



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 72

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Introduction

- The title of this Psalm is *A Psalm of Solomon*
- Some attribute it to Solomon as the author
- But the first and last verses of the Psalm reflect that it was not written by him, but by David
- And according to the Syriac, the title is, "A Psalm of David, when he made Solomon king "
- Therefore, some have regarded it as David's Psalm to and about his son Solomon
- Or it is written to him, as in the Arabic version, "to Solomon"
- It is probably a Psalm of David, composed in his last days, when he had set this beloved son on the throne of the kingdom



Introduction

- But Messiah is the truly subject of this Psalm
- Tertullian observed, that this Psalm belongs to Christ, and not to Solomon
- And also, many of the Jewish writers, both early and contemporary, acknowledge that the Messiah is intended
- The psalmist speaks of an everlasting kingdom, a universal kingdom, a kingdom of perfect peace, a kingdom of perfect submission of its inhabitants, and a kingdom through which all peoples on earth are blessed
- These passages could only refer to the Kingdom of Christ



Introduction

- It is a liturgical psalm
- It was chosen by the Early Church as the special psalm for the Epiphany, foretelling the worship of the nations to the Messiah, and remembering the visit the Wise Men from the Gentiles to submit to the King
- St. Augustine comments on the title and says, “For Salomon’ indeed this Psalm’s title is fore-noted: but things are spoken of therein which could not apply to that Solomon king of Israel after the flesh, according to those things which holy Scripture speaks concerning him: but they can most pertinently apply to the Lord Christ.”



Introduction

- This Psalm is a prayer for Solomon's reign, with an eye toward the future reign of the Messiah
- It speaks of the prayers of all the people for the king and the importance of understanding the king's role in relationship to his God and the people
- It is the last Psalm of the second book of Psalms (42-72)



Introduction

Psalm Outline

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The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- A prayer of David, imploring the divine assistance on his son Solomon to judge with justice
- He does not ask for riches or power for his son, as the children of this world are accustomed to ask; but he asks to give him the grace of properly fulfilling his duties
- David knew that he could be called a good king only if he ruled the people with justice
- Solomon himself asked the very same thing of God, as we read in 1 Kings 3:5-9
- Just judgement is the constant characteristic of the ideal king (Isaiah 11:3,16:5,28:6,32:1)

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- God is the source of all judgement (Deuteronomy 1:17); the king is His representative for administering it
- Though the Psalm refers ultimately to the Messiah, and of "His" reign, yet perhaps the Psalmist believed the reign of Solomon would be, in some proper sense symbolic of that reign, and that it was his desire the reign of the one might, as far as possible, resemble that of the other
- *Your judgments*, Knowledge; authority; ability to execute God's judgments, or His laws
- One of the character of a king is that he is the source of justice

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- St. Augustine says, “The Lord Himself in the Gospel says, ‘The Father judges not anyone, but all judgment He has given to the Son’ this is then, ‘*Give the king Your judgments*’ He that is King is also the Son of the King: because God the Father also is certainly King.”
- *He will judge Your people with righteousness*, Then he will have wisdom to judge God’s people
- *Your people*; For they are God’s more than his; and therefore, he must not govern them according to his own will and pleasure, but according to the rules of God’s word, and for His service and glory

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- St. Cyril of Alexandria observes that the judgment God given to the king is the one mentioned by St. Paul: “according to his purpose... to unite all things in [Christ]’ (Eph 1:10). Indeed, ‘in his days justice will flourish and peace abound, as if to say, ‘in the days of Christ, through faith, justice will spring up for us and, as we turn to God, peace will abound’. Moreover, it is precisely we who are the ‘wretched’ and the ‘children of the poor’ whom this king rescues and saves: and if first of all he ‘calls the holy Apostles ‘wretched’ because they were poor in spirit, he has consequently saved us as ‘sons and daughters of the poor’, justifying us and making us holy in the faith though the Holy Spirit”

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- *And Your poor with justice*, In the perspective of the Holy Bible violating the rights of the poor is an act against God
- The Lord is the defender of the poor and the oppressed, of widows and of orphans (Psalm 68:6)
- He describes God's people as God's poor; for all men, however rich they may appear to be, are poor in God's sight
- They need His assistance in everything, and whatever they have, they have from God, not as a gift, but as a loan
- Therefore, God can demand it back, and take it away from them

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- St. Augustine comments in the use of *Your people* and *Your poor* and says, “Whereby indeed he shows, that the people of God ought to be poor, that is, not proud, but humble. For, ‘blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.’”
- *The mountains and the hills*, which are the characteristic features of Palestine, represent poetically the whole land
- So, the whole land under a just government, will bear the fruit of peace and general welfare for its inhabitants
- Similarly, Isaiah describes peace as the result of righteousness (Isaiah 32:17); and peace was the distinguishing characteristic of Solomon’s reign (1 Chronicles 22:9)

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- Sometimes *mountains* represent human governments in the Holy Bible
- St. Augustine says, “The mountains are the greater, the hills the less...Those then that are eminent in the Church for passing sanctity, are the mountains, who meet to teach other men also, by so speaking as that they may be faithfully taught, by so living as that they may imitate them to their profit: but the hills are they that follow the excellence of the former by their own obedience.”
- The fruit of this righteous judgment is peace to the people
- Where peace and justice reign, few are found to harm their neighbor by word or deed

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- Therefore, the king of such a place will have no trouble in protecting the poor from the few oppressors, who must be found in every community
- According to St. Augustine, peace and justice (righteousness), go together; he who enjoys the true peace, will enjoy justice as well
- *He will bring justice to the poor of the people*, The oppressed and defenseless are the special care of the true king
- *He will save the children of the needy*, In a spiritual sense, Christ saves them from their sins

The Character of the Kingdom

72:1-4



- *And will break in pieces the oppressor*, The Satan, the oppressor and the god of this world
- Some explain the word *the oppressor*; the accuser of the brethren who enticed our first parents, and deceives mankind
- It was prophesied of Christ that He should break his head, Genesis 3:15
- He was manifested in the flesh to destroy his works and He has broken him and all his schemes in pieces, and spoiled all his principalities and powers

A Kingdom With No End 72:5-7



- Verses 5-7 describe the eternal nature of God's Kingdom
- He now begins to pass from Solomon to Christ
- This clearly points to Christ's Kingdom, whose Kingdom is eternal and has no end not Solomon's
- *As long as the sun and moon endure*, Which means in presence of the moon; *throughout all generations*, to the end of time
- When David says, that Christ's kingdom would continue *As long as the sun and moon endure*, he by no means implies that there would be an end to it when the sun would cease to shine, for Christ's Kingdom will endure forever, though the sun will one day cease to shine

A Kingdom With No End 72:5-7



- And *Throughout all generations* is to be understood in a similar sense; when all generations shall have passed away, Christ's Kingdom will not also pass away
- No more than Christ meant to tell His Apostles, He would leave them at a given time, when He said, "*Behold, I am with you all days, to the end of the world;*" which meant, that as He would be with them here, through His grace and His help, so they would be with Him in the world to come, in happiness and glory
- St. Augustine translates it as: "They shall endure with the sun".
- It was claimed that Christianity will not endure but for a short time

A Kingdom With No End 72:5-7



- But here David confirms that the church (*the moon*) will endure throughout all generations
- *He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, Like showers that water the earth*, Clean and refreshing, this is a beautiful picture of the reign of the King of Peace
- The psalmist now describes the coming of Christ, the spread and the uniqueness of His kingdom
- He describes His coming, first to the Jews, and then to the gentiles under the figures of rain, a fleece, and earth, such as the signs Gideon got

A Kingdom With No End 72:5-7



- Many fathers, like the scholar origin, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, believe that the 'mown grass' (the fleece of wool of Gideon) refers to the Jews
- Christ first came to the Jews, represented by the fleece of wool, while the whole world beside was perfectly dry
- And *the earth* (or all the ground) refers to the Gentiles
- Then He came to the gentiles, through the preaching of the Apostles, and then the earth all round was saturated with the rain of the truths of salvation; and the fleece alone remained dry, which represents the Jews who did not believe

A Kingdom With No End 72:5-7



- As the wicked will be reprov'd and punished, so good men will be encouraged, progressed, and uplifted *shall flourish*
- *And abundance of peace, Until the moon is no more,* That is, as long as time and the world shall last
- Which neither was nor could be the case under the reign of Solomon, which was not of very long duration, and the peace of whose kingdom was sadly disturbed, and almost wholly lost after his death
- But which was, undoubtedly and eminently accomplished in Christ, who came to bring peace on earth, Luke 2:14, and left it as a legacy to his disciples, John 14:27

A Kingdom With No End 72:5-7



- Upon Christ's coming there will be true justification, and there will be the most perfect peace with God and with all men
- In a limited sense, this was true of Solomon
- Because of his wisdom, good men were encouraged in his kingdom and the land enjoyed peace
- In a greater sense, it points to Jesus alone
- The connection between the *righteous* and *peace* reminds us of Melchizedek, the One who was and is both the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace (Hebrews 7:1-3)
- The peace which Jesus brings is not superficial or short lived; it is abundant in its depth and duration

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- The psalmist is now describing the expanding of Christ's kingdom, which is the Church spread, all over the world
- It does not appear that any particular seas are meant, as in Exodus 23:31 and Numbers 34:3, 6; rather, the idea is that the earth is set in the midst of the sea, and that Messiah's dominion will reach from shore to shore
- According to St. Augustine, the words, *from the River to the ends of the earth*, are only an explanation of *from sea to sea*, as if he said, he will rule over the whole world, from sea to sea; for the earth is everywhere surrounded by the ocean

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- Some say that *from sea to sea*, may meant from Red sea, to the Mediterranean sea, for so far Solomon's dominion extended; and so, did David's also
- Under David and Solomon, Israel had its greatest extent of territory
- However, the meaning is more generally from one sea to another, or in all parts of the world
- In which sense it is truly and fully accomplished in Christ, and in Him only
- Though many leaders throughout history have sought to rule the entire earth, only Christ will succeed

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- The same is said of the Messiah in Zechariah 9:10; where He is manifestly spoken of as here, and regards the extent of His dominion
- And the son of Sirach combines them with the promise to Abraham in Sirach 44:22-23, *“Therefore, by an oath, he gave glory to him among his people, so as to increase him like the dust of the earth, and to exalt his offspring like the stars, and to give an inheritance to them from sea to sea, and from the river even to the end of the earth.”*
- Verses 9-11, in a way, was fulfilled in Solomon’s life
- We read in 2 Chronicles 9:23, *“And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”*

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- So, though this passage was fulfilled to some extent for Solomon, however, its complete and glorious fulfillment can be found in Christ only
- *Those who dwell in the wilderness*, It refers to people, as shepherds and traveler tribes - people who have no permanent home, but who wander from place to place
- *His enemies will lick the dust*, Prostrate themselves at his feet with their faces in the dust
- They who fall down become as prostrate as if they were licking the ground

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- The idea is, that these wandering, unsettled flocks would become subject to him, or would bow down and acknowledge his authority; this can be fulfilled only under the Messiah
- It can also convey to us the total subjection and prostration of the sinners, believing through faith and offering repentance
- And they who will not willingly fall down before Christ, and piously, and faithfully worship Him, will be compelled, on the last day, to fall down before him, and “to lie under His footstool”

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- *Tarshish*, was the wealthy Phoenician colony of Tartessus in southern Spain
- *The isles*, are those of the Mediterranean generally
- *Sheba* was south-eastern Arabia, famous for its wealth and commerce
- *Seba*, mentioned in Genesis 10:7 among Cushite peoples and coupled with Egypt and Ethiopia in Isaiah 43:3; Isaiah 45:14, is generally supposed to be the kingdom of Meroe in Ethiopia, but may denote a Cushite state on the Arabian Gulf
- The most remote and the most wealthy nations unite in honoring the righteous king

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- The word seems to be used here to denote any distant region abounding with riches
- This was true of king Solomon for some kings offered him gifts as we read in 2 Chronicles 9:23, *“Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year.”*
- We also read in 1 Kings 10:10-11 that the Queen of Saba, *“gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. Also, the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought great quantities of almug wood and precious stones from Ophir.”*

The Breadth of the Kingdom

72:8-11



- However, this will be, unquestionably verified in Christ, who is, and will show Himself to be, King of kings, and Lord of lords, and will be universally acknowledged, obeyed, and worshipped by all the kings and nations of the earth
- And also, this verse befits Christ our Lord, who at His birth, kings from the East came to worship Him, and offered Him gifts
- *all kings shall fall down before Him*, This was prophesied in a beautiful way by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7, which had in mind both David's immediate son and successor, Solomon and David's ultimate Son, Jesus the Messiah
- The fulfillment in Solomon's day is described in 1 Kings 10:23-25

The Nature of the Kingdom

72:12-14



- Verses 12-14 expand on the important theme introduced in verses 2 and 4; bringing justice to the lowly and needy, saving them from those who oppress them
- The justice and righteousness the psalmist prayed and hoped for regarding his son (72:1-4) will be perfectly fulfilled in the Greater King
- Another characteristic of the Messianic kingdom is compassion
- The Messiah will deliver the need and the afflicted
- What he said in verse 12 is part of the reason nations will choose to serve Him

The Nature of the Kingdom

72:12-14



- Christ wins people over by His just rule and not by His power
- What makes the rule of this king so special?
- Simply that he is dedicated to save the needy and rescue the oppressed
- Who would not fear so good a king?
- It is not the fear of hell and punishment that lead people to submission to Christ, but it is “*the goodness of God leads you to repentance*” (Romans 2:4)
- *The poor*, The poor in spirit; who acknowledge their spiritual poverty

The Nature of the Kingdom

72:12-14



- St. Augustine explains, “This needy and poor man is the people of men believing in Him. In this people are also kings adoring Him. For they do not disdain to be needy and poor, that is, humbly confessing sins, and needing the glory of God and the grace of God, in order that this King, Son of the King, may deliver them from the mighty one.”
- He explains that the mighty is the devil, turned from a crafty into a mighty one by our iniquity; for, if man had not yielded to temptation he never could have been subdued by the devil
- Man became the captive of the devil by his sin

The Nature of the Kingdom

72:12-14



- St. Augustine continues and says, “But He that has humbled the slanderer and has entered into the house of the strong man to bind him and to spoil his vessels, He ‘has delivered the needy and the poor man.’ For this neither the virtue of anyone could accomplish, nor any just man, nor any Angel. When then there was no helper, by His coming He saved them Himself.”
- *He will spare the poor and needy*, He now tells us in what manner, Christ will deliver men from the devil, by forgiveness of their sins
- When the sins are forgiven, the chain which held them captives to the devil is broken

The Nature of the Kingdom

72:12-14



- And Christ will bestow grace and justice on them, and so *save the souls of the needy*
- As St. Augustine comments, “he has recommended to our notice both the aids of grace; both that which is for the remission of sins, when he says, ‘*He will spare the poor and needy*’ and that which does consist in the imparting of righteousness, when he has added, ‘*And will save the souls of the needy*’ For no one is meet of himself for salvation, unless God’s grace aid”
- Verse 14 is stating, in another form, the idea that His reign would be one of justice, protecting the rights of the poor, and delivering the oppressed

The Nature of the Kingdom

72:12-14



- Christ's especial tenderness towards the poor and lowly is a main feature in all descriptions of His kingdom (Isaiah 11:4, 29:19, 41:17, etc.), and was emphasized by our Lord when He came upon earth (Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18)
- Christ, not only remits, through His grace, the original sin, but He frees from the actual sins added to it, and from all iniquities
- The lives of the *poor and needy* are often considered to be of little value
- The Messiah, the Greater King, will regard their lives as *precious*
- The Incarnation of the Son of God is a manifest proof how precious is human nature in His sight

A Blessed Kingdom 72:15-17



- *And He shall live*, Some interpret it as he is talking here about Christ' resurrection and reign in His everlasting Kingdom
- And some interpret it as a prayer for the king to live long and prosperously and as an echo of the regular acclamation "Long live the king" (1 Samuel 10:24)
- The psalmist prays for his son that may the people not only greet him with the customary acclamation and offer him the best gifts, but pray for his welfare and bless him as the source of their happiness and prosperity



A Blessed Kingdom 72:15-17

- *the gold of Sheba will be given to Him*, Speaking of Christ, giving Him of their best and rarest, in grateful acknowledgment of His goodness and protection
- Those who are redeemed by Him - who owe so much to Him for protecting and saving them - will consecrate to Him all that they are, and all that they possess
- And constantly praise and glorify Him, *Prayer also will be made for Him*
- Men shall offer prayer for Him continually, as we do when we pray, *'Thy kingdom come'*



A Blessed Kingdom 72:15-17

- St. Augustine comments on *for Him* and explains, “But how to understand *‘for Him’* is difficult; except that when prayer is made for the Church, for Himself prayer is made, because she is His Body.”
- Verse 16 may be understood as a prayer offered by the psalmist for the fertility of the land, and the prosperity of the people
- It may be also understood in a spiritual sense, and means an abundance of spiritual graces
- The ‘Didache’ (the teachings of the apostles) quoted this phrase to refer to the sacrament of the ‘Eucharist’, the source of blessing to the church

A Blessed Kingdom 72:15-17



- This abundance of spiritual food, the word of God, will be *On the top of the mountains*
- In places naturally barren; for it is in the valleys, and not on the tops of mountains, that corn usually abounds
- *Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon*, The fruit shall increase and multiply and will rise higher than the cedars of Lebanon, the tallest in the world
- And such fruit will consist in the crowd of believers
- The believers will flourish, and be multiplied in such numbers as to resemble the growth of the grass on the land



A Blessed Kingdom 72:15-17

- The Gospel, after Christ's death, was first preached in the city of Jerusalem, and was blessed for the conversion of many there, who were fruitful in grace and good works
- St. Luke tells us, Acts 6, "*Then the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.*" (Acts 6:7)
- *His name shall endure forever*, David concludes the Psalm with prayer and praise of the future Messiah
- His throne is for ever and ever; His kingdom is an everlasting one
- *His name shall continue as long as the sun*, His persecutors may endeavor to abolish that name, but they never will succeed



A Blessed Kingdom 72:15-17

- *All nations shall call Him blessed*, These words taken from Genesis 22:18, *“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”*
- And explained by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:16, *“He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.”*
- Christ was the fulfillment of that great promise
- All nations, then, will be blessed by Christ, who is God; that is to say, nobody will be blessed but through Christ
- *All nations* Shall praise Him
- The time will come when all the nations of the earth will honor and praise Him

Closing Doxology of Praise

72:18-20



- Some say that this doxology is not part of the Psalm, but was added to mark the close of the second book of Psalms
- *Blessed be the LORD God, The Messiah, who is truly and properly God, the Lord of all, to whom such a doxology of glory and blessing properly belongs since all good things are from Him and by Him*
- The work in and through Jesus Christ is the work of *wondrous things*
- God alone does marvelous works and must be praised for those works

Closing Doxology of Praise

72:18-20



- *And blessed be His glorious name*, The name by which He is known
- All the names by which He is known, all by which He has revealed Himself, might be regarded with veneration always and everywhere
- *And let the whole earth be filled with His glory*, With the knowledge of Him; with the manifestations of His presence
- The thought of the greatness of God and His work naturally led the heart to long that this blessing be extended through *the whole earth* and that it not only be touched by but *filled with His glory*

Closing Doxology of Praise

72:18-20



- *Amen and Amen*, So be it; let this occur, let this time come
- The expression is doubled to denote intensity of feeling
- It is the going out of a heart full of desire that this might be so
- Verse 20 does not mean that all the Psalms written by David are ended; but it is rather the end of the second of the five books of Psalms
- Some say that this verse is no part of the Psalm, and it was not placed here by the author of the Psalm
- It is worth noting that these are not only *psalms*, but also *prayers*

Discussion



- Define “justice” and “righteousness” (v 1)
- Explain why it is important for the king to receive God’s justice and righteousness?
- What is the king to do for the poor, oppressed, needy, and weak in his kingdom?
- What causes people in the kingdom to be poor, oppressed, needy, or weak, and why does the king need God’s characteristics in order to serve them well?



Discussion

- What do verses 8-10 intend to say about the extent of the king's reign?
- What is the relationship between justice and righteousness and the prosperity and peace of a nation?
- What are the limitations and sins of earthly kings and why should we not put full trust in earthly kings?
- How does Jesus ultimately and perfectly answer each of the prayers asked for the earthly king in Psalm 72?