

Songs of the Kingdom 3 – Psalm 72

Psalm 72 Overview

- Shows us Jesus' character as a Righteous and Just King
- Written about 1000 years before Jesus
- Written by King Solomon
- It's a song exhorting a king to rule in righteousness and justice
- Two Big Themes
 - 1) Righteous Judgment
 - This Psalm mentions "righteousness" and "righteous" 7 times, justice / judge 3 times
 - 8 separate depictions of righteous judgment
 - 2) Prosperity and Blessing
 - "blessed" used 4 times
 - Other words used: prosperity, flourish, abound, abundance, fruit, blossom
 - 19 depictions of blessing, abundance, and prosperity
- Main Message = When a king is righteous and just, everyone is blessed
 - Prophetically, it looks forward to the only truly Righteous, Just King, the Messiah – Jesus

Psalm 72:1 - Of Solomon. 1 Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!

- How do we know this is about the Messiah and not just about Solomon or his son?
 - 1) Remember, Solomon is the author, so it would be odd for him to refer to himself in the third person
 - 2) There are things that don't really apply to Solomon or his sons
 - This king has a kingdom that will never end (Vs. 5-7)
 - This king has a worldwide dominion (Vs. 8)
 - This king rules over other kings (Vs. 9-11)
 - This king is superheroically righteous and just (Vs. 12-14)
 - This king is practically worshiped (Vs. 15)
 - This king's reputation and fame will never end (Vs. 17)
 - This king blesses and is blessed by people from every nation (Vs. 17)
 - 3) The Targum
 - Targum = oral translations (which were eventually written down) of the Bible into Aramaic (or other local languages) between the OT and NT.
 - The Targum translates vs. 1 as "Give the King, the Messiah, your judgments"
 - The Jewish people before the time of Jesus saw this Psalm as being about the Messiah and not Solomon

Psalm 72:2-4 - 2 May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice! 3 Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness! 4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor!

- "may he" = in Hebrew, it's a tense that means a "soft command" or a "strong wish" (ie. "Let him judge your people... He shall judge your people...")
- This King will be an example of true justice, especially to the poor, weak, and needy:
 - "judge your people with righteousness"
 - "defend the cause of the poor"
 - "give deliverance to the children of the needy"
 - "crush the oppressor"
- This is the heart of Jesus, our Messiah
 - Luke 4:18-19 - 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

- “the year of the Lord’s favor” = Refers to the Year of Jubilee, a year in which lands that were sold or mortgaged returned to their owners, debts forgiven, and Israelite slaves released
 - Matthew 12:18-21 - 18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. 19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; 20 a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”
 - Jesus Brought Justice to the Poor and Needy
 - Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8)
 - Blind Beggars (Matthew 20)
 - Children (Matthew 19)
- “May he... crush the oppressor!”
 - Jesus didn’t crush oppressors in the way we may think (or want)
 - To Jesus, the real fight wasn’t against Rome but against human sin.

5 Aspects of Biblical Justice that Make it so Unique

- From the book *Why Social Justice Is Not Biblical Justice* by Scott David Allen
- 1) Biblical Justice Is About Conforming to God’s Standard
 - “justice” = from Latin *justus* = “straight” (like a plumb line)
 - Biblical Justice = conforming to God’s moral standard, laid out in the moral law of the OT (specifically the 10 Commandments)... summarized in the Royal Law of the NT (Love God with all you have... Love your neighbor as yourself)
 - An action is just if it conforms to God’s righteous standards of the Royal Law
 - “justice” = Hebrew *tsedek*
 - Quote: Gary Breshears, theology professor – defines *tsedek* as “a life in which all relationships – human to human, human to God, and human to creation – are well-ordered and harmonious”
 - “Your righteousness is righteous forever” (Psalm 119:142)
 - Social Justice = conforming to society’s ever-changing moral standards... Which is why so many things being done in the name of “justice” today seem so very unjust – because they are not conforming to God’s standards but to the will of the mob
- 2) Biblical Justice is Impartial
 - Roman Goddess of Justice (Justitia) = personified as a blindfolded woman carrying a sword and scales
 - Biblical Justice = An important aspect is that it’s impartial (blind)
 - Social Justice = Social Justice, by its very nature, is not impartial, but takes into account what identity group a person belongs to
- 3) Biblical Justice Says God is the Ultimate Judge
 - Quote: Webster’s 1828 – “[Justice is] giving to everyone what is his due”
 - Paul and the Snake (Acts 28)
 - Biblical Justice = God is the only one who has the ultimate right to give us what we deserve, because only He judges perfectly
 - Social Justice = There is no God who will bring justice, so it’s up to us, society, the mob, to enforce justice now – cancel culture, boycotts, lies, violence, riots, etc.
- 4) Biblical Justice Upholds Individual Responsibility
 - Biblical Justice and Social Justice differ on the question of where the ultimate problem lies
 - Biblical Justice = Injustice begins in our own hearts, with our own sins which keep us out of harmony with God’s fixed standards
 - Social Justice = Injustice is not about our individual actions but about society and systems past and present

- It's possible that you never did anything wrong personally, but you are guilty because of your membership in a particular group
 - Essentially, Biblical Justice says you are guilty for your sins... And Social Justice says you are not guilty for your sins but someone else is to blame – a system. However, you are guilty for sins committed by someone else – the systems in which you are a part.
- 5) Biblical Justice Fixes Society's Problems On a Heart Level
 - Biblical Justice and Social Justice differ on the question of how to fix the problem of injustice
 - Biblical Justice = Each individual person needs a heart change, where their sins are forgiven, their guilt is wiped away, and they begin to live in harmony with God, creation, and those around them... thus bringing justice to society
 - Social Justice = People don't need to change, but systems must be overturned and rebuilt to bring about justice

Psalm 72:5 - May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!

- This King's kingdom will remain, essentially, forever
- Isaiah 65:17 - For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.
 - There will come a day when the sun and moon and all the heavens will be gone and replaced by something new... Jesus' Kingdom will remain until that final day
- Nothing will dismantle Jesus' Kingdom

Psalm 72:6 - May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth!

- One day, Jesus will reign as King over the entire earth in a very real, physical way, and the earth will be blessed as a result
 - But even today wherever people surrender to Him as King, His blessing and goodness come

Psalm 72:7 - In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

- Because Jesus is even now reigning as King, even now we can expect to flourish

Psalm 72:8-11 – 8 May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! 9 May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust! 10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! 11 May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!

- Jesus has universal and ultimate dominion.
 - Universal: there is no part of the earth where he is not king
 - Ultimate: there are no rulers who can challenge His reign
- “desert tribes” = probably referring to nomadic tribes of the Arabian Peninsula
- “kings of Tarshish” = Probably a Phoenician city in the south of Spain known for its wealth gained through trade
 - In the Bible, it's always referred to as distant from Israel
 - Jonah tried to sail there when he was running from God
- “kings of Sheba and Seba”
 - Sheba – Located in southern Arabian Peninsula... Greeks wrote of the vast quantities of gold they used to decorate their houses
 - Around the time Solomon wrote this Psalm, the Queen of Sheba visited him to see his wisdom, bringing with her gifts of great wealth (1 Kings 10)
 - The Great King of this Psalm would command more devotion and adoration than even Solomon, which Jesus pointed out about Himself (Matt 12:42)
 - Seba – usually mentioned alongside Egypt and Ethiopia... so most likely a Gentile kingdom in North Africa
- Even mighty and powerful Gentile kingdoms near and far will bow down to this Great King

Psalm 72:12-14 – 12 For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. 13 He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. 14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight.

- This Just King will be sensitive and compassionate to those in need
- This is exactly how Jesus was!
 - The 2 Blind Men (Matthew 20) – It says, “Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight”
 - “in pity” = lit. Greek “moved with compassion”... this phrase comes up 12 times in the Gospels to describe Jesus’ feelings towards the sick or hurting
 - Matthew 14:13-14 - 13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.
 - Matthew 9:36 - When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
- Compassionate Was A Verb
 - Originally in the English language, the word “compassionate” was used as a verb meaning you felt compassion and then took action to help
 - This is a part of Jesus’ character as a compassionate and just King... He doesn’t just feel our pain, but He fixes the problem.

Psalm 72:15-17 – 15 Long may he live; may gold of Sheba be given to him! May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all the day! 16 May there be abundance of grain in the land; on the tops of the mountains may it wave; may its fruit be like Lebanon; and may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field! 17 May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed!

- There is a great blessing and prosperity that comes because of this King’s righteous rule.
- One day, Jesus will return and sit on a visible throne. He will rule in a literal and physical way.
- But He is already reigning as King spiritually, particularly over the Church, those of us who have received him already as our King
 - So along with His just and righteous rule, we can expect His blessing and abundance

Psalm 72:18-20 – 18 Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. 19 Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen! 20 The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

- No matter what’s going on around us or who is dominating our nation’s politics, we have every reason to celebrate just as Solomon does in this Psalm... Why? Because we serve the only truly good, completely righteous, totally just King - Jesus