

Introduction: “The Prayers of David, the Son of Jesse, Are Ended” (v20)

Verse 20 is the conclusion to Book 2 of the Psalter.

The Prayers of David, the Son of Jesse, Are Ended.

As we have seen, not all of Book 2 was written by David.

 Psalms 42-49 are songs of the Sons of Korah.

 Psalm 50 is a song of Asaph.

But Books 1-2 of the Psalms are all about the Davidic kingdom.

 The assumption behind all these songs

 is that the Davidic king is sitting on the throne.

 Things may not yet be the way they *should be* –

 but since the King is on the throne, there is a future for God’s people.

And that is what the title conveys:

Of Solomon.

Psalm 72 and Psalm 127 are both addressed “to Solomon” or perhaps “concerning Solomon.”

Solomon is the Son of David who points the way toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

I sometimes have to chuckle at commentators.

 Commentators are bitterly opposed to each other

 over the question of whether Psalm 72 is a royal psalm or a messianic psalm.

 Some argue that Psalm 72 is Messianic – that it speaks of the future glory of the Messiah.

 Others argue that Psalm 72 is Royal – that it speaks of the Davidic king in ideal terms.

You might say at first – what’s the difference?!

 There is an important difference.

 If it is simply a Messianic Psalm,

 then that would mean that no one except Jesus

 had any business thinking that this was about him;

 if it is a Royal Psalm,

 then that would mean that every Davidic king from Solomon onward

 should have thought that this Psalm was (in some sense) about him

I like how Bryan Estelle puts it.

 It is a “Messianic Kingship Psalm.”

 The Davidic king was the *anointed one* – the *Meshiach*.

Therefore every Davidic king should have seen Psalm 72 as speaking of him.
This is what the Davidic king should be.

And yet, no Davidic king ever quite lived up to it!

This is why we sang the “Last Words of David” at the beginning of the service.

In 2 Samuel 23, we hear the “last words of David”

“the oracle of David, the son of Jesse, the oracle of the man who was set on high,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the sweet psalmist of Israel.”

David says in 2 Samuel 23:

“The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.
The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me:
When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,
he dawns on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.”

Now, notice that David starts by saying

“when one rules justly...in the fear of God.”

In one sense, this could be said of any king.

But David is not just any king.

David goes on to say in verses 5:

God “has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.”

The Davidic king dawns, shines, and makes the earth flourish
because he does for Israel what God does for Israel!

You can see this in the sequence of the last three Psalms in Book 2.

In Psalm 70 the Psalmist says,

“Make haste, O God to save me, O LORD make haste to help me....

But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!”

Likewise, Psalm 71 echoes the same language –

“in your righteousness deliver me and rescue me...

O God, be not far from me; O my God make haste to help me!”

In Psalms 70-71, God is the helper of the poor and needy.

But in Psalm 72, the King is the helper of the poor and needy.

After all, if the King is supposed to be a picture of God’s just rule –

then the King should be imitating God in his care for the needy!

Indeed, that is why Psalm 72 starts off the way it does:

“Give the king *your justice*, O God,
and *your righteousness* to the royal son.”

The source of the King’s righteousness is nothing else but God’s own *gift*.

1. “Give the King Your Justice” – The Source of the King’s Righteousness (v1-4)

72 *Give the king your justice, O God,*

and your righteousness to the royal son!

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!

We have often seen this language of “righteousness” and “justice” together.

Righteousness is what characterizes a well-ordered community.

It has to do with *doing* what is right – and *deciding* what is right –
but not just as isolated individuals.

A righteous king is one who is not only “just” and “wise” –

but also powerful enough to put his justice and wisdom into action.

You could easily have a king who *wanted* to do the right thing,
whose kingdom was characterized by unrighteousness.

We need a King who establishes righteousness in his kingdom.

Notice what righteousness looks like in Psalm 72.

The righteous king rescues the poor.

He judges the poor with justice.

He defends the cause of the poor.

He delivers the children of the needy.

He crushes the oppressor.

He delivers the needy when he calls.

He delivers the one who has no helper.

He has pity on the weak and needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

We’ve seen this often throughout the scriptures.

It’s not that the king is supposed to give handouts to the poor.

It’s that the king makes sure that no one mistreats the poor!

The poor are the helpless.

The poor does not refer to the lazy, or the wicked.

The poor are those who have no access to power.

When trouble comes, they have no one to care for them.

The rich and powerful are well-connected and do not need a “helper.”

Who will stand up for the poor?

Who will *help* them – who will do for them what they cannot do for themselves?

The king is their helper!

The king is supposed to look out for the little guy.

And this is not just a “spiritual” thing.

God expects those in power to look out for the little guy.

So, as you think about voting for politicians –

ask yourself this:

Who will make sure that those who lack access to power

do not get squashed by the powerful?

And not just in politics:

if you are a teacher – an elder – a manager – a babysitter –

whatever authority you have in life,

your authority is derivative from God –

and since God is the helper of the poor,

you are to make sure that the little guy doesn't get squashed.

When it says in verse 3,

“Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people” –

the word translated “prosperity” is *shalom* – “peace.”

I'm not sure why they translate it “prosperity” here.

Certainly *shalom* includes the idea of “well-being” and “prosperity,”

and when the King judges with righteousness

then peace and prosperity will follow!

Because *shalom* is the condition of Christ's kingdom.

Paul opens so many letters *grace and peace to you*

from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Shalom (peace, prosperity, and well-being) comes from God in Jesus Christ.

Ernst Hengstenberg says it nicely:

“For peace is brought forward, here and throughout,

only in so far as it is the product and consequence of that righteousness,
which is inherent in the king,
and which has been introduced by him among his people.”
Moses had promised peace as the product of righteousness:
“if ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them
I will give peace in the land..
and the sword shall not come into your land.” (Lev 26:3-6)
“The righteousness of the king, is the centre of the Psalm,
that on which every thing else depends” (Vol. 2, pp. 394-95).

Verse 4 also reminds us that it is the calling of the righteous king to “crush the oppressor.”
Those who oppress the poor – those who take advantage of their position
to make life miserable for the little guy –
need to be taken down!

And when the king crushes oppressors and delivers the children of the needy,
then people fear God.

2. “Til the Moon Be No More” – The Duration of the King’s Refreshing Reign (v5-7)

⁵ *May they fear you^[a] while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!*

⁶ *May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!*

⁷ *In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!*

Some people can’t figure out who the “you” is in verse 5 –
but the whole Psalm is addressed to “you” O God.

When you have a righteous king – then the people fear the LORD.

And here you see the language of 2 Samuel 23 coming back:

“When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God,
he dawns on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.”

Even so, when the Davidic king rules justly,

God makes *him* to become like showers that water the earth.

“In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more.”

In other words, verses 5-7 express a common wish of ancient kings:

“O king, live forever!”

And some think that this is just poetic hyperbole.

The Psalmist is just expressing the common ancient sentiment

that doesn't really *mean* that he expects the king to live forever!!!

It's not clear to me at what point God made it clear
that the Son of David would actually live and reign forever.
But it is clear to me that God gave man the desire for an eternal king –
someone who would right the wrongs of all the ages,
make things *right* – and *keep them that way!!*

And just as the eternal duration of the kingdom is expressed in verses 5-7,
so also the universal extent of the kingdom is expressed in verses 8-11.

3. “May They Fall Down Before Him” – The Extent of the King’s Dominion (v8-11)

⁸ *May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River^[b] 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!*

From “sea to sea” probably refers to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf.

The “River” certainly refers to the Euphrates –
and the “ends of the earth” refers to the boundaries of human habitation.

You see this in verses 9-10,
where desert tribes bow down to him (those who inhabit the waste places),
as well as kings of Tarshish – the farthest trading post known to man –
and kings of Sheba and Seba (from farthest Africa).

Indeed, “May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him.”

The Psalmist wants to see *all nations* in fellowship with the Davidic king.

Through the exaltation of the Son of David
the blessing of Abraham will come to the nations.

Here we realize that the righteousness of the King is not merely for Israel.

It is “for the Jew first, but also for the Greek.”

You see this especially in the “kiy” in verse 12.

4. “Precious Is Their Blood in His Sight” – The Character of the King’s Justice (v12-14)

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.*

The nations come bowing to the King,
not because he was such a great and mighty warrior –
not because he compelled them by force!
but rather, they bowed before him,
“because he delivers the needy when he calls.”

The nations are so impressed by the *righteousness* of the King,
that they humble themselves before him.

And so in verses 12-14 we hear the character of that righteousness.
Once again, there is a focus on how the King saves the needy and delivers them.
But something else is added:
“He has pity on the weak...”
“...precious is their blood in his sight.”

The LORD has compassion on the weak.
And even so, the King has compassion on the weak.

A wicked king thinks nothing of the death of the weak.
They were only in his way!

But a good king considers the blood of the weak as precious.
Psalm 116:15 says “precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints.”
And the King is like his God.

Is it any wonder that the beggars and blind men and lepers came to Jesus?
Son of David, have mercy on me?
Lord, have mercy on me?
They understood that if Jesus is indeed the King – the Messiah –
then Jesus will take pity on them and *help them* in their distress.

And if we are characterized by the compassion of Jesus,
then we will follow Jesus and reflect his concern for the weak and helpless.

And therefore the people pray that the King would live and reign forever.

5. “May His Name Endure Forever” – The Legacy of the King’s Rule (v15-17)

Verses 15-17 summarize the prayer of the people for their King.

They want to see the King blessed –

so that he might become a blessing to his people,
and indeed, so that in him, all nations would be blessed.

a. May Prayer Be Made for Him (v15)

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!

May the King live long and prosper.

Whenever we pray, “Thy kingdom come,”

we are praying for the kingdom of Jesus to flourish and expand.

And when his king flourishes

the land and the people flourish.

b. May the Land and the People Flourish (v16)

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!

If you know anything about mountain tops,

then you know that grain generally does not grow on mountain tops!

The idea here is that the grain would be so fruitful that it grows even on mountain tops!

And not only will the land be fruitful –

but so will the people!

The people will blossom in the cities.

When the King reigns and brings justice,

then peace and abundance follows!

And so:

c. May People Be Blessed in Him (v17)

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!

In other words, the Davidic King is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.
God had promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him.
And Psalm 72 says that this will happen when a Son of David
has an enduring name.
All nations will call him blessed.
Indeed, all nations will be *blessed* in him!

Psalm 72 calls us to think back to the beginning of the Psalter.
“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.”

Psalm 1 certainly calls *all people* to delight in God’s law –
but it especially highlights the “blessed man.”

Psalm 2 then speaks of the nations raging *against the LORD*
and against his anointed.”
And Psalm 2 warns the nations – the Kings of the earth –
“Sere the LORD with fear, and rejoices with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.”
And then Psalm 2 concludes by saying,
“Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

The nations need to learn that they must take refuge in the Son of David.
Because only when they take refuge in the Son of David
will they be blessed in him.

And when the blessing of Abraham comes to the nations,
then the great benediction rings out:

Conclusion: “Blessed Be the LORD” (v18-19)

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!

Verses 18-19 were probably added when the Psalm was placed here at the end of Book 2.
I have said before that Jonah 2:9 is the basic message of the Bible:

Salvation belongs to the LORD.
And if that is the case, then Psalm 70 is the basic prayer,
“Make haste O God to save me!”

But Psalm 72:18-19 is the basic doxology:

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.
Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen.”

The LORD is the God who alone does wondrous things.

We bless him because he has blessed us in Abraham –
we are those Gentiles who have been included in the family of God.
Psalm 72 knew that the Gentiles would bow to the Messiah!