

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“KINGSHIP: GOD'S REIGN THROUGH THE KING”

For individual study or discussion

Psalm 72 has been called “the king of Israel’s job description” because it depicts the ideal kingship, outlining the importance of the king’s relationship not only with God but also with the people. It is a royal psalm and a prayer of the nation for their king. They ask God to grant the king a heart that cares for society’s most vulnerable. Pastor Eugene Peterson adds, “*This prayer of intercession for the ruler is clear-sighted in its perception of what is essential in government: justice for the poor, defense for the weak, and deliverance for the needy.*”¹ Under the guidance of God, this king’s reign is to be what other kings could not be: a perfect reign of justice and righteousness.

The Exemplary King (vv. 1-7)

According to Psalm 72, the foundation for this exemplary kingship is marked by both power and compassion (vv. 1-4). The ideal king is endowed with divine judgment and righteousness to govern justly, defending the poor and needy by crushing their oppressors. The exemplary king wields his power for the protection of the weak. As a result, peace and prosperity will extend throughout the generations, with his reign continuing as long as the sun and moon endure (vv. 5-7).

- Read Jeremiah 17:5-7 and 23:5-6. How should Jeremiah’s words shape our expectations for earthly leaders, compared to our hope in Jesus? (cf. Psalm 146)
- Read Isaiah 11:1-5 and 16:5. How does Isaiah describe the “exemplary king” and what are the similarities to the king of Psalm 72?
- Read Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings 3:3-14. What does Solomon pray for, and like Psalm 72, what does he prioritize?

The Extent of his Kingdom (vv. 8-14)

The extent of the king’s dominion stretches from sea to sea and encompasses all the nations. He is not only sovereign over powerful rulers, he is also the redeemer of the lowly. As he rescues the poor and needy of his kingdom, he reveals that his global rule is not one of oppression, but of benevolent care for the vulnerable.

- What Edenic overtone do you find in verse 8? (cf. Genesis 2:10) How does the psalmist foreshadow a future where the whole world will become Eden-like under the everlasting rule of Jesus? (See also Psalm 46:4; Zechariah 9:9-10; and Revelation 22:1)
- To oppose such an ideal king means certain defeat. Read Genesis 3:14-15. What other allusion does the psalmist make to the Garden of Eden?
- Read Revelation 21:22-27. How does Revelation pick up on the theme of the tribute of the nations found in Psalm 72:10-11? Describe John’s vision of the messianic kingdom. How does it envision Psalm 72?

The Entreaty for his Kingdom (vv. 15-20)

The final section of Psalm 72 transitions from petition to praise. The psalmist prays for the enduring prosperity and blessedness of the king’s reign and then concludes with a doxology, extolling God’s glorious name and wondrous works. Ultimately, Psalm 72 depicts the future reign of the messianic king over all the nations, echoing many other passages of the Prophets about the messianic kingdom (cf. Isaiah 11, 45, 60 and Zechariah 9).

- Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Galatians 3:16, 29. How does the concluding doxology of verses 17-19 reflect the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, and how does Paul connect this promise to Christ in Galatians 3?
- How does Revelation 5:9, which proclaims Christ as the one who ransomed people “from every tribe and language and people and nation,” echo the global vision of Psalm 72:15-19?

DATE: June 15, 2025

SPEAKER: Brian/John Mark

SERIES: Summer in the Psalms

PASSAGE: Psalm 72

Family Dinner Table

The Exemplary King

In the book *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, there's a character named Bishop Myriel. He's not rich or powerful, but he's known for being kind and generous to people everyone else looks down on. One night, a man named Jean Valjean comes to his house. Valjean has just been freed from prison, and no one will give him food or a place to stay. But the bishop welcomes him in. That night, Valjean steals the bishop's silver and runs away. When the police catch him, they bring him back to the bishop, expecting him to press charges. But instead, the bishop says, “I gave him that silver,” and even gives him more. That moment changes Valjean's life. He becomes a new man—someone who is generous toward the needy and who protects the weak. This story reminds us of the kind of ruler Psalm 72 describes—a king who helps the needy, shows mercy to the poor, and brings peace and blessing to the nations. Psalm 72 points us to Jesus. Only Jesus perfectly fulfills the role of *The Exemplary King*.

- Read Luke 4:17-20. Discuss instances in Jesus' earthly ministry where he lovingly cares for the needy. How does Jesus perfectly perform the kingly duties described in Psalm 72?
- Pray for the leaders of your state and country, that they would embody the righteous judgments described in Psalm 72.

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¹Peterson, Eugene. *Praying with the Psalms*. 1989, NY NY. Harper Collins.