

## Psalm 21

*Prayer for Deliverance.  
For the choir director. A Psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad,  
And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!
- <sup>2</sup> You have given him his heart's desire,  
And You have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah.
- <sup>3</sup> For You meet him with the blessings of good things;  
You set a crown of fine gold on his head.
- <sup>4</sup> He asked life of You,  
You gave it to him,  
Length of days forever and ever.
- <sup>5</sup> His glory is great through Your salvation,  
Splendor and majesty You place upon him.
- <sup>6</sup> For You make him most blessed forever;  
You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence.
- <sup>7</sup> For the king trusts in the LORD,  
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he will not be shaken.
- <sup>8</sup> Your hand will find out all your enemies;  
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
- <sup>9</sup> You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;  
The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,  
And fire will devour them.
- <sup>10</sup> Their offspring You will destroy from the earth,  
And their descendants from among the sons of men.
- <sup>11</sup> Though they intended evil against You  
And devised a plot,  
They will not succeed.
- <sup>12</sup> For You will make them turn their back;  
You will aim with Your bowstrings at their faces.
- <sup>13</sup> Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength;  
We will sing and praise Your power.

v.1: David was still between anointing and enthronement, yet speaks of himself as "the king." He had presumably experienced at least one deliverance from King Saul, who was hunting him (Ps.18; 1 Sam.24).

v.4: "life" (*chay*) is a very common word in the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis 1.

v.5: "most blessed" could also mean "a blessing" (*berakah*) or "source of blessing" (ESV) as in God made Abraham a blessing (Gen.12:2; cf. Isa.19:24; Ezk.34:26; Zech.8:13)

v.9: David was probably thinking of how God consumed some people with fire (Gen.19; Lev.10) and swallowed up others in the earth (Num.16)

## Discussion Questions

1. Who is “the king”?
  - a. In the immediate sense, David is speaking of himself.
  - b. In the ultimate sense, Jesus takes the role of the Heir of David, the greatest of the kings.
  - c. In the personal sense, when we believe in Jesus, we “are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms” and share in his kingship (Eph.1:15 – 2:10; Rom.5:12 – 21). Jesus shares with us his reign. So we read this Psalm through how Jesus read it.
2. What does David mean when he says, “your heart’s desire”?
  - a. “Life” as in physical, bodily life (v.4). But more than that. It’s not just length of life, but quality of life.
  - b. Being crowned (v.3b), which is an honor.
  - c. Sharing in God’s glory, splendor, majesty (v.5), which is about appropriate authority and power.
  - d. Being blessed and being a blessing (v.6a).
  - e. Joy and gladness (v.6b).
  - f. He’s thinking about God’s original design and the Garden of Eden (Gen.1 – 2).
  - g. Application: Is it easy for you to desire things for yourself that are absolutely God’s best? Did you stuff those desires down? Did you let those desires get distorted because of sin?
  - h. Application: How can you remind yourself that God is restoring our desires to what He always meant for us to desire? Maybe a note to read? A beautiful picture to reflect on?
3. Why does David say, “life... forever and ever”? Did David live forever?
  - a. It’s hyperbole as David speaks and writes and prays this. Although David might be speaking of the kingship as an institution, and not just the individual kings who sit on the throne.
  - b. But the literary becomes literal for Jesus, who is the Heir of David and greatest King. “Life” ultimately points to Jesus’ bodily resurrection.
  - c. The Hebrew Bible makes us focus on the life of the body, not the soul separately from the body. In 1 Sam.28, King Saul uses a witch-medium to call up the ghost of the prophet Samuel. Samuel’s soul apparently does appear and respond, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” (1 Sam.28:15) and gives us no further information about what the souls of the dead experience or do.
4. Who are the enemies?
  - a. Generally, those who rebel against God’s commands, a theme that starts in Psalm 1.
  - b. Those who are opposed to the human king that God anoints and enthrones. That’s the immediate experience of David, as that king. That theme starts in Psalm 2.
  - c. Who are the “offspring” and “descendants” of v.10? Does God destroy innocent children?
    - i. No. These are the people who follow in your rebellion and share in it. They are the ideological children of the rebellious.
5. What will God do to His enemies?
  - a. Keep in mind that this is poetry, and hyperbole is one of the ways that Hebrew poetry works. This isn’t a full exposition of what God does to those who rebel.
  - b. Fire (v.9) is a consistent image that God takes to Himself.
    - i. God is like a fiery sword that burns/cuts away the corruption of sin from human nature before we return to the tree of life (Gen.3:24) and Jesus now wears the mantle of the fiery sword (Rev.1:12 – 18).
    - ii. God is like a refiner’s fire (Mal.3:1 – 4). God is like a metalsmith who purifies gold by melting it down, and scoops out the dross. But if we want to hold onto the sin God wants to burn away, then we are identifying ourselves with the problem, and will experience God as inflicting pain. But it doesn’t mean God’s real intention is to cause pain.
    - iii. The “fiery oven” is an image that is consistent with how God “contains” and will “restrain” those who rebel against Him.
  - c. “Being swallowed up” (v.9) might refer to God swallowing up Sodom and Gomorrah in fire (Gen.19), or God swallowing up Korah’s rebellion in the earth down to Sheol (Num.16).
  - d. God will make them retreat, in v.12a, and also be ahead of them, in v.12b.
6. There is a subtle double usage of fire. One is a blessing for the people of God, and the other is a logical consequence of rebelling against God.
  - a. Fire is implied in the refining fire that purifies gold for the crown, in v.3b. The fire is destructive for those who do not want to be refined.

- b. In fact, Jesus was forced to wear a crown of thorns, when he was crucified, not a crown of fine gold. What's the irony there?
  - i. The first irony is that the Romans mocked Jesus' claim to be King of the Jews. They thought they were destroying Jesus and his claim to be King by denigrating him.
  - ii. The irony of the irony is that Jesus *was the fire in the burning bush* on Mount Sinai in Exodus 3. So Jesus takes the mantle of the thorns because the burning bush was thorny back then. He was calling everyone to himself. And just as God in the burning bush later called Israel to Himself and came down in fire on all of Mount Sinai (Ex.19), Jesus would later send the fire of his Holy Spirit upon a new Mount Sinai, at Pentecost, which was the community of his disciples (Acts 2:1 – 13).
  - iii. Jesus purified his fallen human nature through his human faithfulness, so in his resurrection he is raised with a fully healed and purified humanity. So in effect, he is crowned with fine, purified gold!
- 7. In v.13, at the end, who is the "we"?
  - a. The congregation, the people. David as king is worship leader.
  - b. The future kings of Jesus' line, who chime in later in their own lives.
- 8. What is God's "power"?
  - a. It's not a power to control people per se.
  - b. Power to give life and blessing.
  - c. Power to defeat His opponents because they defeat themselves, really.
  - d. Application: How do we celebrate and praise God for this specific power? Do we allow God to produce gladness in us? How?