

Unit Theme: Non-Davidic Psalms

July 21, 2024 (Lesson 8)

THE MESSIAH'S UNIVERSAL REIGN

- 1. Majesty of the Messiah-King** (Psalm 45:1-8)
- 2. Messiah's Reign Over the Nations** (Psalm 47:1-4)
- 3. The Lord Is Exalted** (Psalm 47:5-9)

Central Truth: The Lord Jesus Christ will rule in truth and justice over all the earth.

Focus: Reflect on and rejoice in the magnificence of Christ's coming kingdom on earth.

Evangelism Emphasis: Everyone is invited to live forever in Christ's kingdom.

Golden Text: "For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (Psalm 47:2-3).

Psalms 45 and 47 were originally composed with the Davidic dynasty in mind. The kings ruled from Jerusalem as the anointed servants of the Lord God. Even so, the early church interpreted these psalms as speaking prophetically to the rule of the Messiah—Jesus Christ. As we study, we will keep in mind the original Hebrew context, but we will focus on how these words speak to God's rule over all creation through Christ.

These two psalms are attributed to the "sons of Korah." Korah, a cousin of Aaron and Moses, is remembered because of his rebellion against Moses and God's subsequent judgment against him (Num. 16:19-33). The surviving descendants of Korah became distinguished by their priestly service in Israel's worship (26:11; 2 Chron. 20:19).

1. MAJESTY OF THE MESSIAH-KING

As the title suggests, Psalm 45 was composed to be recited as a love song/poem at a royal wedding addressing the king and his bride. Therefore, the exposition that follows will focus on how this psalm speaks to God's rule through Christ and His bride, the church.

A. Gracious and Blessed (Psalm 45:1-2)

1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. 2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

The appearance of the bridegroom is “most excellent” (v. 2 NIV) or “most handsome” (NASB). The kings of Israel were renowned for their appearance. Saul was “a young and handsome man . . . taller than any of the people” (1 Sam. 9:2 NASB). David had “beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance” (16:12; 17:42 NASB).

In the ancient Hebrew context, “the children of men” (Ps. 45:2) is a reference to all the descendants of Adam. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God to rule over the earth (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 8:4-8). Likewise, the sons of David were installed by God and adopted as God’s sons to rule over God’s earthly kingdom (2 Chron. 6:16). Since a royal wedding was a public event, the invited guests included the princes of Israel, as well as royal delegations from surrounding kingdoms. All guests wore clothing appropriate to the royal event. As the royal bridegroom was presented before the assembled guests, he would have been clothed in great splendor to signify the status and wealth of his family and his kingdom. The psalmist said among all the assembled royalty, the Davidic king/bridegroom excelled all of them in splendor and majesty.

Jesus Christ is “of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:3-4). Unlike the Davidic kings who preceded Him, Jesus is not the adopted son of God; He is the eternally begotten Son of God who was “made flesh” (John 1:14, 18; 3:16). As the Son of Man descended from David, He is human par excellence. While the Gospels do not describe the physical appearance of Jesus, the sacred text tells us He is “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9) and His appearance is a radiant glory that glorifies all creation

(1:3; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 3:2). His appearance abolishes death, grants eternal life (2 Tim. 1:10), and destroys the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). His name is above all names, and He is the King above all kings (Rev. 1:5; 19:16).

Just as God anointed the mouths of the prophets, He anointed the lips of the kings so they too spoke His gracious words (Ps. 45:2). Since ancient times rulers have commanded armies, administered justice, and shaped the political imagination of nations through the sound of their voice and the words of their mouth. David is remembered for his courageous challenge to Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-47) and his beautiful psalms. Solomon was renowned throughout the ancient world for his words of wisdom (1 Kings 10:24). The king's gracious and wise words guided the nation in righteousness and justice (1 Kings 3:28; 2 Chron. 1:10-12).

Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God, the personification of the divine voice through whom the world was created (John 1:1-3). The crowds were amazed at His authoritative teaching (Matt. 7:28-29). His gracious words offered forgiveness and mercy (Mark 2:5; John 8:11); healed the sick (Luke 8:48-50); exorcized demons (Mark 9:25); calmed storms (Matt. 8:26); raised the dead (John 11:43-44); and commissioned the church (Matt. 28:18-20). The words of the exalted Lord are like that of a sharp two-edged sword that can bring forth salvation and judgment (Rev. 1:16; 2:16). The proclamation of His Word is the salvation of all who obey (Ps. 2:10-12; Rom. 10:13-15).

Royal Weddings

Royal weddings are major social and political events which serve to promote the interests of the nation. The wedding of Prince Charles of Great Britain to Lady Diana Spencer on July 29, 1981, was attended by dignitaries and government officials from around the world, including most of the European royal families and heads of state. The ceremony included three choirs and

three orchestras. The event was televised in over fifty countries for an estimated television audience of 750 million people. The cost of the wedding is estimated to have been about \$48 million.— *Wikipedia*, “Wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer”

B. Glorious and Victorious (Psalm 45:3-5)

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. 4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. 5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

The royal Bridegroom is “most mighty” (Ps. 45:3), or a “Mighty One” (NASB). He is a glorious, majestic, heroic, and victorious warrior. David was celebrated by the people of Israel as a warrior who defeated the Philistine giant and successfully led the armies of Judah and Israel against their enemies (1 Sam. 18:6-7, 16). David fought “the Lord’s battles” (v. 17; 25:28). One of the primary duties of the Davidic kings was to serve as the primary military leader of the nation. The Davidic king did not fight for personal glory and power. Power that is corrupted by sin is deceitful, arrogant, and unjust. The king’s rule must reflect the character of God—“truth and meekness and righteousness” (Ps. 45:4). The “right hand” of the king signifies power and action; that is, “awe-inspiring deeds” (NLT). The king was to rule in a manner that inspired the nation to live in faithfulness to God.

Jesus Christ is a divine warrior with skin in the game. He “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4); from “the power of darkness” (Col. 1:13); and from “the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10). In Revelation 17, Satan’s allies “make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.” Jesus defends those who are “called, and chosen, and faithful” (v. 14). Jesus is depicted as a great warrior riding a white horse who “doth

judge and make war” against the nations in rebellion against God (19:11-16). As believers suffer in this present age, He has offered an inspiring example of faithfulness to God (1 Peter 2:21-23).

§ *How does Jesus Christ characterize both might and meekness?*

C. Eternal and Anointed (Psalm 45:6-8)

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

The Davidic kings ruled in God’s behalf. God’s covenant with David declared, “Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Sam. 7:16). King David is remembered as the greatest king of Israel. His dynasty ruled from Jerusalem for over four-hundred years. Because of generations of disobedience, God allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem in 586 BC. Since then, no “son of David” has ruled from Jerusalem. But the promise of an eternal kingdom does not end there. Neither the death of a king, nor the demise of a dynasty, can threaten the rule of God. The eternal nature of the Davidic covenant did not depend on human kings, but on the eternal power and presence of God. “The Lord is King for ever and ever” (Ps. 10:16). The eternal promise of the Davidic covenant is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:23, 34).

Jesus is the “son of David” (Matt. 1:1). Hebrews 1:8-9 quotes Psalm 45:6-7 to establish that God’s eternal kingdom is fulfilled in Christ. The eternal Son rules with the Father so all the enemies of God will be defeated (Heb. 1:13; cf. Ps. 110:1). Jesus holds the “key of David” (Rev. 3:7; Isa. 22:22), which signifies He alone is the rightful heir of the Davidic throne and that, through Jesus alone, humanity gains access to the New Jerusalem (Ian Paul, *Revelation*).

The “scepter” (Ps. 45:6) was a staff, or rod, used by kings as a symbol of royal power and authority (Est. 4:11). In the case of evil kings, the king’s scepter could symbolize oppression (Ps. 125:3; Isa. 14:5-6). However, the scepter of the Davidic king signified the power to comfort God’s people in the presence of evil (Ps. 23:4). The Roman soldiers placed a crown of thorns on the head of Jesus and gave Him a scepter—“a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matt. 27:29). They could not anticipate Jesus would be exalted by the Father and given a scepter—a “rod of iron”—by which He would rule all the nations (Rev. 2:27; 19:15).

Royal anointings were a significant rite of ascension to the throne (Ps. 45:7). The Old Testament records the anointing ceremonies of Saul (1 Sam. 10:1), David (16:3, 13), Solomon (1 Kings 1:39), Jehu (2 Kings 9:6), and Joash (11:12). The anointing rite required a special olive oil mixed with myrrh, cinnamon, and other aromatic spices and was sanctified as holy unto the Lord (Ex. 30:22-33). The oil was poured over the head of the anointed one, causing the oil to flow down the face and beard, and even onto their garments (Ps. 23:5). In effect, to be anointed was to be baptized in oil, which signifies God pouring out the Holy Spirit on the chosen leader. This anointing was associated with gladness and rejoicing.

The writer of Hebrews (1:9) cited Psalm 45:7 in reference to the exalted Christ, who rules at the right hand of the Father. The title *Christ*, or *Messiah*, means “Anointed One.” When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit descended on Him and the Father declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). After His baptism, Jesus went to the synagogue at Nazareth and read from the scroll of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me . . .” (Luke 4:18). Jesus is the anointed Davidic King acting as the divine/human Mediator through whom the Holy Spirit is poured out on all of God’s

people (Matt. 3:11; John 14:16; Acts 2:33). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is an ecstatic experience of love, peace, and joy (Rom. 5:5; 14:17). We worship the anointed King “with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

§ *What does Jesus love, what does He hate, and why (Ps. 45:6-7)?*

2. MESSIAH’S REIGN OVER THE NATIONS

A. The Lord Most High (Psalm 47:1-2)

1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. 2 For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

The theme of celebration is continued with Psalm 47. The subject of this psalm is not the Davidic dynasty, but the rule of God over all the nations of the earth. The Hebrew prophets declared God’s rule over the earth would be accomplished by the Messiah (Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:13-14). The coming Messiah would be God himself and a descendent of David—the Son of God and the son of Mary (Gal. 4:4).

This psalm gives us insight into the worship of ancient Israel, which was highly ritualized and expressed with great enthusiasm. The worship of Israel was “not docile, passive, or silent.” Worshipers were “deeply engaged in a life-or-death” interaction with God (Walter Brueggemann, *Worship in Ancient Israel*). The future depends on God’s victory over the powers of darkness. The divine King is triumphant over all God’s enemies. God’s people clap, shout, sing, and dance in hopeful anticipation of God’s final victory over all the forces of evil.

The phrase “most high” (Ps. 47:2) signifies the Lord of Israel is exalted higher than all gods of the nations of the world (Deut. 10:17). Psalm 96:4-5 declares the Lord “is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens.” Furthermore, God is to be “greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all those who

are around Him” (89:7 NASB). The “council of the holy ones” refers to all of the angelic beings that serve God’s royal court (Rev. 7:11, 15). The Apostle Paul declared the exalted Christ is “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Eph. 1:21).

The Hebrew word for “terrible” (Ps. 47:2) can also be translated as “awesome” or “feared.” God’s mighty acts provoke “fear and dread” among His enemies (Ex. 15:16). God’s mighty acts provoke awe and reverence among His people (Deut. 7:21); God’s people are “to fear [the] honored and awesome name” of the Lord God (28:58 NASB). God’s presence causes His enemies and friends alike to tremble before Him (Ex. 15:14-15; 19:16). At the sight of God’s wrath, Moses declared, “I am full of fear and trembling” (Heb. 12:21 NASB). At the sound of God’s voice, “the heavens and the earth tremble” (Joel 3:16 NASB). “The day of the Lord is great and very terrible” (2:11, 31). The presence of the exalted Christ caused Saul of Tarsus to fall “to the ground . . . trembling and astonished” (Acts 9:4-6 NKJV); and John to fall “at [Christ’s] feet as dead” (Rev. 1:17). Jesus declared when Christ comes again in “power and great glory . . . all the tribes of the earth [shall] mourn” (Matt. 24:30). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

§ *According to Psalm 47:2, why can God’s people “shout unto God with the voice of triumph” (v. 1)?*

B. Almighty Benefactor (Psalm 47:3-4)

3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet. 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

The primary responsibility of any national leader is to protect the nation from international adversaries. As the tribes of Israel entered Canaan, God “drove out the nations” before them (see

Josh. 3:10). As David faced Goliath, he declared, “The battle is the Lord’s” (1 Sam. 17:47). When the Moabites and Ammonites “came against Jehoshaphat to battle,” the prophet told his people, “The battle is not yours, but God’s” (2 Chron. 20:15). The security of the people of God was not dependent on military might, but in the presence of God (Ps. 20). However, God’s protection was dependent on the obedience of the people (Deut. 11:22-23, 28).

The Almighty God would assure the “inheritance” of the children of Abraham (Ps. 47:4). “The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it” (24:1 NASB). The concept of an inheritance is a major motif of redemption throughout the Bible, being mentioned over two hundred times. In the beginning, God created Adam and Eve and granted them sovereignty over the earth (Gen. 1:26). God’s promise to Abraham ensured “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (12:3). So, the Abrahamic covenant was not limited to his descendants, but to all the children of Adam. The earth is humanity’s inheritance from God. God has shared the earth with all the nations of humanity, apportioning an inheritance to all peoples (Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26).

When the children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian slavery, God gave them an inheritance—land to possess, flourishing crops and animals, many descendants, and peace (Deut. 3:28; 12:10; 28:8). The promise of an inheritance ensured an end to poverty. However, the blessings of the inheritance were contingent on the obedience of the people (Deut. 15:4-5; Ps. 25:12-13). The promise of an inheritance is extended to all nations who live in faithfulness to God. Even the enemies of Israel will receive an inheritance when they swear allegiance to the Lord. The prophet Isaiah envisioned a day when the Lord will declare, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance” (Isa. 19:25).

Jesus Christ promised all who believe in Him will receive “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). The meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). Those who love God with their whole heart, and love their neighbors as themselves, will inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25-28). Those who serve the Lord with a sincere heart will “receive the reward of the inheritance” (Col. 3:24). Those who overcome the tribulations and temptations of this present age will inherit “a new heaven and a new earth,” where there “shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Rev. 21:1, 4).

Let God Work

The only thing that can hinder us is our own failure to work in harmony with the plans of the Creator. If this lack of harmony can be removed, then God can work.—Hannah Whitall Smith

3. THE LORD IS EXALTED

A. King of the Earth (Psalm 47:5-7)

5 God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. 7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

These words speak to the ascension of the victorious divine King. A victorious warrior-king would return to his capital city amid the welcoming shouts of an enthusiastic populace and the blaring of trumpets. The psalmist encouraged the people to worship with great celebration because the God of Israel had victoriously warred against the gods of the nations (Isa. 21:9; Jer. 50:2).

In the ancient world, the dominion of the gods was limited to specific geographic locations, or specific peoples. Atum was the chief god of Egypt; Baal was the primary deity of the

Canaanites; and Zeus was believed to have ruled the Greeks from Mount Olympus. In contrast, the domain of the Lord God of Israel is “all the earth” (Ps. 47:7), and He rules over all the peoples of the earth. The Lord rules from His throne in Heaven, and the earth is His footstool (Isa. 66:1). God’s dominion is not limited to the earth, but extends beyond the heavens (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6). Even the mightiest kings of the earth are mere servants of the Lord (Ps. 72:11).

When the Romans crucified Jesus, in mockery they placed a sign on the cross that said, “The King of the Jews” (Mark 15:26). Neither the Romans nor Jesus’ Jewish enemies comprehended the truth of those words. But Jesus is more—He is “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). The One whom the world crucified will return in power and glory, then “the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man” will be afraid and will seek to hide themselves “from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:15-16 NASB).

Purposeful Singing

In the context of a worship service, music should never be “music for music’s sake.” Worship leaders . . . are there to assist the people, through the medium of music, to encounter God. We are not there just to sing and play songs. We are not there to entertain or “perform” for an audience; we are there to use everything at our disposal to glorify God and edify His people.—Ron Owens

B. Ruler of the Nations (Psalm 47:8-9)

8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. 9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

God reigns over all the nations. God allows all nations to receive the benefit of His divine care (Matt. 5:45). God has established human government and law to promote peace and justice (Rom. 13:1ff). God blesses those nations that seek justice (Jer. 4:2), but He judges those nations who favor wickedness (25:31). Nations rise and fall according to the will of God, and the most powerful human leaders are subject to His decrees (Ps. 46:6-11).

The psalmist envisioned a day when all the earth's rulers will gather around the throne of God to acknowledge His sovereignty (47:8-9). The term "shields of the earth" is a military metaphor suggesting the peace and security of the earth depends on the power of God (Tremper Longman, *Psalms*).

The hope for the world's future depends on the divine/human child born of Mary. The prophet Isaiah declared Him to be "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6 NASB). He will establish an eternal government of peace, justice, and righteousness. Peace and justice cannot be established by human will, but only by "the zeal of the Lord" (v. 7 NASB).

§ *Are you currently submitting your heart and soul to the reign of Christ?*

CHRIST'S COMING REIGN

The ascension of Jesus Christ was witnessed by only a small group of people (Acts 1:9-11). Even so, as the exalted Lord entered the gates of the New Jerusalem, He was greeted by the "hallelujahs" of the multitudes of angels and saints who rejoiced in His victory over sin and death, and all the forces of evil (Rev. 19:1, 6). The promise of His ascension is, "This same

Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Until now, the largest gathering of people in the history of the world was the Kumbh Mela Pilgrimage in 2013. Located in northern India, it is estimated over 30 million people gathered to celebrate a Hindu religious event. This does not compare to the day when Jesus will appear in the clouds of glory and “every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7). Every human who has ever lived, believer and unbeliever alike, will witness the appearance of Jesus as He returns to rule eternally on the earth. Unbelievers will mourn. But those who have anxiously awaited His appearing shall receive “a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

Daily Devotions

- M. Christ’s Victory Over Satan Foretold (Genesis 3:13-15)
- T. Futility of the Nations’ Opposition (Psalm 2:1-12)
- W. The Father Gives the Son Dominion (Daniel 7:13-14)
- T. Jesus Identifies Himself as Messiah (Matthew 26:62-65)
- F. Jesus’ Warning to Be Ready (Luke 21:34-36)
- S. Jesus’ Glorious Return (Revelation 19:11-16)