

Psalm 72 'The Reign of the Righteous King' Transcript

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In the 17th century, between the years of 1634 and 1637, Holland went through what is called the Dutch tulip mania. The Dutch tulip mania—have you heard of this, Hans? No? In a way of speaking, a tulip flower craze took over Holland. They are, of course, known for tulips. There's a couple of Dutch companies down towards Edendale that grow tulips, of course. Through careful selective breeding techniques, growers were able to produce incredible variations of tulip colors, and prized bulbs would fetch extravagant prices—over-inflated prices—and it created something of an economic bubble where bulbs were going for more than people's yearly wages. Such was the demand for these bulbs. It was an incredible thing.

Growers discovered one technique in particular that involved introducing a virus known as the mosaic virus. Those of you who grow plants might know what that is. It causes a plant—and it would cause tulips—the petal structure to split into two different colors, and so you can create all sorts of variants of colors. However, with all the innovation and money spent on these new varieties of tulips, one kind of tulip to this day remains elusive and has proved impossible to produce to growers, and that is a pure black tulip. The closest growers have ever gotten is a deep purple-black. If you

were to Google search "black tulip," you would get results, but they're actually just a very, very dark deep purple and not a pure black. One article that I read on this stated that black tulips will probably never exist.

What does a black tulip have to do with Psalm 72? Well, not much, but Psalm 72 presents an elusive ideal, an elusive vision of kingship in Israel, which was elusive until the coming of Christ as its fulfillment. Psalm 72 presents us with the ideal king and kingdom in Israel. It presents a grand vision, an ideal for all that the king of Israel was to be. But how did things pan out? Well, as their history showed, the ideal remained like that black tulip. It always just seemed in the distance, elusive, not to be arrived at—an unfulfilled prayer—that is, until Jesus arrived on the scene.

Psalm 72 is a prayer of David's for his son Solomon, who is crowned after him as the new king of Israel. It holds out to Solomon an ideal and it calls God, who has covenantally bound himself in the Davidic dynasty, to expand and prolong his rule, to grant that the king would rule in righteousness. But what David prayed was never truly realized in his own reign or in the reign of Solomon or in the reign of any of the kings of Israel. As we know, after Solomon, the kingdom entered decline. Her kings did not rule with righteous judgments, and instead, we'll read of a national schism that occurred, and we have the breaking up of the kingdom—the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. It was never supposed to be that way. Her kings did not rule with righteous judgments. The afflicted went without justice. The righteous were often persecuted. The prophets that God sent to her were killed. The nations came against Israel's kings instead of bowing before them. Instead of serving them, gold was taken from them.

Wherever is the king and kingdom of Psalm 72? That's the question. Where is this king? Is he forever elusive? He cannot be found. It may have seemed to the Jews that he may never be found. The nation went away into exile. Foreign peoples inhabited her cities, but David's prayer—and no prayer—is ever in vain. Such a righteous rule was possible only with the greater descendant that God promised would come, that he would raise up. For to David, the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel chapter 7

states, "Your house, your kingdom shall endure before me forever." When God makes a promise like that, you can know that it is sure and true. It comes with the authority of the creator, and so he says, "Your throne will be established forever." The faithful of Israel, even if the nation be scattered into exile and to other pagan nations around them, they would know that somehow God would make good on his promise.

So David prays for Solomon, knowing that while his descendants to rule after him according to the flesh would fail, the promised seed of the woman, the descendant of Abraham, the Messiah of promise, he would fulfill that prayer, and it would be in him that perfect justice might be known; that in him, the borders of Israel containing the revelation of God would overflow into all the world, and more and more peoples might benefit from his glorious reign over all lands and over all people, over all powers and principalities. Psalm 72 is a messianic prayer made in faith that this elusive ideal, unable to be achieved by mere man, might someday be realized in the Messiah.

So I want to bring you what is more of a topical sermon based off Psalm 72, which is a messianic psalm fulfilled in Jesus Christ. I have this heading: His Righteous Reign, or the Reign of the Righteous King, you might prefer. This Christmas, I want you to think of the wider implications of the coming of the Messiah. We get—and rightly so, understandably so—we get very narrow in our understanding of Christmas. The Son of God has come to seek and to save the lost, praise God! But the context in which that salvific purpose for which Christ came is nested in the coming of the kingdom of God. See, Christmas is the coming of the kingdom. It's about the realization of the rule and reign of God. We need to understand this. He came not only to be a ransom for his people but to inaugurate the long-awaited rule and reign of God, albeit in an unexpected way, and first through the cross of Calvary. Christmas, then, is about the coming of the kingdom, for only in Jesus do we truly see what is said here, and particularly in verse 11 of Psalm 72.

In your Bibles, you may notice that the psalm heading atop this Psalm—my Bible has the title "The Reign of the Righteous King," and then it has a

Psalm of Solomon. You may notice that, leading us to say naturally, "Well, this is uniquely a psalm that Solomon wrote." However, if you look again at the final verse that I read in verse 20, you'll notice here that we have actually the book of Psalms divided into different books. Psalm 72 is the closing of book two of the Psalms, and Psalm 73 opens book three. Notice verse 20 of Psalm 72: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." So we have the question: Whose psalm is this really—Solomon's or is it David's? Well, the Hebrew inscription there can be rightly interpreted; the Hebrew allows it for Solomon instead of "of Solomon." So I take the view of Calvin and Charles Spurgeon, who viewed this psalm as David's prayer recorded into the Psalms by Solomon. In fact, Spurgeon entitled a sermon on this chapter of the Bible "David's Dying Prayer."

Psalm 72 holds out to Solomon, then, an ideal of kingship from David himself. David presents him with a mandate and a mantle so that the new king may understand the gravity of what it meant to be crowned as king in Israel, that he might faithfully represent the rule of God over his people in the nation and land. The kingship of Israel, you see, was itself a type—a pointer beyond itself—to the rule which God has over his people. The king of Israel was a proxy king for God. God ruled through the king, and it would be realized in its fullness in the anti-type, who is the Messiah. Israel's king was a vice regent. God called them to mirror his own rule. That's why we read in verse one of Psalm 72, "Give the king your judgments, O God." Why? Because the king is ruling for God over his people. He is representing God's rule to the people, and so he needs God's judgments. He needs God's word in his heart that he would reign righteously.

But there's a heading here I want to get to, and it is that this rule—this ideal—is fulfilled in Christ, and it is presently inaugurated in Jesus Christ. The question we have to ask is: How does Jesus currently manifest his kingship? There's a question. How does Jesus currently manifest his kingship? How does he fulfill the ideal of Psalm 72? I have stated that Jesus fulfills the substance of David's prayer for the new king, the reign of the righteous king. Therefore, it was fulfilled by God himself in the incarnation. This was its intended end. We know this by the New

Testament's affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah, as we've been looking at in Matthew. He's the descendant of David and the rightful heir to the throne. Remember the genealogy we looked at at the beginning of Matthew's gospel to show this.

Secondly, we know it because of the centrality of the kingdom to Jesus' teaching. Remember, after John the Baptist comes into the wilderness and he's baptizing, and then Jesus is baptized, then he goes away to the wilderness. What do we hear in the words of Christ? Once John is arrested, he comes preaching but "The kingdom"? The rule, the reign of God—is here in Jesus' person."

But you rightly ask: Where is the evidence of this righteous reign? As Ian was praying earlier, we look into the world and we see chaos, we see division, we see war. Where is the evidence of this king's righteous reign? In verse 11, the ideal is presented that all kings shall bow down before him; all nations serve him. But I do not see the nations in subjection to Christ, you would rightly say. This stumps many Christians at first. They see a conflict here when we look at the state of affairs in the world and even the visible church—the different all sorts of carry-on that's going on—all these different churches. We look into the lives of many professing Christians, and we see inconsistencies. We find some of those in our own lives, and we wonder about his reign. For doesn't Psalm 72 also affirm, as in verse 2, "May he judge your people with righteousness and your afflicted with justice"? And you say, "Where is this? I cannot see it."

We need to remember that when Jesus announced the arrival of the kingdom, it was not what the Jews were wrongly expecting. You see, they formed conclusions that the Old Testament never made. They thought that the Messiah's first coming was his only coming. Does that make sense? They thought that his first coming was his only coming, that the inauguration of the kingdom they were holding out for and the consummation of that kingdom were one single event. This was the mystery of the Old Testament. When God's kingdom rule arrived in the Messiah, what would its nature be like? When you read through the Old Testament, it appears to come in a finality, in a sudden sense, as a

singular event. But what Christ shows us is that, no, there is a first coming of the Messiah, then there is a second coming of the Messiah. There is an inauguration of the kingdom, and there is a consummation of the kingdom. This is the critical point.

We see this perspective in Acts chapter 1. You don't have to turn to it, but it's in your supplement; you can look at it later in more detail if you like. Acts chapter 1, before Jesus' ascension to his disciples, before his ascension, he's talking to the disciples, and the text reads this: "So when they had come together, they were asking him, that is, Jesus, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'" Jesus then answers in two ways. First, he said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority." And then secondly, Jesus corrects their misunderstanding of a Jewish-centric expectation of the kingdom that they had. See, they said, "Are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" And Jesus answers them and says, "No, but I'm going to commission you into the world instead." So he says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest parts of the world." You see, the kingdom of God was to be expanded beyond the borders of Israel, as we see in Psalm 72. This interpretation is confirmed when we look at the end of the book of Acts, and we find Paul in his imprisonment in Rome. In Acts 28, it says, "Acts 28:30-31: And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered." The gospel of the kingdom goes into all the world.

So how then will we understand what did Jesus mean by the kingdom of God? We've begun to answer this question. Well, Jesus revealed that the long-awaited fulfillment of God's covenantal promises and the Abrahamic covenant and the Davidic covenant specifically are rolled out in two distinct stages rather than as one. This is what was undefined in the Old Testament but revealed by Jesus in the New Testament revelation. As a simple illustration, I've used Donald Trump's recent election as an example, and we can use it again. Donald Trump has been voted in as

president, and yet he will not receive the fullness of his power until he is sworn in under oath in January. But there is a real sense in which his presidency has already begun, isn't it? He is at this time appointing his cabinet ministers and so on. He is preparing things for when he finally is invested with all those powers of president come January. Well, it's a little bit like that with Jesus coming as well.

And so the reason why we don't see the fullness of Psalm 72 yet is because we're awaiting that final consummation stage of Christ's rule. On the one hand, truly it is here; the Messiah's rule has begun. Peter tells us this much in Acts chapter 2. Speaking of David, Peter says, "Because he, David, was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on the throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh suffer decay." Peter identifies that the receiving of the Davidic throne, the inheritance of an eternal rule, occurred at the resurrection of Christ. The glorified God-man now reigns presently, really.

Jesus spoke of the immediacy of the kingdom himself, didn't he? When he talked about the kingdom is near you or in your midst or within you, he would say. He saw it as a real, true reality with his presence. But we await the fullness of the kingdom, which comes suddenly at the second coming of Jesus. We see this in the parable of Jesus. Take Matthew 13, for example—a lot of parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. Matthew 13:47-49: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea and gathering fish of every kind. And when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach and sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad fish they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous." Then there is consummation, you see. That's a two-stage kingdom.

Further, I think the kingdom of God and his kingship is helpfully defined through the rubric of Jesus' basic two-age eschatology. Eschatology means end things. In the gospels and in the New Testament, you'll find this idea of this age and the age to come. This age and the age to come—it's a basic eschatological rubric that Jesus gives us. In this age, the

kingdom comes in its spiritual sense only. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." He said that it's in your midst or that it's within you. Even to the Pharisees, he says that the people of the kingdom are the church. We are its occupants. We have our citizenship in heaven, don't we? As Paul writes to the Philippians, we have been given a pledge of an inheritance in this kingdom. We have been raised with Christ. We are heirs with Christ of the kingdom promises granted in the giving of the Spirit and our regeneration. In the age to come, that present spiritual reality of the kingdom shall be eternally paired with its physical reality, and then the kingdom comes in its fullness and consummation.

I love how the theologian John Bright puts it. Listen to this quote: "The future tense of the Old Testament, 'Behold, the days are coming,' has now become an emphatic present. The kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). "The final act of the drama has even now begun. The messianic age has dawned." In other words, the Old Testament promises became, in Jesus, a real present reality but divided into a present and a future stage. So that's what we need to understand about how we can relate to the king and kingdom of Christ to such royal psalms such as Psalm 72.

But let's make some application and bring this home for our daily lives. Application point one would be this: We need burning zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ. If we are citizens of his kingdom, we ought to burn with a zeal for his glory, and we see this in the psalm. There is a deep burden here for the glory of God. You'll notice in verse 18 of Psalm 72, there's a blessing here in these two verses: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders, and blessed be his glorious name forever. And may the whole earth be filled with his glory." You see, that is the burden of the righteous of God—that his glory would be made known in all the world. Do we find such a zeal and burden for God's glory in our own hearts? When we ask ourselves that question, you know, we live in light of fuller revelation than even David or Solomon or God's Old Testament saints could have ever imagined. We have the completed canon, don't we? We have Christ crucified and that fullness of revelation. We have the life of Christ. We have the gospels. We have this full and deep revelation of God's redemptive purposes.

So we have every reason to pray the same prayer with David: "May the whole earth be filled with the glory of Christ," for that was its end to which it was pointing. The Messiah has come. He came to die, to be punished for the sins of his people, that they might receive forgiveness and reconciliation with God. And so we must treasure and honor our King in the world, and we can show this commitment by serving him in all we do to our very best. Do your best for Christ. Don't be half-hearted about it. Let the way that we work with our hands and order our lives be in accordance with our mouths that say, "Blessed be God." Or may we prove that with our lives. May we show it by desiring that more might recognize the glory of our great King and enter his embrace. Show your zeal for King Jesus by not allowing your unsaved family members to ever leave your lips in prayer, nor your friends, nor your co-workers. You must pray, "Oh God, give them light. Grant them the ability to see the beauty of Jesus, the love that he showed us during his crucifixion, the power over death that he exemplified, the eternal life that comes with his name."

So may we not become idle in life, friends, but especially in our Christian lives, so we would not diminish the veracity of our claim to love the glory of Christ if this is something we claim. May we not be idle in our Christian lives. It'll be no good for us to sing of the magnified glory of Christ on Sundays when we have little interest for him during the week. We should aim to win the day for Christ in whatever we put our hand to. If we are bedridden and sick, we can glorify Christ and thank him for those times that we have been healthy and without praise and thanks for that. If we are in conversation with one who is suffering, we can tell them that God himself has come into the world as a man to suffer, that in a coming day we need it any longer, and we can hope in him. You see, the ways in which we are afforded the opportunity to have a burning zeal for Christ are vast and unnumbered, and it must be our prayer along with the psalmist here. But I wonder, are we looking and are we praying to that end?

Our second application would be this: The righteous king delights in his people. The righteous king delights in his people. It is a shallow and uninformed Christianity that sees the life lived after conversion to Christ as a performance—a performance to continually receive the love of

Christ. We must move on from such thinking. It is not the performance of the flesh that keeps us safe and secure in our salvation, for King Jesus is the one who is a deliverer from the guilt and power of sin. He has already finally and fully dealt with the only real enemy truly of your soul—your sin and your adversary, the devil—which kept you in darkness until his light shone in your hearts. The psalmist anticipates the righteous king is one who is a deliverer, and how in Christ Jesus, the one who died and was raised, now takes up residence in his people's lives by the Spirit. Psalm 72:13-14: "He will have compassion on the poor and needy." When you realize the fullest extent of that idea of poor and needy, you realize it is spiritual. A man can have nothing in this world, but if he has not Christ, that's all that matters. A man can have everything in this world, but if he has not Christ, that's all that matters—that we are poor and needy in spirit is especially true. We need salvation, and the lives of the needy he will save. It says he will rescue their life from oppression and violence; their blood will be precious in his sight. This is your king, Christian. You are precious and valued in his sight. He cares about your life, and if you ever wanted assurance of your security in Christ, to know that you are forgiven, to know that he loves you, remind yourself that the blood—that is, the life—of his people is precious in his sight, and he proved it by giving up and shedding his own blood to purchase your soul, to redeem you from sin.

The God who does that—the God who sends his Son into the world to pay the penalty for his people's sin—he can be trusted because he has proved his love to you in an unthinkable way. He endured the torments of hell to spare your soul what was due. He has loved you and will continue to love you with an unending love that knows no end and cannot be measured. So do not enter a Christian performance rat race. Do not be like that hamster on the wheel that's just running and running and running, trying to reach this destination. Rest in Christ, friend. Rest in Christ. Bless his name for the love that is already real and present and has already been shown to you.

A final heading, a final application: May our gifts and gold come to him. Our righteous king is worthy and more of the world itself. If it were within our ability to offer Christ the world, he would be worthy of more. The world

is his inheritance, for now it remains to be seen how, but a day is soon coming when, with your very own eyes, Christian, you will see to whom the dominion truly belongs when the heavenly man returns for his bride, the church, and the summation of this present age begins. We will realize that none but him has ever had a right to anything in this world without his blessing. Jesus owns your bank account, Christian. He owns your wages. He owns your house. He owns your car, your life. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, as the psalmist says. And here is how the prayer of David expresses this sentiment. He says in verse 10, "Let the kings of Tarshish and the islands bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts." These were lands considered distant to Israel, representing the reality that the world over owes its wealth and prestige to this king. In another prayer of David, we read this in 1 Chronicles 29: "Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all, and in your hand is power and might, and it lies in your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, O God, we thank you and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from you, and from your hand we have given to you." Did you get that? David says that from God's own hand he has given to God. In other words, it's not just that we give to God, but we are returning to him what he has already given to us because we're acknowledging that ultimately all things that we have are his blessing to us—the ability to work with our hands, even to earn wages. We are to consider this a blessing that God gives us, and so we give back to him as he has given from his own hand. The tribute comes to Christ in this way.

With our time, we may give to Christ in his kingdom. With our strength and health, we can use it to serve him. But it is often of our possessions and wealth that reveals where our heart really is—how willing we are to part with that which we cannot keep to invest in that which is of eternal worth. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. At the birth of Christ, you remember in Matthew, we saw the wise men from the east. You remember that? The wise men from the east came. What did they bring? Gold, frankincense, myrrh—costly gifts. They were unsettled and unwilling to return to their land until their gifts were before the child Christ, sent by God undoubtedly

as aid for the parents to sustain them, Mary and Joseph. Friends, remember that Jesus paid the ultimate price to redeem us, and so this king is worthy of all which we are and that which we have.

Shall we pray?