

The King Who Rains

Psalm 72 May 26, 2024

In 1955, the king of Thailand travelled through the largest region of his kingdom. It was dried by drought. Crops were failing. The people there suffered from chronic poverty and malnutrition, even though they faithfully gathered each year to shoot homemade rockets into the sky “to ask the weather god to release the monsoon upon the earth.”

The situation was dire, so, the king started developing a plan. In 1969, after 14 years of research, the Royal Rainmaking Project was a go. A fleet of aircraft distributed dry-ice flakes over the tops of clouds. The government says that it started raining within 15 minutes. The Project continues today. In 2019, they conducted over 1,600 rainmaking operations throughout the kingdom.¹ Sadly, as of 2020, Thailand was still experiencing drought - the worst in 40 years.²

Psalm 72 is a song about a great kingdom and a great king. His reign is unlike any we’ve seen. There is a perfect harmony between God and sovereign and citizens and even *nature*. Who *wouldn’t* want to live in this kingdom under this king?

Above verse 1 we see the words, “Of Solomon.” We assume that means “by” Solomon, but it could also mean “for Solomon,” or “concerning Solomon.” There’s a little bit of confusion because this Psalm is the only one to also have a *postscript*. The last verse tells us, “The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are concluded.” It’s possible he wrote this song for his son. It’s possible they worked on it together. And some scholars think it may have been used at Solomon’s coronation.³

That makes sense because in this song we see an ideal king and an ideal kingdom. One commentator calls it “A vision for government.”⁴ And it’s *quite* a vision. We’ll see it’s so great that *no* human king could ever live up to it.

Psalm 72:1-4 - ¹ God, give your justice to the king and your righteousness to the king’s son. ² He will judge your people with righteousness and your afflicted ones with justice. ³ May the mountains bring well-being to the people and the hills, righteousness. ⁴ May he vindicate the afflicted among the people, help the poor, and crush the oppressor.

Rulers sometimes pick up a nickname. Ivan the Terrible. William the Conqueror. Cautious Cal. John Adams was referred to as “His Rotundity.”⁵ The king of Israel should always have “*the righteous*” after his name. Righteousness is the theme of this opening stanza. It should define the nation of Israel and the man on the throne.

¹ Suvat Chirapant *The King And The Cloud – The Story Behind The Royal Rainmaking Project*

² <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/146293/drought-hits-thailand>

³ C. Hassell Bullock *Psalms, Volume 1: Psalms 1-72*

⁴ John Goldingay *Psalms, Volume 2: Psalms 42-89*

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nicknames_of_presidents_of_the_United_States

Sometimes we use the word "righteousness" and we think, "Well, that means not being bad." The word means implies a *standard*. We talk about meeting standards, a standard of living, standard time, the gold standard. The king of Israel must conform to the standard *given* to him by God.⁶

Solomon prays at his coronation, "Lord, give me *Your* justice and *Your* righteousness so that I can rule the people and judge fairly so that the whole kingdom overflows with well-being."

Today, government policies are often conformed to the result of polls - *skewed* polls. Or shaped around selective data - statistics that reinforce certain ideas or perspectives. But the *ideal* kingdom is one where God's righteousness and kindness are the standard.

The song has just begun, but already Solomon cannot live up to the ideal. No human king could be so righteous the mountains work with him in blessing the people. No king has been able to help every suffering person in his kingdom and always judge fairly in every case. The ambition of this first stanza are higher than any human government has ever been able to achieve.

Psalm 72:5-7 - ⁵ May they fear you while the sun endures and as long as the moon, throughout all generations. ⁶ May the king be like rain that falls on the cut grass, like spring showers that water the earth. ⁷ May the righteous flourish in his days and well-being abound until the moon is no more.

The king of Psalm 72 is a king who *rains* in nourishment and benefit and provision on his people. In reality, where does every government get the money it has? It has to take it from the people. That's one of the reasons why God didn't want Israel to have a king, originally. When they said, "We want a king," God sent messengers to tell them, "No you don't. He'll tax you. He'll take your land. He'll take your sons and daughters. He'll take your labor."

But here we see what God wants for His people. His desire is that the king would nourish them and help them to grow. The poor, the afflicted. Those with less access than others. In this song, the blessing is for *all* of them, for *all* the people and it was meant for every generation.

It begs the question: If this was God's intention, why isn't there a son of David sitting on the throne in Israel right now? If the moon still shines at night, why isn't there a Davidic king in Jerusalem?

Most of you know why things are the way they are. Israel not only rejected God's way of doing things, they rejected God. After centuries of patience and mercy and trying to bring them back, God allowed judgment to fall on the nation of Israel. *But*, He hasn't given up on them. His promises, His intentions, His affection for them persist. He still guarantees that, one day, a son of David will sit on the throne and Israel will experience the righteous blessings described in this song.

Solomon was a great man who started with a lot of promise. When God appeared to him in a dream and said, "What do you want Me to give you," Solomon said, "Give me the wisdom so I can

⁶ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. Vol. 5.*

lead this great people!" He had care and affection for his subjects. But, we know that ultimately he failed to live up to this stanza, too. Just after he died, the people of Israel came to Solomon's son and said, "Hey, your dad worked us to the bone. He put a harsh yoke of labor on us."⁷ He wasn't a refreshing rain to them, but a heavy weight.

Psalm 72:8-11 - ⁸ May he rule from sea to sea and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. ⁹ May desert tribes kneel before him and his enemies lick the dust. ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and the coasts and islands bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. ¹¹ Let all kings bow in homage to him, all nations serve him.

May he rule from sea to sea! We've been hearing a chant recently: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!" Of course, the meaning is, "Let's kill all the Jews who live in Israel."

Notice the difference in the way our God does things. First of all, His intention is to establish a righteous and wonderful Kingdom that covers the whole earth and He has the power to do it. It is His *right* because the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. *But* in His grace, when He sets up His forever Kingdom, He will allow nations to still exist,⁸ *and* He will allow them the freedom to obey or disobey.⁹ Now, disobedience will bring consequences, but this is a God grace, not genocide. A God Who invites, Who welcomes, Who makes a place for those who want in.

In this kingdom, though Israel will always remain distinct, we see that Gentiles will be grafted in.

Solomon did expand the territory of Israel up to the Euphrates river.¹⁰ But he definitely didn't live up to this stanza. The friendships he made with Gentiles didn't make him more righteous. In fact, it was his practice of marrying foreign wives, some for alliances, that drew his heart away from God.

Psalm 72:12-14 - ¹² For he will rescue the poor who cry out and the afflicted who have no helper. ¹³ He will have pity on the poor and helpless and save the lives of the poor. ¹⁴ He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious in his sight.

Ronald Regan famously said that the nine most terrifying words in the English language are, "I'm from the government and I'm here to help." Sadly, the people God installs to *protect* others often become the ones who do the oppressing, who cause the affliction, who commit the violence.

The throne of Israel was supposed to protect the weak. All government is supposed to because God's heart is to help the weak. It is His delight to use His infinite strength to rescue. To save. He is the *Redeemer* King, Who uses His own wealth, His own resources, to pay for your freedom. To pay for your future. He left His throne *Personally* to come down and save you. As far as I know, the King of Thailand didn't fly any of those planes, let alone empty his vaults to save his starving people.

⁷ 2 Chronicles 10:3-4

⁸ Micah 4:2

⁹ Zechariah 14:17

¹⁰ <https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Maps/Pages/The%20Kingdom%20of%20David%20and%20Solomon%20-%201000%20BCE.aspx>

A few weeks ago I was at a Christian graduation ceremony and the main speaker talked about how important it is that you work to be a part of the Kingdom of God. He referenced the parable of the Pearl of Great Price and said, "Do whatever you have to to gain the kingdom of God." And I was so disappointed because, *no!* No, *YOU* are the pearl! *You* are the treasure and *God* is the One Who gave *everything* to have you!¹¹ You are *precious* in His sight. Your life matters. Your future matters. He has *such* plans for you and He spares no expense in accomplishing what He desires for you.

You may ask, "Well, if that's true, why am I suffering? Why don't I *feel* protected or provided for or sheltered?" Psalm 72 doesn't promise that you'll never suffer or struggle. What it tells us is that the Great King will save, will show pity, will redeem. You are *His* and He loves you and He will not forget to accomplish His plans for your life.

Of course, Solomon didn't live up to this stanza either. *No* king could care this much. It's impossible. There isn't enough time. There isn't enough money. There isn't enough power for a human king to help *every* suffering person in his kingdom.

Psalm 72:15-17 - ¹⁵ May he live long! May gold from Sheba be given to him. May prayer be offered for him continually, and may he be blessed all day long. ¹⁶ May there be plenty of grain in the land; may it wave on the tops of the mountains. May its crops be like Lebanon. May people flourish in the cities like the grass of the field. ¹⁷ May his name endure forever; as long as the sun shines, may his fame increase. May all nations be blessed by him and call him blessed.

During the time when David and his sons were king, if the nation of Israel honored God and went His way, they would be materially blessed. The crops, the weather, the economy, all of those things would be miraculously good. That was God's promise to them.

Sadly, the hearts of the kings turned away from God and the people followed. Solomon didn't live up to this stanza. At the end of his life, he no longer loved the Lord. Solomon's son didn't care about the people *at all*. And the kingdom split into two nations and it was downhill from there.

Instead of *flourishing*, theirs was a history of *fracturing*. But, their failure is not *God's* failure. In fact, the Lord faithfully preserved a remnant. He extended centuries of mercy and help and deliverance and forgiveness again and again and again, even when the nation was unfaithful.

Now, God has a great plan for your life. That plan is for *growth* and progress as you walk with Him. His plan is that the whole world would be blessed by His grace.

There in verse 17 we hear again the promise He made all the way back in the time of Abraham - that "all the nations would be blessed." That's His desire. More than desire, that is His *work*. A work He is still accomplishing and will complete and we get to participate in.

¹¹ *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

Psalm 72:18-19 - ¹⁸ Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does wonders. ¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name forever; the whole earth is filled with his glory. Amen and amen.

Solomon was a great man - the wisest to ever live. But as the song comes to a close he and David and everyone else acknowledge that it is *God alone* Who does wonders. It wasn't the throne of Israel that gave wealth or power or greatness, it was the God Who *established* the throne.

And so, as the coronation ceremony ends, they recognize that they needed someone *greater* than Solomon. Someone Whose name would be above every other name. Someone Whose glory would fill the whole earth. Someone Who could live up to the ideal.

"Amen and amen" - Let it be true, yes, let it happen!

It was a long wait with a lot of let downs over the centuries. But then something amazing happened. In Matthew 12 a descendant of David shows up and He says this, "Look, something greater than Solomon is here."¹² And He told them, "The Kingdom is at hand! The Kingdom you've been waiting for. That perfect, wondrous, ideal Kingdom from Psalm 72."

But what was the response? The leaders of Israel rejected the King. The Romans nailed Him to a cross. And so, the ideal Kingdom was put on hold. It's not an allegorical Kingdom. We don't build it ourselves. We're waiting for that moment, announced in Revelation 11, when it *happens* - when the Kings comes again for the last time and: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever."¹³ When the whole earth is filled with the righteous, gracious, perfect glory of God.

Psalm 72:20 - ²⁰ The prayers of David son of Jesse are concluded.

The prayers were concluded, but the plan continues. God's plan for this world, God's plan for *your* life is continuing. The Root and the Offspring of David is alive and He loves you and invites you to accept Him as King - to enthrone Him in heart heart while we wait for His earthly throne to be established.

We still have a vision for government. It's the vision shown to us in Bible prophecy like the Revelation, the end of Ezekiel, the book of Isaiah. We know the King Who lives up to every stanza of Psalm 72. The One Who will accomplish this ideal. And so, each day we can crown Him in our hearts and pray, "Your Kingdom come." Knowing one day it will and all will be right and good and wonderful because the King Who rains will bless us with His grace and power and righteousness forever and ever, amen.

¹² Matthew 12:42

¹³ Revelation 11:15