



Royal Psalms

Introduction

The royal psalms are psalms concerning the king. Many are about earthly kings, especially David. These also reveal much about our heavenly King because the earthly king was to be a reflection of God in his rule and care of his people. Other royal psalms speak directly of God who is the King of the universe.

Some of the royal psalms are also “messianic psalms” because although they were originally written about David, or other faithful kings of the Davidic line, they also look ahead to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. In this way, David is considered to be a “type” of Christ. A Biblical “type” is a person or event in the Old Testament which looks ahead to, or foreshadows, a person or event in the New Testament. The Old Testament “type” was a shadowy figure of the full reality which was to be revealed. David was clearly a type of Christ as a shepherd and anointed king.

We studied five royal psalms last week.

- I. The Triumph of the Lord’s Anointed - Psalm 2
- II. The Lord of Glory is King Forever - Psalm 29
- III. God is King of All the Earth - Psalm 47
- IV. The Reign of God’s King - Psalm 72
- V. The Reign of Messiah Prophesied - Psalm 110

1. The Triumph of the Lord’s Anointed - Psalm 2

Psalm 2 is known as a coronation psalm. It was written for the coronation celebrations of the kings of David’s royal line. The psalm exalts the Lord and His anointed king and exhorts the nations to cease their rebellion against the rule which God has ordained. Psalm 2 is also a messianic psalm. It is quoted by many New Testament writers in reference to Jesus as the promised Messiah: Acts 4:24-28, Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5, and Revelation 1:5, 2:27, and 12:5. Psalm 2 pictures, not only David and his sons who sat on the throne after him, but also his Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he refers to as his Lord in Psalm 110:1.

According to Acts 4:25, the writer of Psalm 2 is David, who celebrates his coronation with assurance of victory over the rebellious nations which surrounded Israel. The psalm also pictures Jesus Christ as *King* (2:6), *Son* (2:7), and victorious ruler of the nations (2:8-9).

A. The Nations’ Rebellion - Psalm 2:1-3

The psalm opens with a rhetorical question, *Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?* The pagan nations had rebelled against Israel and her king, *His Anointed*. (See 1 Samuel 16:12.) Rebellion against the anointed king was the same as rebellion against God Himself (2:2).

B. God’s Rebuke - Psalm 2:4-6

These verses picture God in heaven, sitting upon His throne and laughing at the futility of the nations’ rebellion. God speaks to the rebels *in His wrath* (2:5), showing His contempt for their evil plans. He had established His king upon the throne. The rebels, therefore, were ultimately subject to His omnipotent power. James Montgomery Boice’s comment on these verses is worth repeating, “What is God’s reaction to the haughty words of these pygmy human rulers? God does not tremble. He does not hide behind a vast celestial rampart, counting the enemy and calculating whether or not he has sufficient force to counter this new challenge to his kingdom. He does not even rise from where he is sitting. He simply *laughs* at these great imbeciles” (Psalms).

C. The King’s Proclamation - Psalm 2:7-9

In declaring the *decree*, which refers to the covenant God made with him in 2 Samuel 7, David, the king and psalmist, declares his right to rule.

1. *You are My Son* - 2:7

The covenant stated that the earthly king would be God’s son. “God wanted the kings (David and his line) to regard Him as their Father. From the giving of the Davidic Covenant onward, the term ‘son,’ when used concerning one of the Davidic kings, became a messianic title. It was in this sense that Jesus spoke of Himself as the Son of God. That was a claim to be the Messiah” (Dr. Tom Constable, “Notes on Psalms”).

2. *Today I have begotten You* - 2:7

Today refers to the coronation day. God begat David, and all successive kings, by placing them on the throne.

3. The inheritance - 2:8-9

As a son inherits from his father, so the king inherits the kingdom. In these verses, the king is invited to ask for his inheritance, *the nations.....and the ends of the earth* (2:8). David and his successors never ruled the whole earth. This portion of the psalm awaits fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 9 describes the subjugation of the nations. The picture given is reminiscent of the Egyptian pharaohs who customarily took their scepters to smash pottery jars marked to represent rebellious cities or nations. God's King will not have to resort to pottery jars!

D. The Psalmist's Warning - Psalm 2:10-12

The psalmist exhorts the nations to be wise and reverently submit to the Lord, since it is ultimately He whom they are rebelling against. *Kiss the Son* (2:12) is a call to do homage and submit to the Lord and His anointed King. If they do not, they will *perish* (2:12). Only those who *put their trust in Him* will be *blessed* (2:12).

There is evidence that Psalm 2 was originally part of Psalm 1 (which we studied in Lesson 2). If so, then the two are closely linked and Psalm 2 may be considered a continuation of the "doctrine of two ways," the way of the righteous and the way of the sinner. James Montgomery Boice ([Psalms](#)) points out that in Psalm 2, the way of sinners now becomes a "cosmic revolt of the nations against God and His Anointed. It becomes an unfolding of the wrong path and its consequences. On the other hand, the righteous man of the opening psalm is now explicitly seen to be God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ ... It is by taking refuge in Jesus that the judgment awaiting the wicked can be avoided."

Ultimately, Psalm 2 is a picture of rebellion against God. It is a call to all people to submit to the sovereignty of God and *Kiss the Son*. Have you turned from your rebellion and humbled your heart in submission to the Son?

II. The Lord of Glory is King Forever - Psalm 29

Psalm 29 is about God, the King. It is a powerful description of the glory of the Lord revealed in a violent thunderstorm. The psalm was written by David, perhaps to discredit the pagan belief that their gods brought the rains and were the power behind storms. David's glorious psalm begins with *mighty ones* giving glory to God and ends with the quiet blessing of peace upon His people. The entire psalm is filled with praise and glory to God who is King forever! There are only eleven verses in Psalm 29, but *the Lord* is mentioned eighteen times.

A. The Glory of the Lord - Psalm 29:1-2

The psalmist, David, addresses *you mighty ones* (29:1), probably a reference to God's angelic beings, although some commentators take it to refer to mighty men of God. These *mighty ones* are called to ascribe glory to the Lord and to worship Him. All creatures are to give Him glory because He is the *King of glory* (Psalm 24:7)!

Notice that the phrase, *Give unto the Lord* is repeated three times in these first two verses. Each time the forcefulness of the statement builds, culminating in an exhortation to *Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*. The Lord is the one and unchangeable holy God. He alone is to be worshiped!

B. The Lord in the Thunderstorm - Psalm 29:3-9

This section of the psalm describes a powerful thunderstorm moving over the Mediterranean Sea, sweeping across the land of Canaan, and finally moving out across the desert. Notice that all the verses in this section are parallelism in which the second line is a repetition and usually an intensification of the first.

1. *The voice of the Lord* - 29:3-9

The constant repetition of the phrase, *the voice of the Lord*, is like the rumble of thunder through the psalm. It is a faithful reminder that God is in the storm.

2. The description of the storm - 29:3-9

The dark clouds of the storm are first sighted *over the waters* (29:3), probably the Mediterranean Sea. The distant thunder is powerful and evokes thoughts of the majesty of the Lord. The storm makes landfall in verse 5, breaking the mighty cedars of Lebanon into splinters. It is so fierce that even the mountains, *Lebanon and Sirion* (Mt. Hermon) tremble (29:6). The *flames of fire* (29:7) describe the lightning which accompanies the thunder. In verses 8 and 9, the storm passes into the wilderness, the southern Desert of Kadesh, shaking the earth and causing deer to give birth to their young. Strong winds strip the leaves from the trees of the forest.

3. *And in His temple everyone says, "Glory!"* - 29:9

This may refer to the angelic host of heaven giving glory to God (verses 1-3) or it may refer to the literal temple in Jerusalem where God's people, in response to His mighty display of power in the storm, raise their voices and shout *Glory!* John Calvin ([Calvin's Commentaries](#)) notes that "God's voice fills the whole world, and spreads itself to its farthest limits; but the psalmist declares that His glory is celebrated only in His church (His temple), because God not only speaks intelligibly and distinctly

there, but also gently allures the faithful to Himself.” The world hears the thunder but fails to recognize the voice of God in it and therefore fails to give Him glory. Ears are attuned to the sounds of the world but are deaf to God. Those who open their ears and hearts to listen to Him cannot help but shout *glory!*

C. The Sovereignty of the Lord - Psalm 29:10-11

The storm has passed, but God remains *King forever*. He sat enthroned as King in Noah’s day when He caused the mighty floodwaters to cover the earth (Genesis 7). He is King of the thunderstorm. He will be King forever!

The same power by which God brought the storm and the flood are available to His people. His strength is our strength. And just as God causes the storm to subside, He also blesses His people with peace.

III. God is King of All the Earth - Psalm 47

Psalm 47 is another psalm of God, the King. It is among those classified as an enthronement (sometimes called “kingship”) psalm, along with Psalms 93 and 95 - 99. The common characteristics of the enthronement psalms are a concern for all the peoples of the earth, the proclamation of great acts of God, and a call to praise the Heavenly King. These psalms also speak prophetically of the kingdom of God. Psalm 47 looks forward to the day when *every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Philippians 2:10-11). That will be the glorious day when *The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!* (Revelation 11:15).

The writing of this psalm is attributed to the sons of Korah.

A. God is Sovereign Over All the Earth - Psalm 47:1-4

The psalmist calls *all you peoples* (47:1), not just the people of Israel, but all the nations, to exuberantly worship God because He is the *awesome* and *great* universal sovereign (47:2). The psalmist describes two ways in which God had demonstrated His sovereignty: 1) by subduing the nations and 2) by taking Israel into the land He had chosen to give them as an inheritance. See Deuteronomy 7:1-11. All the nations had witnessed God’s sovereignty in these mighty acts.

B. God Reigns - Psalm 47:5-9

This passage is a prophecy which expresses the hope of all believers.

1. God is King of all the earth - 47:5-7

In these verses, God ascends to His throne to rule over all the earth. There is great fanfare. The trumpet sounds. Five times in three verses the psalmist calls for the singing of praises. Those who sing praises are to understand: God has taken His throne. The kingdom of God has come in its fulness. The prayer of Matthew 6:10, *Your kingdom come, Your will be done*, has been answered.

2. God sits on His holy throne - 47:8-9

The King of the earth reigns. Those who were once far off, *the princes of the people*, have gathered together to become fellow heirs with Abraham. God had promised Abraham that in him *all the families of the earth shall be blessed* (Genesis 12:3). Psalm 47 celebrates the fulfillment of that promise. God reigns! He pours out His blessings. And He rules, for all the power of heaven and earth are His. *He is greatly exalted* (47:9). See also Ephesians 3:6.

The *people of the God of Abraham* (47:9) who have gathered to sing praises are all people of faith, as attested in Galatians 3:9, *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham*. Jesus told the Jews, *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad* (John 8:56). People of faith are those who rejoice in the salvation that Jesus Christ has brought. Those who rejoice with Abraham are the ones who *receive the promise of the Spirit through faith* (Galatians 3:14) and look forward to the day depicted in Psalm 47!

IV. The Reign of God’s King - Psalm 72

Psalm 72 is a description of the reign of the earthly king, Solomon, but in the fulness of its interpretation, it looks ahead to the reign of the heavenly King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Solomon, the son and successor of King David, is designated as the writer of this psalm in which he prays for blessing upon his reign. Psalm 72 is a picture of the blessings which flow from the righteousness of God’s appointed king. It is a portrayal of the ideal king who rules with wisdom, justice, and righteousness. Therefore, the descriptions in Psalm 72 must necessarily go beyond their application to Solomon and must finally be understood as anticipating Solomon’s ultimate successor, the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Isaiah 11:1-5, which is a description of the Messiah’s reign, and notice the close resemblance to Psalm 72.

A. The King’s Righteousness - Psalm 72:1-7

Solomon prayed for the ability to rule with justice and righteousness (72:1-4). This is reminiscent of his

request of God in 1 Kings 3:9, *Therefore give to your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?* Solomon saw great benefits for the people as a result of his just and righteous rule. It would cause them to fear God (72:5) and it would bring prosperity to the land, *like showers that water the earth* (72:6). Righteous people would flourish and peace would prevail (72:7).

B. The King's Dominion - Psalm 72:8-11

The king's rule is described as extending from the Euphrates River *to the ends of the earth* (72:8). Solomon's desire was to establish justice and righteousness throughout the earth as a benefit to all people. His kingdom was never this extensive, though it did encompass all the land from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea (1 Kings 4:21). The prophecy of Psalm 72:11, *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him* awaits fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The King's Compassion - Psalm 72:12-14

Solomon desired a kingdom built upon compassion, an attribute sadly lacking in the politics of our modern world. However, Christ our King cares for the needy, the poor, and the helpless. He rescues the oppressed and victims of violence. Until He comes in His glory to establish His eternal reign (Revelation 11:15), Christians are to be His arms of compassion in this world.

How do you show His compassion to those in need?

D. The King's Prosperity - Psalm 72:15-17

Solomon pictured the material blessings of his rule. Gold poured in from Sheba (72:15 and 1 Kings 10:1-2) and grain and fruit grew abundantly even on the tops of the mountains (72:16). Solomon pictured people expressing their gratitude by praying for him and praising him every day (72:15). He saw this praise as enduring forever (72:17). People would not forget him because of the great blessings of his reign.

The last two lines of verse 17, *All men shall be blessed in Him; All nations shall call Him blessed*, are clearly linked to God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, *And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*. This blessing has come through the Lord Jesus Christ, descendant of Solomon, descendant of Abraham. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ* (Ephesians 1:3).

E. Doxology - Psalm 72:18-20

The final lines are a closing benediction for the psalm and also for Book 2 of the Psalms. (See Lesson 1 for division of books of the psalms.) The benediction blesses God and His glorious name and prays for the whole earth to be filled with His glory.

There is much conjecture concerning the last verse of Psalm 72. Was it an editorial addition to an earlier edition of the psalms in which David's psalms were grouped together? Was this psalm really written by David, for and about Solomon? Or was it written by Solomon as a prayer soon after David's death, or perhaps as he lay on his deathbed? The important thing is that this beautiful psalm honors and glorifies God in an optimistic and sincere spirit of righteousness and trust in Him. It also gives a glimpse of the great hope of Christ's eternal kingdom which is to come.

V. The Reign of Messiah Prophesied - Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is a royal coronation psalm written by David, probably to celebrate his enthronement in Jerusalem following his defeat of the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:6-9). But completely overshadowing that event is the description, seen in every line, of a descendant of David who would also be His Lord. That is what makes Psalm 110 the greatest of the messianic psalms. It is not an overstatement to say that Psalm 110 is all about the Messiah, the son of David who is also the Son of God. We see Him here as the prophesied King, perpetual Priest, and powerful Judge. Much of what is written in this psalm is made more clear in the New Testament. Psalm 110 is the psalm most quoted by New Testament writers.

A. The Prophesied King - Psalm 110:1-3

Verse 1 describes a conversation between the *LORD* (in capital letters), the Hebrew "Jehovah" or "Yahweh", the God of Israel, and David's *Lord*, the Hebrew "Adonai" which refers to a person of greater stature or importance than David. "Here is a case of David's citing God's words in which God tells another personage, who is greater than David, to sit at God's right hand until God makes the person's enemies a footstool for the person's feet. This person can only be a divine Messiah, who is Jesus Christ" (James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms](#)).

1. Jesus is *Lord* - 110:1

Jesus Himself quoted verse 1 to show that He was both David's descendant and the Messiah. Mark 12:35-37 makes it clear that David refers to his Son as his *Lord*, thus the Messiah.

2. The Lord rules - 110:1-3

God commanded Messiah (*Lord*) to sit at His right hand; the place of honor, power, and authority. From this position, He will rule over His enemies until the time they are completely subjugated to Him. Ephesians 1:19-23 teaches that Jesus is now seated at God's right hand. God has raised Him from the dead and *seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet.*

Jesus is King. He is no longer the sweet baby in the manger or the suffering servant nailed to the cross. He is King, ruling from the right hand of God, extending His kingdom throughout the world. Verse 3 describes how He works through His people who willingly serve their holy, heavenly King. He works through believers who are sprinkled like the morning dew across the face of the earth (110:3). Christians are His army, fighting for Him "by suffering, by faith, and by the preaching of God's word" (Martin Luther, as cited in Psalms, James Montgomery Boice).

B. The Perpetual Priest - Psalm 110:4

Jesus, the Messiah, the King of the universe, is also our Great High Priest. By solemn oath, God has made Him *priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek*. In the Old Testament (Genesis 14:18-20) we learn only three things about Melchizedek. First, He was the priest of God Most High. Secondly, the meaning of his name designates him as *king of righteousness*. Thirdly, he was *king of Salem* which means *king of peace*.

Jesus' priesthood is not of the imperfect Old Testament order of Aaron whose priests ministered by physical succession for their brief lifetimes in an earthly sanctuary, continually offering sacrifices for the sins of the people and for themselves. Jesus is of *the order of Melchizedek* (110:4 and Hebrews 5:10), a priesthood with no beginning and no end (Hebrews 7:13), instituted by God's solemn oath (Psalm 110:4). As Priest, Jesus offered Himself, one sacrifice, once for all, the perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9:11-12). He now sits at the right hand of God, His work of atonement for sins completed. *He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them* (Hebrews 7:25).

C. The Powerful Judge - Psalm 110:5-7

These verses speak of the Messiah dispensing judgment at the right hand of God. He will judge and destroy all who are in rebellion against God. He will wage war. *The day of His wrath* (110:5) is the same as *the day of the Lord*, described in Joel 2:1-11; 3:11-14 and Amos 5:18-20. It is the day of judgment of God's enemies (Isaiah 13:9) and a day of deliverance for the *survivors whom the Lord calls* (Joel 2:32). See also Romans 9:27. On this great day the Lord Jesus Christ will be exalted (110:7). See also Philippians 2:9-11.

Application

The apostle Peter writes further of the *day of the Lord*, that it *will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*. Peter then asks, *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?* (2 Peter 3:1-12). Peter's question is for you as well!

Therefore, *what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God* (2 Peter 3:11) in light of what you have learned from these psalms about your God and King?

