

PSALMS

Chapter 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! ⁵ May they fear you 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! ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River 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! 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. 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! 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! 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! 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! ²⁰ The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

Ps 72† A prayer for the king, a son of David who rules on David's throne as God's earthly regent over his people. It may have been used at the time of the king's coronation (as possibly were Ps 2; 110). Possibly vv. 2–11, 17 are expressly a petition. They express the desire of the nation that the king's reign will, as a consequence of God's endowment of his servant, be characterized by justice and righteousness, the supreme virtues of kingship. The prayer reflects the ideal concept of the king and the glorious effects of his reign. See Jeremiah's indictment of some of the last Davidic kings (e.g., Jer 22:2–3, 13, 15) and the prophetic announcement of the Messiah's righteous rule (see Isa 9:7; 11:4–5; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16; Zec 9:9). Later Jewish tradition saw in this psalm a description of the Messiah, as did the early church. The last three verses do not belong to the prayer. (CSB)

Format: Vv 1–4, prayer for the king; vv 5–7, may the righteous flourish; vv 8–11, may all other kings serve the king; vv 12–14, the king has pity; vv 15–17, may the king's name endure forever; vv 18–19, bless the Lord; v 20, colophon for an early edition of the Psalter (Books One and Two; Ps 1–72). (TLSB)

72 title *Of Solomon.* Either by him or for him—of course, both may be true. Undoubtedly it was also used by Israel (Judah) as a prayer for later Davidic kings. (CSB)

Hbr could mean “for Solomon” or “by Solomon” (or perhaps both) for the occasion of his coronation; it may well have been used at the coronation of other kings from David's line. In accord with the promise of 2Sm 7:8–17, the line of Davidic kings prophetically pointed to the ultimate Son of David, Jesus. Just: “It [Ps 72] refers also to our Christ” (ANF 1:211). (TLSB)

72:1 The basic prayer. *justice ... righteousness*. May the king be endowed with the gift for and the love of justice and righteousness so that his reign reflects the rule of God himself. Solomon asked for wisdom (see 1Ki 3:9, 11–12; see also Pr 16:12). (CSB)

Justice and righteousness would be desirable attributes of a king's rule. (TLSB)

The outstanding characteristic of the Messiah's kingdom is justice. His rule is not based on arbitrary power, but on genuine righteousness. The righteousness of Christ's rule is reflected in two ways. First there is the justice of the gospel through which Christ gives his people forgiveness and eternal life. This decree of forgiveness is just, because Christ has paid for their sins in full. There is also the justice of the law through which Christ crushes the enemies of his people and all defy God. (PBC)

righteousness. CSB note 4:1 – Initial request to be heard. *righteous*. Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. This faithfulness is in full accordance with his commitments (both expressed and implied) to his people and with his status as the divine King—to whom the powerless may look for protection, the oppressed for redress and the needy for help. (CSB)

Hebrew is “tsadaq,” which means “proved right” or “in good order.” It is used to describe a person in a right relationship with God, trusting God's promised salvation and living by the covenant promise. The Psalms describe how the wicked plot against the righteous, but the Lord watches over the righteous and delivers them. God is righteous because He faithfully and justly keeps His Word. (TLSB p. 843)

Hbr *tsedaqah*, “blamelessness, honesty, justice.” An attribute of God praised in the Psalms. The expression “in Your righteousness deliver me” (71:2; cf 5:8; 31:1; 89:16; 119:40; 143:11) describes the psalmist asking God to keep His promise of salvation (see “righteous acts” and “deeds of salvation” in 71:15). He is the source of righteousness (4:1), which is the basis for the biblical teaching of righteousness or justification through faith (cf Gn 15:6; Rm 3:21–5:11). (TLSB – p. 843)

72:2–7 The quality of his reign: May it be righteous, prosperous and enduring. (CSB)

72:3 King's rule is so extraordinary that it has a positive effect on the entire land, even the whole creation. (TLSB)

the mountains – In this psalm, as in many other prophetic passages, eternal things are described in earthly terms. In prophetic writing the mountains and hills often symbolize exaltation or being raised up from lowliness. (PBC)

Righteousness in the realm will be like fertilizing rain on the land, for then the Lord will bless his people with abundance (see vv. 6–7; 5:12; 65:9–13; 133:3; Lev 25:19; Dt 28:8). (CSB)

bear prosperity – The peace and prosperity enjoyed in the Messiah's kingdom are not merely earthly prosperity, but the peace and prosperity of eternity, which we begin to enjoy through faith already in this life. (PBC)

72:5-7 Figurative depiction of the splendor of eternity. Ambrose: “The divine Scriptures promised us this rain upon the whole earth, to water the world with the dew of the Divine Spirit at the coming of the Savior.... So now we drink, who before were thirsty” (*NPNF* 2 10:94). (TLSB)

72:5 *while sun endures*. The king's life has been spared—to live for ever and ever.). – Only Christ rules until the end of this age and on into eternity. (CSB)

72:6 For another vivid metaphor expressive of the significance of the Lord's anointed for the realm see La 4:20. (CSB)

The gentle showers that water the land are symbols of the spiritual blessings that refresh the soul. (PBC)

72:7 *flourish*. Because the king supports and protects them, but uses all his royal power to suppress the wicked (see Ps 101). (CSB)

72:8–14 The extent of his domain (vv. 8–11) as the result of his righteous rule (vv. 12–14). (CSB)

72:8 His kingdom will reach to the full extent of the promised land, but his authority will extend to all the world (see vv. 9–11). Ideally and potentially, as God's earthly regent, he possesses royal authority that extends on earth as far as God's—an expectation that is fulfilled in Christ. (CSB)

sea to sea...river – The farthest geographical extent of the land of Israel (achieved under the reign of Solomon). Even as the land promised to Israel pointed beyond itself to life in heaven (Heb 11:14–16), so the expression here points to the universal extent of Christ's dominion (Mt 28:18), seen also from v 11. (TLSB)

72:9 The tribes of the Arabian Desert to the east will yield to him. (CSB)

Unruly tribes in the wilderness of the Arabian Peninsula. (TLSB)

Every knee will bow to him. We see the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy as people of every nation come to faith in Christ. We will see its completion on the last day, when every living being will acknowledge Christ's lordship, either willingly in heaven or unwillingly in hell. (PBC)

lick the dust. See Mic 7:17. (CSB)

Description of submission. (TLSB)

Implies humiliation and defeat in an ancient Near Eastern context, where defeated rulers were often forced to do obeisance by placing their faces on the ground. (TLSB)

72:10 The kings whose lands border the Mediterranean Sea to the west will acknowledge him as overlord, as will those who rule in south Arabia and along the eastern African coast. (CSB)

Kingdoms south of Egypt or on the southern Arabian Peninsula, known for their riches. (TLSB)

Tarshish. A distant Mediterranean seaport, perhaps as far west as modern Spain. (CSB)

Seba. Elsewhere in the OT associated with Cush (Ge 10:7; Isa 43:3); it may refer to a region in modern Sudan, south of Egypt. (CSB)

tribute – Hebrew term was found written on a potsherd at Kadesh-barnea, an oasis south of Judah in the Negeb, from which trade could go toward Egypt or toward the Red Sea. The inscription may have marked tribute to Israel or from Israel. Ezk 27:15 tells of a similar “payment.” (TLSB)

72:12-14 Describes an ideal rule; the Israelites pray that their king might rule this way. (TLSB)

72:12 *he delivers the needy* – If we think of one word to describe Jesus that word is “Savior.” When he came to earth, he showed compassion for the poor and needy, for the weak and the oppressed. He often delivered them from bondage to physical ailments, and even from death. But most important is the fact that he delivered them and us from the bondage to sin and Satan. No one else can help us against these enemies. (PBC)

72:15–17 Concluding summation: May the king enjoy a long, prosperous, world-renowned reign—one that blesses all the nations. (CSB)

72:17 *All nations.* The language recalls the promise to Abraham (see Ge 12:3; 22:18) and suggests that it will be fulfilled through the royal son of David—ultimately the Messiah. (CSB)

These words point to Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise of 2Sm 7:8–17. (TLSB)

72:18–19 A doxology at the conclusion of Book II of the Psalter. It is the people’s response, their “Amen.” (CSB)

Doxology concludes not merely this psalm but the entire Book Two of the Psalter (Ps 42–72). (TLSB)

72:19 *filled with his glory.* Wherever God’s saving power is displayed, his glory is revealed. (CSB)

72:20 An editorial notation probably carried over from an earlier collection of psalms ascribed exclusively to David. (CSB)

Editorial note may indicate that at one time the entire Psalter ended here. In Book Three (Ps 73–89), only Ps 86 is attributed to David. (TLSB)

Ps 72 The psalmist realizes that even the best of the Davidic kings fell short of the ideal. So we also often fail to live as we should. Yet our hope is in David’s Son and Lord, Jesus Christ, who has brought us eternal salvation. • “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.” Amen. (LSB 398:1) (TLSB)