

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

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
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Psalm 72 — A Greater King Than Solomon

1.0 Introducing Psalm 72

- This psalm is one of two attributed to Solomon (see Ps 127).
- Psalm 72 is the last of Book 2 (Pss 42-72).
 - ✓ Doxology: verses 18-19.
 - ✓ Postscript to the Davidic collection: verse 20.
- Psalms 56–72 are brought to a fitting conclusion with their unifying themes:
 - ✓ Universality (56:7; 57:11; 59:13; 65:2, 5; 66:1; 67:2-5, 7; 68:32; 72:8, 11).
 - ✓ The Name of God (61:5, 8; 63:4; 66:2, 4; 68:4; 69:30, 36; 72:17, 19).

2.0 Reading Psalm 72 (NAU)

72:1 *A Psalm* of Solomon.

Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's son.

72:2 May he judge Your people with righteousness
And Your afflicted with justice.

72:3 Let the mountains bring peace to the people,
And the hills, in righteousness.

72:4 May he vindicate the afflicted of the people,
Save the children of the needy
And crush the oppressor.

72:5 Let them fear You while the sun *endures*,
And as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

72:6 May he come down like rain upon the mown grass,
Like showers that water the earth.

72:7 In his days may the righteous flourish,
And abundance of peace till the moon is no more.

- 72:8** May he also rule from sea to sea
And from the River to the ends of the earth.
- 72:9** Let the nomads of the desert bow before him,
And his enemies lick the dust.
- 72:10** Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.
- 72:11** And let all kings bow down before him,
All nations serve him.
- 72:12** For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help,
The afflicted also, and him who has no helper.
- 72:13** He will have compassion on the poor and needy,
And the lives of the needy he will save.
- 72:14** He will rescue their life from oppression and violence,
And their blood will be precious in his sight;
- 72:15** So may he live, and may the gold of Sheba be given to him;
And let them pray for him continually;
Let them **ble**ss him all day long.
- 72:16** May there be abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains;
Its fruit will wave like *the cedars of Lebanon*;
And may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth.
- 72:17** May his name endure forever;
May his name increase as long as the sun *shines*;
And let *men* **ble**ss themselves by him;
Let all nations call him **ble**ssed.
- 72:18** **Ble**ssed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who alone works wonders.
- 72:19** And **ble**ssed be His glorious name forever;
And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen, and Amen.
- 72:20** The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 72

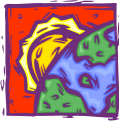
3.1 Outline

- I. The Psalm's Prayers (vv. 1-17)
 - A. Prayers for the Human Monarch (vv. 1-7)
 - B. Prayers for the Heavenly Messiah (vv. 8-17)
- II. The Psalm's Praises (vv. 18-19)
- III. The Psalm's Postscript (v. 20)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Give”
 - Psalm 72 opens with an imperative—the only one in the psalm.
 - The first verse summarizes the message of the psalm:
 - God is the source of justice and righteousness.
- **v. 3** “peace”
 - *Shalom* involves more than absence of conflict. Its sense is “wholeness”—something even beyond “prosperity.”
 - The mountains and hills proclaim divine revelation (cp. Isa 55:12).
- **v. 5** “sun . . . moon”
 - Since God created these two visible extraterrestrial bodies before He created mankind, they are symbolic of longevity and perpetuity.
 - See Psalm 89:36-37; Jeremiah 31:35.
 - Cf. 2 Samuel 7:16.
- **v. 6** “rain . . . showers”
 - “In an arid environment such as Israel had, the rains were essential for crop production and were considered evidence of divine blessing.”—Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 987.
 - See 2 Samuel 23:4.
- **v. 8** “rule from sea to sea”
 - See Exodus 23:31.
 - “Rule” is the same Hebrew term used in Genesis 1:26 in reference to mankind ruling over all the earth.
 - The Messiah, as the supreme representative of mankind, will fulfill the divine decree given at creation.
 - ✓ Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:6-9.
- **v. 10** “Tarshish . . . Sheba and Seba”
 - Tarshish was most likely located in Spain (Tartessus).
 - Sheba (cf. 1 Kgs 10:1; Isa 60:6) is in southern Arabia (Yemen?).
 - Seba (cf. Gen 10:7; Isa 43:3) is perhaps in northern Africa.
- **v. 14** “from oppression and violence”
 - “Oppression” depicts the powerful exploiting the powerless.
 - “Violence” (*hamas*) refers to the violent and ruthless disregard for life.
 - Messiah will exercise divine justice in the defense and vindication of the defenseless, the abused, the oppressed, and the poor.



- **v. 15** “may he live . . . let them pray for him continually”
 - At the enthronement of Solomon the people prayed for his life and reign to be long and prosperous. Cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
 - The people hope for the long reign of the promised son of David.
 - Solomon did not turn out to be that future king (cp. 1 Kgs 10–12).

- **v. 17** “let *men* bless themselves by him”
 - Repetition of “bless” and “blessed” emphasize the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-3).
 - The verb should not be taken as a reflexive (“bless themselves”), but a passive (“be blessed”), just as in Genesis 12:3. See Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:474.



- **v. 17** “call him blessed”
 - The Hebrew root word for this “blessed” (*’ashar*) is different than the other forms of “bless” (*barak*) in this psalm.
 - The last word of Psalm 72 proper is from the same root as the first word of Psalm 1 (the first and the last words of the Davidic collection).

- **vv. 18-19** Doxology
 - All of the book doxologies in the Psalter (see notes on Ps 41) include:
 - ✓ “Blessed be the LORD.”
 - ✓ Reference to duration.
 - ✓ Concluding “Amen.”
 - Book 2’s doxology adds:
 - ✓ “God” on “Blessed be the LORD.”
 - ✓ “Who alone works wonders.”
 - ✓ “And blessed be His glorious name forever.”
 - ✓ “And may the whole earth be filled with His glory.”

- **v. 20** Postscript
 - Books 1 and 2 contain more than psalms by David:
 - ✓ Anonymous: Psalms 10, 33, 43, 44, 66, 67, and 71.
 - ✓ Sons of Korah: Psalms 42 and 44–49.
 - ✓ Asaph: Psalm 50.
 - ✓ Solomon: Psalm 72. Verse 20 could be taken as evidence for taking the heading as “for Solomon.”
 - Books 3-5 contain psalms by David: Psalms 86, 101, 103, 108, 109, 110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–145.
 - See 2 Chronicles 29:27; Acts 4:25 (re: Ps 2); Hebrews 4:7 (re: Ps 95).

- **Messianic Revelation**
 - Solomon is in the picture, but the psalm goes beyond him.
 - Is the phraseology merely ancient near eastern royal hyperbole?
 - See notes on Psalm 45.
 - In the Psalms a human king's name is never the object of praise.
 - The blessing is universal (v. 17)—extending far beyond anything accomplished during Solomon's reign.
 - Isaiah 11:1-5 and Zechariah 9:9-10 might depend upon Psalm 72.
 - Psalm 72 may be summarized in the Lord's Prayer: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10).

4.0 Singing Psalm 72

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

(Tune: "I Sing the Mighty Power of God")

Hail to the Lord's anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
To take away transgression and rule in equity.

He comes in succor speedy to those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying, were precious in His sight.

By such shall He be fearèd while sun and moon endure;
Beloved, obeyed, reverèd; for He shall judge the poor
Through changing generations, with justice, mercy, truth,
While stars maintain their stations, or moons renew their youth.

He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in His path to birth.
Before Him, on the mountains, shall peace, the herald, go,
And righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.

Arabia's desert ranger to Him shall bow the knee;
The Ethiopian stranger His glory come to see;
With offerings of devotion ships from the isles shall meet,
To pour the wealth of oceans in tribute at His feet.

Kings shall fall down before Him, and gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him, His praise all people sing;
For He shall have dominion o'er river, sea and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion or dove's light wing can soar.

For Him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end:

The mountain dews shall nourish a seed in weakness sown,
Whose fruit shall spread and flourish and shake like Lebanon.

O'er every foe victorious, He on His throne shall rest;
From age to age more glorious, all blessing and all blest.
The tide of time shall never His covenant remove;
His Name shall stand forever, His Name to us is Love.

— Words: James Montgomery (1821)
Music (adapted): William H. Monk (1868)

5.0 Praying Psalm 72

- O Lord, cause our leaders to uphold justice. [v. 1]
- Father, send Your Son to reign as King on earth. [v. 8]
- May all nations and people worship the Messiah. [v. 11]
- Thank You for valuing our lives, O God. [v. 14]
- Blessed be the name of the Lord. [v. 17]

6.0 Applying Psalm 72

- God's people should pray for their rulers (1 Tim 2:1-2).
- Father, may Your kingdom come and Your will be done here on earth (Matt 6:10).
- Come quickly, Lord Jesus (Rev 22:20).

Charles Colson reminded delegates
to a National Association of Evangelicals convention
some years ago after Ronald Reagan had spoken to them
and they were all very impressed and cheering wildly,
“The kingdom of God does not arrive on Air Force One.”
— James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols.
(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 606