

What a wonderful covenant comfort for one generation to know that the Lord *never lets go of the next*. We read joyfully of God's covenant blessings on David's kingdom continuing in the reign of the young Solomon, who in 1 Kings 3:3-10 asked the Lord for wisdom to rule and thereby pleased the Lord. Then later, to our heartbreak Solomon departed from the Lord; his many foreign wives, his royal power, and his wealth led him astray (1 Kings 11:1-9). We see the vanity of his years of prosperity in the book of Ecclesiastes. We may also question how, with idols in his palace, Solomon *knew anything from his experience* of the blessing of having, "The Lord build his house" in the Psalm he wrote on that subject – Psalm 127.

But we are to always let the Word of God have the last say when it comes to the children of the covenant – whether it is David's son, or our own children. That is why we turn this week to Psalm 72, another Psalm of Solomon, after considering some of the dire consequences of Solomon's disobedience.

Monday: Read 1 Kings 10:14-11:9

Hope for the Worst

We begin by quoting an article in *Tabletalk* about the downfall of the rulers who followed David (especially Solomon) as described in 1 and 2 Kings.

1 Kings tips us off that things are about to go sour with a few seemingly inconsequential details of King Solomon's reign: "And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen" (1 Kings 10:26). Strike one for Solomon.

"And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone" (v. 27). Strike two.

"Now King Solomon loved many foreign women" (11:1). Strike three, he's out.

"And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel . . . The Lord said to Solomon, I will surely tear the kingdom from you." (vv. 9, 11).

Solomon's idolatry set into motion a course of events that led to a divided kingdom and a subsequent series of one evil king after another. In the north, the succession of illegitimate kings began with Jeroboam: . . . (and reaching its lowest point with Ahab) who "reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him" (16:29–30). During Ahab's reign, the people abandoned covenant fidelity to the Lord. The Jewish historian Josephus noted that Ahab "made no alteration in the conduct of the kings that were his predecessors, but only in such things as were of his own invention for the worse, and in his most gross wickedness."

1 & 2 Kings are really a study in the corrupting influence of idolatry over all of society, and an affirmation of God's power to bring life into the most desperate of situations because He is the "living God."

Aaron Garriot, *Tabletalk*, August 27, 2021

Meditate and Pray: Lord Jesus, we are always disappointed by man, for no one is able to carry the heavy weight of kingship and rule without sagging under the great weight of temptations that accompany success, power, and riches. Thank you that you wear the robe of kingship flawlessly and humbly still, may we put our trust only in You.

Tuesday: Read 1 Kings 3:3-10 and Jonah 2:8-10**Those Who Cling to Worthless Idols...**

The verdict over Solomon's reign, especially his intermingling of idolatry alongside his devotion to Jehovah, leads to this succinct but tragic conclusion (in yesterday's article by Aaron Garriot from *Tabletalk*): "The injection of pagan worship into Israel proved to be fertile soil for cultic and moral syncretism."

Thus, wickedness, whether by false teaching or false living, always enters into the true Bride of Christ, the church (in Old or New Testaments) in this syncretistic way. Syncretism means the mixing of different rituals, beliefs, or practices under the guise of claiming to be in accord with true faith. In Biblical terms, it means mixing man-made and idolatrous belief and practice with Biblically protected true faith and true worship.

This happens because there is a satanic drive on the part of false teaching and immorality that insists on its right to be accepted into the lives of God's people. The church today, for example, faces relentless, syncretistic pressure to redefine biblical marriage and gender away from its historical Biblical distinctions of man and woman, male and female. But the urgent danger in such compromises *within the church* with such false distortions of Scripture truth, is that, while we would gain in popularity with the world were we to make such compromises, we would lose that loving relationship with the Lord of which Jonah speaks from the belly of the fish in Jonah 2.

Meditate and Pray: Lord of the Word, please give your ordained leaders in the church the courage to stand on and with Biblical truth. Please do not allow our blessings to go to our head. Please grant us the grace to be committed, in the day of small things, to love your truth. Do not let us pursue wealth, popularity, and success in the name of building the kingdom of God. Protect us from allegiances with the temptations of this world, leading to compromises in Biblical Doctrine or practice. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Psalm 72:1-5**The One Wise King**

The title of Psalm 72 reads "of Solomon;" it has the Hebrew preposition before the proper name, Solomon. According to Keil and Delitzsch's commentary on the Psalms, this always designates the one to whom the Psalm belongs, as its author. Psalm 72, therefore, is defined in their commentary as a "prayer which expresses the heart and mouth of the people of Israel, probably very soon after Solomon's accession to the throne. It is a church-prayer on behalf of the new, reigning Solomon." The Almighty, who knew from the beginning of the profound failures in Solomon's integrity that would mark his reign, nevertheless chose him to pen this beautiful Psalm.

Meditate and Pray: Sovereign Ruler, who knows all things, please pour out a spirit of prayer upon your church in our day, that we might pray for the progress and success of Christ's Kingdom, in the same way that Israel prayed for the young King Solomon.

Moreover, thank you that the wisdom that you granted Solomon when he asked for it (1 Kings 3:9-10) is now fulfilled in the wisdom of the Son of God, by which He rules over the world and His church. Thank you that our Savior and Bride-Groom never turns his head to the women of this world, as Solomon did (1 Kings 11:1-2). Thank you that He is a "One-woman Man." He died for His bride, the church, alone – and will be faithful to her forever!

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you have fulfilled the words of Isaiah 11:1-5:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Thurs/Fri: Read Psalm 72:1-7 and Isaiah 11:1-10

Flourishing Under the King

Yesterday, we read with joy from Isaiah's description of the Messiah:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit....
.... with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

This perfect, wise, compassionate care for His redeemed, no matter the weakness of their situation, is also described in Psalm 72:1-7. Here are selected verses:

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!

The striking quality of His rule is of a King who has a *continual, perfectly-timed, individually attentive, concern to answer each need of those in bondage to worldly, Satanic and sinful power.*

For example, take the metaphor in Ps 72:6 of rain showers "falling on mown grass," preceded in verse 5 by the enduring fear of the Lord, that will last (literally) "unto the uttermost generation" -- i.e., "which outlasts every generation that preceded it" (Keil & Delitzsch).

What does that speak of? Combining verses 5-6, we think of the continual, daily need for moisture in the agricultural lands of the Middle East. Some plants of Israel in their desert environment thrive simply on the heavy dews they receive. How much more life-giving are the showers of God's grace which He causes to fall on our lives! They are guaranteed to flow each morning, providing crucial moisture in the midst of desert heat. The language of the Psalmist is intense here, as he piles up one picture after another:

"Long as the sun shines and as the moon reflects the sun's light." That's how long this king will rule, inspiring godly fear in the hearts of his subjects.

As strategic, perfectly-timed rain, giving life to parched crops in the desert, or as gentle showers (or dew), this king's rule will refresh his subjects.

Meditate and Pray: As if to confirm our faith, later verses in Psalm 72 clearly identify this Ruler as more than Solomon (though David's son was the one who originally wrote this Psalm to express his need for the prayers and support of God's people in the first days of his kingdom). The King who will reign with wisdom, fruitfulness and power is He, "whose Name will endure forever, and whose fame will continue as long as the sun!" (Psalm 72:17).

Let us thank the Lord Jesus that His reign will endure forever, subduing us as His subjects; defeating all of our foes and defending His kingdom from all enemies, as hymn # 441 in our *Trinity Hymnal*:

1 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does his successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

2 To him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head;
his name, like sweet perfume, shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

3 People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song;
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

4 Blessings abound where'er he reigns;
the pris'ner leaps to lose his chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all the sons of want are blest.

5 Let every creature rise and bring
peculiar honors to our King,
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen!

Sat/Sun: Read Psalm 72:12-14 and Isaiah 50:4-9

Vindication and Comfort

Christ rejoices in His Father's personal, attentive, comforting care for Him in Isaiah 50, rejoicing that the Father did not abandon Him to the difficult task of seeking and redeeming His lost people as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.

Isaiah 50:4 says that God the Father trained up His Son in the Word of God (morning by morning) to sustain Him in His weariness as He went forward in the difficult work of being our Savior.

When He, God the Father, the Redeemer of Israel, came to His own people, “there was no man to receive Him” (Isaiah 50:2), but the Father would make sure that the Son did not suffer the same fate when sent as our Savior. As Jesus predicting that all his disciples would fall away “but the Father would not leave Him alone,” (John 16:32). God the Father ensured that His promises, His presence, and His strength would accompany His Son in the work of our salvation – every step of the way.

No wonder that the very Word that provided Christ with strength and refreshing hope in Isaiah 50:4, comes to bold expression in Isaiah 50:7-8 (KJV):

For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.
He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

Here is God’s Word for His Son, reassuring Him that, in the Resurrection, God will vindicate Him from the accursed death of a criminal on the Cross! These words of Christ’s speak about Himself in His sufferings, taking them to heart as He proceeds towards Calvary, “giving His back to those who strike; His beard to being pulled out and His face to spitting,” (Isaiah 50:6).

But this King of our salvation, according to Psalm 72:7, is not content simply to take *His own victory and comfort* from His Father’s presence with Him at the Cross. He cares for each of us individually, so that He gives us *each one* the very comfort from the Word of God which sustained Him on earth. In short, Isaiah 50:7-8’s reassurance becomes ours (as Thomas Goodwin points out) in the triumphal word of our victory in Christ’s love in Romans 8. Consider these translations of Isaiah 50:8 (left column) and Romans 8:33-34 (right column) and see if you don’t see the parallels -

He who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who is my adversary?
Let him come near to me.

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?
It is God who justifies.
Who is to condemn?
Christ Jesus is the one who died—
more than that, who was raised—
who is at the right hand of God,
who indeed is interceding for us.

Thus Christ applies to each one of His children *the very words of comfort which the Lord gave Him in Isaiah 50*.

Meditate and Pray: Let us thank the Lord Jesus for His careful attentiveness to each cry on the part of His needy ones. When there is no other helper, He steps in to help us (Psalm 72:12) – just as His Father stepped in to help Him when the world, and even His own disciples, forsook Him.