

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 45 — Out of the Ivory Palaces

1.0 Introducing Psalm 45

- An unknown earthly king and his bride may have been the objects of this psalm.
 - ◆ Solomon and the princess of Egypt (1 Kings 3:1)? (Kirkpatrick)
 - ◆ Jehu? (Briggs)
 - ◆ Joram and Athaliah (2 Kings 8:18, 26)? (Delitzsch)
 - ◆ Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31)? (Hitzig, Cohen)
- Song of Songs 3:6-11 is the closest Old Testament text with regard to the lyrical presentation of a wedding procession.
- Psalm 45 is often listed with Psalms 2, 16, 22, and 110 as being completely messianic.
- “Either we have here a piece of poetical exaggeration far beyond the limits of poetic license, or ‘a greater than Solomon is here.’”—Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), 3/1:307.

Reading Psalm 45 (NAU)

45:1 A Maskil of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love.

My heart overflows with a good theme;
I address my verses to the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

45:2 You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.

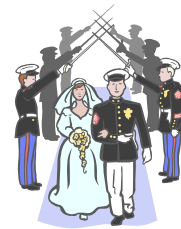
45:3 Gird Your sword on *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
In Your splendor and Your majesty!

2.2 Notes

- **v. 1** The Psalmist's Introduction
 - This verse is unique in the Psalms.
 - The poet is eager to pen the words of this beautiful wedding psalm.
- **vv. 2, 18** "Therefore . . . forever"
 - The repetition of these two words in one line at the beginning of the psalm and again at the end of the psalm forms an inclusio.
- **vv. 2-9** Compliments for the Bridegroom
 - Compare Song of Songs 5:10-16 in which the bride's praise is focused on the bridegroom's physical appearance.
 - The king's appearance (v. 2a, "fairer than the sons of men").
 - Aramaic Targum: "Thy beauty, O King messiah, is greater than that of the children of men."
 - The king's words (v. 2b, "grace").
 - The king's military prowess (vv. 3-5).
 - The king's just administration (vv. 6-7).
 - The king's wedding (vv. 8-9).
- **v. 3** "Your splendor and Your majesty"
 - Phraseology most often applied to God in the Old Testament:
 - "glory and majesty": Psalms 96:6; 104:1; 111:3
 - "awesome things" performed by His right hand (v. 4): Psalms 44:3; 98:1; 118:15-16
 - "loved righteousness and hated wickedness" (v. 7): Psalms 33:5; 37:28
- **v. 6** "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever"
 - "The editors of the Book of Psalms may already have understood this psalm in this [messianic] manner, for they placed Psalm 45, which deals with the greatness of the messianic king, immediately after Psalm 44, which deals with the tribulations of the people of Israel while they are subject to foreign nations."—Amos Hakham, *Psalms with The Jerusalem Commentary*, the Koschitzky edition, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 2003), 1:361.
 - Note Psalm 44:4, "You are my King, O God."
 - Quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9 and applied to Jesus Christ.
 - "Ps 45:7 was considered messianic by Jewish and early Christian interpreters alike. One need not become enmeshed in controversy over whether the words have direct/primary reference to Christ or to a Judean king. Based on the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:12-29; 1 Chron 17:7-27; and Psalm 89) which remains inviolable (cf. Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-17; and Ezek 34:20-24; 37:21-28), the promise of God is irrevocable, whether applied to David, his royal descendants or to the greater descendant, Christ himself (cf. Luke 1:68-69 and Acts 13:32-37)."—Richard D.

Patterson, "A Multiplex Approach to Psalm 45," *Grace Theological Journal* 6/1 (Spring 1985): 40-41.

- **v. 7** "God, Your God, has anointed You"
 - Does this rule out the Messiah being the bridegroom in this psalm?
 - Compare Psalm 110:1.
- **v. 8** "ivory palaces"
 - This is the verse that inspired the hymn "Out of the Ivory Palaces."
 - The palaces were not constructed of ivory, but were decorated with ivory carvings, furnished with ivory furnishings, and containing ivory treasures.
 - Furniture: Solomon's throne (1 Kings 10:18); beds (Amos 6:4).
 - Northern Israel: Ahab's palace (1 Kings 22:39); homes (Amos 3:15).
- **vv. 10-15** Counsel for the Bride
 - Forget the past; leave your family (v. 10).
 - Genesis 2:24
 - Genesis 12:1
 - Submit to your husband (v. 11).
 - Genesis 18:12 (cp. 1 Peter 3:6)
 - Ephesians 5:22-24
 - Enjoy the wedding and its future blessings (vv. 12-15).
 - Compare 1 Corinthians 2:9.
- **v. 12** "The daughter of Tyre"
 - "Daughter" is used here as an idiomatic reference to the inhabitants of Tyre.
 - See Psalm 137:8 and Isaiah 37:22.
- **v. 16** "your fathers . . . your sons"
 - "Your" is masculine singular, making the antecedent the king.
 - NASB and NAU mistakenly took the antecedent to be the bride. Elsewhere in the psalm that translation capitalizes references to the king. NKJV is more accurate.
- **v. 17** "the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever"
 - "The peoples" involved in praising someone is always in Psalms a reference to praising the LORD.
 - Psalms 67:3, 5; 117:1.
- **v. 17 [46:1]** "For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah, set to Alamoth. A Song."
 - Unusual order placing "set to Alamoth" following the authorial designation ("of the sons of Korah").
 - "Alamoth" could be the name of a melody or could refer to women's soprano voices.



3.0 Singing Psalm 45

Out of the Ivory Palaces

My Lord has garments so wondrous fine,
And myrrh their texture fills;
Its fragrance reached to this heart of mine
With joy my being thrills.

*Refrain: Out of the ivory palaces,
Into a world of woe,
Only His great eternal love
Made my Savior go.*

His life had also its sorrows sore,
For aloe had a part;
And when I think of the cross He bore,
My eyes with teardrops start.

Refrain

His garments too were in cassia dipped,
With healing in a touch;
Each time my feet in some sin have slipped,
He took me from its clutch.

Refrain



In garments glorious He will come,
To open wide the door;
And I shall enter my heav'nly home,
To dwell forevermore.

Refrain

— Words & Music: Henry Barraclough (1915)

The words are based on a sermon Barraclough heard delivered by John Chapman in 1915 at Montreat, NC; in 1893. Chapman had written a book called *Ivory Palaces of the King*.

4.0 Praying Psalm 45

- May my words always speak of my King. [v. 1]
- Lord, You are always in control, Your throne is forever. [v. 6]
- Father, help me to place my marriage ahead of my former family. [v. 10]
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5.0 Applying Psalm 45

- Even the weddings of the ancient Davidic kings represented greater spiritual truths regarding the Messiah.
- Our marriages need to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:31-33).