

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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A Second Look at Psalms: Psalm 72

There was a time, not so long ago, when people spoke of Utopia. What they meant was difficult to understand. They may have had an idea of better things on earth that suited them, although always just outside their grasp. Of course, they had no thought of what was suitable to God! Our talk today describes conditions on earth when the Lord Jesus will sit upon His own throne. These conditions will not be imaginary then, they will be real. The Bible tells of that day when *"a king shall reign in righteousness"*.

What a contrast to the talk last Sunday on Psalm 69. There it was the sufferings of Christ. Today we are to think of His glories in the coming kingdom. At the time this Psalm was written, Solomon was its immediate subject. Like every other servant, he failed. It is obvious that Psalm 72 looks forward to *"a greater than Solomon"*. So the subject of this Psalm is the Lord Jesus Christ, the only perfect King. We often hear the word 'millennium' in these days, relating to the year 2000. The word itself is not in the Bible. However, there are 6 mentions of 'a thousand years' in Revelation 20. This Psalm then is a description of things on earth during this period of a thousand years. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to it as *'the world to come'*.

Let's think now of this Psalm. What kind of rule will it be in that day? The first two verses of this Psalm give a direct answer. Two words occur. They are, *'righteousness'* and *'judgement.'* Let's think of the first of these. Even a casual look will show you that there is not much of that about. In fact the Bible says that righteousness suffers today. Listen to the Apostle Peter, *"...If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye"*. Look around at the world today, whether in industry or politics or whatever, doing right goes by the board. There is a verse in another Psalm that says, *"men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself"*. It doesn't matter how you do it, you still get a pat on the back! It will not be like that during the thousand years' rule of Christ. Righteousness will be reigning, not suffering! It will be inflexible and unchanging. The New Testament says, *"He shall rule them with a rod of iron"*.

The second word used in the opening of this Psalm is 'judgement'. There is a day when the Lord Jesus will sit as Judge upon the great white throne. The dead are judged out of the things written in the books and straight away the sentence is carried out. This will be the last assize. But judgement in our Psalm is different. It means that He will administer justice to all, particularly to the poor and needy. Let's listen to verse 4, *"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor"*. This is the meaning of judgement in our Psalm. The reverse is the rule now. Along with this fairness there will be wisdom available in every situation. We may remember how Solomon pleased the LORD when he asked for wisdom rather than wealth and honour. God gave him wisdom; the incident of the two harlots and the living child is recorded as a sample of Solomon's wisdom. How sad it is that he did not keep this up. Many different forms of government have been attempted by the nations to get rid of inequality but none have succeeded. Great efforts have been made to improve conditions among the working classes. Some of us have lived to see Communism, with its cruelty, rise and fall. It has its privileged classes as well. True justice will not be seen until a divine hand is in control.

The next feature in our Psalm is peace. Why is there so little peace in the world today? The answer is that righteousness is absent. The Bible makes it plain that the fruit of righteousness is peace. We have already referred to the King who will reign in righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ. But He has another name. At Christmas we often think of these words, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"*. When this glorious Person was here they said, *"We will not have this man to reign over us"*. This is another reason why peace among the nations will never be secure until He comes again.

Verse 3 gives us the first mention of peace in Psalm 72. Let's listen to this verse. *"The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness"*. Nations are often pictured as mountains in the Bible. Hills may speak of smaller powers. There won't be any need for the 'United Nations Organisation' then. However, we must be thankful for the great efforts of men to bring peace among nations. Since the Second World War there hasn't been another world war. Sad to say it has been an uneasy peace, mainly among smaller nations. Just look at the situation now! There are so many world conflicts there seems to be no end to it. The Christian shouldn't be disappointed or depressed. We know that there will be no real peace until Jesus reigns. How often our hearts are cheered with this hope. There are other scriptures which tell us of a time of peace on earth. Just listen! *"And He shall judge among*

many people ... and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Micah 4:3). We need to interpret the weaponry differently nowadays! But the message of peace is sure! Another verse occurs in our Psalm on the theme of peace. In the day of Christ, there will be *"abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth"*.

During the thousand years of the reign of Christ men will fear God. Listen to verse 5. *"They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations"*. This does not mean that men are to be terrified of God. It is rather a reverence for God. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul sums up man's character by nature. One of the things he says is, "There is no fear of God before their eyes". How true this is! All around us today there is little fear of God. How often the Lord's name is taken in vain, even among children. Believers today should be marked by the fear of God and His word. Solomon, whose name heads this Psalm, wrote, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom". It means that we bring God into our circumstances and into the decisions we make in life. May we be helped to do so.

We cannot fail to notice the repetition of 'He' in our Psalm. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who is central to the Psalm. All depends upon Him. The word 'appearing' is familiar to all readers of the New Testament. The blessings of the millennium will come in when He appears. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews puts it like this, He shall *"appear the second time without sin unto salvation"*. He appeared the first time *"to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"*. This will never be repeated. Involved in His first coming was His cruel rejection by men. This will all be reversed. What a cheer this gives to us who have trusted Him for our salvation. In another place in the New Testament, Paul writes of those who *"love His appearing"*. The thought of His being publicly honoured gives the Christian great joy.

Let's think of verse 6 of our Psalm. *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth"*. In the years before the setting up of the millennial kingdom, there will have been terrible destruction upon earth, particularly in Israel. Prophecy records the horror of the great tribulation. Because man rises up against God the only answer is judgement. Whatever meaning we may give to the mown grass, just think of the rain coming down in its refreshing showers. What a wonderful change will come in then! We are in debt to the hymn writers on many of these themes, 'He shall come down like showers upon the new mown grass, And joy and hope like flowers spring up where He doth pass'.

Verses 8-11 give us some idea of the extent of the kingdom of Christ. It was ever in the purpose of God from the beginning that the man God made should have dominion over the works of His hands. This was marred by sin. However, it still remains God's purpose. This is expressed in the beginning of the Bible and again in Psalm 8. Listen to it! *"What is man, that Thou art mindful of Him? and the son of man that Thou visitest Him? For Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and honour. Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under His feet"*. Added to this is the quotation in the letter to the Hebrews, applying it to the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer says, *"But now we see not all things put under Him, but we see Jesus ...crowned with glory and honour"*. Let's bring all this into verse 8 of Psalm 72. *"He shall have dominion"*. It will be publicly seen then.

Let us think now of the extent of Christ's dominion: *"from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth"*. Many who have commented on this Psalm have given these limits as referring to Palestine. We must remember that Palestine and the city of Jerusalem will be the centre in that day. However, the whole world will come under the rule of the Lord Jesus. A correct translation of Revelation 11:15 says, *"the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come"*. Further on in Psalm 72 it says, *"Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him"*. Rulers from afar will bring their gifts to Him. We recall the incident of the Queen of Sheba who did that in Solomon's time. She was so impressed by what she saw and heard, we are told that there was no more spirit in her. What will it be when they come to do homage to the Great King? Isaiah the prophet wrote of these things, *"All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD"*. We might even think of the wise men from the east who came with their gifts to the child Jesus. Added to the gold and frankincense, they brought myrrh. The first time the Lord Jesus came to this world He came to suffer, that is the significance of myrrh. He came to lay down His life for us, sinners far from God.

Think now of the physical changes which will take place in the millennium. Verse 16 describes some of them. We will have to quote this verse as it is rendered in other translations, *"There shall be abundance of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains"*. Not handfuls, as it says in the Authorised Version!! Have you ever seen corn growing on the top of the mountains? I haven't. Don't we find it depressing when we see photographs in our newspapers of the tragic results of famine? Little children, little more than skin and bone, with no food available. There are streams of refugees wandering from land to land with no sustenance - sad to say, very largely the results of greed for power among the nations. These verses go on to refer to fruitfulness. *"The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth"*. We can imagine great fields of corn rustling in the breeze, just like the stately cedars in Lebanon move from side to side in the wind. There won't be any inner city problems then. We can remember the great efforts made by governments to solve the matter of deprivation and juvenile crime in the cities.

These problems also arise largely because of the shortage of the basic necessities of life. There are other scriptures that tell the same story. *“Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree”* (Isaiah 55:13). Also *“The desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose”*. All the blight that sin has brought into this fair creation will be removed. As the thousand years roll on, that blight may well be forgotten. We must remember, however, that if sin rears its ugly head it will be speedily dealt with by a righteous God.

Coming to the closing verses of the Psalm, we think again of the Person at the centre of this Psalm. Let's listen to verse 17. *“His name shall endure for ever: His name shall continue as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed”*. There are many names in this world that are accounted great, but none so great as His! The Lord Jesus has many names, but none are actually given here. It is a renown and a dignity that is referred to that will never fade because of who He is. Psalm 41 expresses the hatred for Christ when He was here on earth in the minds of the leaders of Israel, *“When shall He die, and His name perish”*? Our verse gives the answer to this challenge: *“His name shall continue as long as the sun”*. The sun is used here as figure of permanence.

Verses 18 and 19 are a doxology. They ascribe glory to both God and to Christ, the rightful Heir of all things. The Psalm seems to rise higher and higher, *“Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen”*. We who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are fully assured of these things. David the king could say no more. *“The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended”*. The aspirations of a godly Jew are expressed here by David. It doesn't mean that he wouldn't pray any more. His whole being was moved by the sentiments of the Psalm - he could say no more.

The scene we have considered today will be fulfilled on earth. However, there is a heavenly side to that day. We read of this in Revelation 21. There is a city in heaven identified as the “bride, the Lamb's wife”. This is one of the names given to the Church to which believers belong today. We will then reign in heaven with Him. There will be close links between heaven and earth then. The nations on earth bring their glory into the city and walk in the light of it. As we bring this talk to an end today may we be moved, like David was, to bring our worship to God the Spring and Source of all blessing.

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