# "The Reign of the Righteous King"
(Psalm 72)

Last week, we began looking at what the Old Testament Psalms and prophets had to say about the coming King, the One who would be of the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from the tribe of Judah, whose name would be Shiloh, the One who would bring peace. We saw in Psalm 2 that there would be those who would oppose this King when He came, who would try to stop Him from coming to the throne. But in spite of this, He would be crowned. When Jesus came, the leaders of the Jews and the Gentiles opposed Him. They arrested Him and put Him to death on a cross. They did not want to have this man rule over them. But after His enemies crucified Him, His Father raised Him from the dead; He lifted Him up into heaven and had Him sit down at His right hand, until He would subdue all His enemies under His feet. For His work of redeeming His people, the Father has given to Christ the name, which is above every name, the title of Lord. He has given Him a kingdom, which will never end, the nations as His inheritance, and the promise that all peoples would serve Him. Right now He rules over all the nations with a rod of iron, putting down one and raising up another as He wills. When He received this kingdom, He sent out His messengers with the Gospel, with the message that all nations should bow their knees to Him willingly and receive His salvation, lest He come to them in His wrath, and the history of the world since that time has been the history of the working out of this very thing.

This is what we saw last week. This week, I would like for us to consider a little more of what the Old Testament tells us about the reign of this King from Psalm 72. Psalm 2 speaks about the power and authority of Messiah. Psalm 72, which is closely related to it, speaks mainly of what His reign would be like: It would be a reign of justice, righteousness, peace and prosperity.

Now as we read Psalm 72, we realize that it has first to do with the reign of Solomon. It was a prayer that Solomon made to the Lord that He would bless his kingdom with the things that I just mentioned. Solomon was a man of peace, not like his father who was a man of war and bloodshed. The wars David fought enabled Solomon to rule in peace, since the Lord had defeated all of David's enemies. It was during this time of peace that he built the Lord's Temple and the people of Israel experienced the great blessings of abundance and prosperity, all which came through their obedience to the Lord – through their dealing righteously and justly with each other, and having righteous judges and a righteous king who would insure that they would. But as we look at this prayer, we see that Solomon must have prayed it in the Spirit of prophecy. It looks beyond Solomon himself to the One he was a picture of. It contains things that could never be true of Solomon himself, not the least of which was the continuance of his kingdom forever in righteousness. We know that Solomon's reign began in blessing, but it ended in tragedy. Solomon disobeyed God by marrying many wives. His wives eventually turned his heart to worship other gods. Because of this, the Lord took the kingdom away from him almost entirely. He didn't do it during his lifetime, but during that of his son, Rehoboam. But yet He didn't take it entirely away. The Lord allowed him to keep one tribe, the tribe of Judah, that which became the southern kingdom of Judah. So you see, this prayer can hardly be seen as answered in Solomon. It really looks beyond him to the reign of the One he was a picture of, the One who would come through his loins, the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose kingdom would have no end. This is what we will want to look at this evening: the reign of the coming righteous King.

Now I would like to deal with this psalm the same way I did last week – through a series of questions and answers. The first question we can ask from this psalm is, What would this king be like? Solomon begins his prayer with a request that the Lord would endow him with the Spirit of wisdom and with the grace to have a godly character. When he says, "Give the king Your judgments, O God" he is asking for the wisdom and knowledge to know the difference between good and evil. After Solomon offered to the Lord a thousand burnt offerings, the Lord came to him and asked him what he wanted. He didn't ask for riches or a long life or the lives of his enemies, but instead for wisdom, and so the Lord gave it to him, because this is what he wanted for him so that He might rule His people (2 Chr. 1:1-12). When he asks for "righteousness," he is asking that the Lord would give him a godly character, so that he would be able to rule righteously. And when he uses the names king and the king's son, we understand both of these as referring to himself. Solomon is the king and he is the son of a king. He is simply using these different names in Hebrew parallelism. Now we know why Solomon or any other earthly king would need these things to rule justly, but what does this have to do with Jesus? Viewed from the perspective of the Old Testament saints who would come after Solomon and use this psalm in worship, it was a prayer that the Lord would raise up godly kings, especially *the* godly King, the Messiah, the One who was to be the King of Israel, the King of the nations, and who was to be the Son of the King, the Son of God: "Send forth Your King, Your chosen One, the One whose right it is to rule. Endow Him with wisdom and righteousness, for that is the kind of king we want, the kind of king we need." The Father sent Jesus to rule. To prepare Him to be king, He anointed Him with His Spirit above measure, the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, the Spirit of righteousness. This is the kind of King He has given us: a wise and righteous King.

Secondly, He would be a just King. He would judge the Lord's people with righteousness and His afflicted with justice (v. 2). The judges at the higher courts and lower would render just verdicts, which is what some believe the reference to the mountains and the hills refer to (v. 3). He would protect those who cannot protect themselves, save the poor and crush those who oppress (v. 4; cf. also vv. 12-14). We know from the Scriptures that this is what Solomon's reign was like, especially at first. But this too would be the character of Christ's reign. Jesus is the righteous judge of all the earth. It is impossible for Him to judge unjustly. He is the deliverer of His people. He not only crushed the head of the serpent on the cross, the one who oppresses our souls, He not only protects us from those who persecute us in this life, but He has promised that one day He will destroy all of His and our enemies in His wrath and cast them into a lake that burns forever with fire. He is the Savior of His people. Isaiah writes concerning Him, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist" (Isa. 11:1-5). Jeremiah writes, "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she will be called: the Lord is our righteousness" (Jer. 33:15-16).

Third, He would be a righteous King. True religion would prosper under His reign (v. 5). Solomon would have the fear and respect that was due to him as an earthly monarch, because he would love the Lord and walk in His ways. But Jesus, as the God-man, would have the fear and reverence that men give to God alone. He says, "Let them fear You while

the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations" (v. 5). His reign of justice and righteousness would be like a refreshing influence, like rain coming down upon the mown grass (v. 6). He would be a blessing to the souls of the righteous, as His Spirit is poured out in revival. There have been seasons of refreshing poured out from the Lord in the history of the church, just as there have been seasons of judgment. And in His days the righteous would flourish, because the righteous too love righteousness and hate injustice.

And He would be a King of peace (v. 7b). We know that the reign of Solomon was marked by peace, at least as long as he served the Lord. But the peace this greater Son of David would bring would be even greater. All of us long for peace, not only peace for our souls through the forgiveness of sins, but also peace where we live so that we might live in safety. Jesus provides both. He has given us peace with God by taking away the enmity, which is our sins. But His reign will also bring peace in the world, everlasting peace. Isaiah writes, "Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war" (Isa. 2:2-4). He writes in 11:6-10, "And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious." And in 9:7, he writes, " There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."

What kind of King would Messiah be like? He would be a wise and godly King, a just and righteous King, and a King of peace. But now secondly, how far would His rule extend? The same as we saw last week, "May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (v. 8). Solomon's dominion was large. The kings of the earth sought to hear his wisdom, and they all brought gifts as tribute, just as we read in verses 9-11 in this psalm. We read in 2 Chronicles 9:22-24, "So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. And all the kings of the earth were seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year." But Christ's dominion would be much larger. It wouldn't be limited only to the known world at that time, but extend to all the world. His gospel was to be preached to all the nations to bring them under His reign. Eventually every knee will bow to Him (Phil. 2:10-11). We read in Psalm 110:2-3, "The Lord will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, *saying*, 'Rule in the midst of Your enemies.' Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; in holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You *as* the dew."

Third, how would the world fare under His reign? There would be a time of great prosperity and abundance. Solomon prays, "May there be abundance of grain in the earth on top of the mountains; its fruit will wave like *the cedars of* Lebanon; and may those from the

city flourish like vegetation of the earth" (v. 16). There would be blessing both upon the supply of food and upon the citizens of the kingdom. Certainly there was an abundance of physical blessing during the reign of Solomon, and while he walked with the Lord, spiritual blessing as well. But during the reign of Messiah there would be even greater blessing. Listen to what Isaiah writes in 65:17-25, "'For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem *for* rejoicing, and her people *for* gladness. I will also rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few* days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be *thought* accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit *them;* they shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear *children* for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the Lord, and their descendants with them. It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,' says the Lord." This is what things will be like under the righteous reign of Messiah. Righteousness exalts a people, and under His Kingship, righteousness and blessings will abound. This is one of the passages that most powerfully teaches that the reign of Christ prior to His return will bring blessing to the earth. It can only fit in the time frame before He comes again, and we haven't yet seen anything like it in this world.

Fourth, how would the people respond to His reign? Gold will be given to him to honor him. Men will pray for him and bless him all day long (v. 15). Men will bless themselves by him and all nations will call him blessed (v. 17). This was true of Solomon's reign, but how much more of Messiah's. The part that says, "Let them pray for him continually," can also be translated, "Let them pray through him continually," which would be more true in the case of Christ. We don't need to pray for Him, but we do need to pray through Him. But certainly we are to bless Him, for He is worthy.

Finally, how long would His reign continue? Solomon writes, "May his name endure forever; may his name increase as long as the sun shines" (v. 17). Solomon's name would continue through his sons, just as any man's would. But it would especially continue through his greater Son, Christ. Christ's name would continue and increase in spite of all the attempts of His enemies to destroy it. His kingdom would be forever. The Lord said to David, "When your days are fulfilled that you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up *one of* your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever" (1 Chr. 17:12-14). This is the best part of the reign of the Messiah. The kingdom which His Father would establish would last forever; it would have no end. And this means that those who are the subjects of His kingdom through faith in Christ would also never perish, but rule and reign with Him forever. People of God, this King is your King. These blessings are the blessings which the Father has purposed for you or all eternity. Let us rejoice in what the Lord has done for us, and do all we can to give glory to Him. Amen.