future, knowing He has been faithful in the past?