

Seeing Double

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[0 : 00] And Judah and Israel lived in safety, even from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree all the days of Solomon.

Even the remotest outposts of Israel were safe during the duration of his reign. And with his reign, he brought joy to the righteous, because he built the temple of God, the place where the righteous could come and worship God in all the earth.

And you can, after a fashion, talk about Solomon as a force of nature, as rain that waters the earth. You know, David used that same language for himself in his final words in 2 Samuel 23.

He describes himself like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.

That may seem a little dramatic, but when you're in a fully-fledged monarchy, not just a constitutional monarchy like what we have in the UK, you recognize this, that the fish rots from the head down.

[1 : 16] Everything is affected by who the king is. It affects everyone. And if you have a bad king, bad things happen.

And you need a good leader to have a good kingdom. And King Solomon brought Israel a great number of blessings. But there's a problem.

And it's a fairly obvious problem. Solomon died. And the night he died, the moon still shone. This psalm was not fulfilled by him, not completely.

He brought peace. But that peace was temporary. Upon his death, the entire nation was ripped apart in a civil war.

And so many of his descendants died on the battlefield. You can see from Solomon's life that he was not the promised Messiah.

[2 : 15] He is not the one promised in the Davidic covenant when God came to him and said, When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will rise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

And your house and his kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. God in the Davidic covenant is promising to David that there is a descendant who will reign forever.

Not for 40 years. Not even for 70 years. Like Queen Elizabeth. But quite literally, till the moon is no more.

Till eternity itself. Now, I think it's quite possible that David at some point thought that Solomon had a chance to be the Messiah.

That he had a chance to be the one who was promised in the Davidic covenant. I think that's possible. I think that might be why he decided to name him Peace. And he used all this messianic imagery in this psalm.

[3 : 24] But that turned out not to be the case. Someone else needed to come. And that someone else was Jesus Christ.

This psalm is praying for the coming of Christ because with him comes a truly endless reign. Christ died once. And then he rose again from the dead, never to die again.

Death had a grip on him and then it spat him out again. And when it spat him out, he would never again fall under death.

It is not possible for Christ to die anymore. Not after his resurrection. Not after his ascension. Where he is raised on high and crowned above all and given the name above all other names as the messianic king.

He tasted death. And he shall never taste death again. He shall always endure as long as the moon does.

[4 : 29] And it is with his reign that we are supposed to think about Jesus Christ as rain watering the earth. Christ is who nourishes us.

It is Christ who keeps us safe. Who builds us up in righteousness and justice. And it is Christ who with his eternal reign that we latch on to in the means of grace.

We seek him in worship. That's who we are seeking here today as we gather together in worship. It is with his reign that we as the people of God know peace.

Because Christ, he is true peace. He is shalom. Which brings peace with God the Father. He wipes our sins away and makes us children of God.

He is the one who brings us the most intimate peace imaginable with God. He is the one who endures forever. And Christian, as we are thinking about Christ's eternal reign, I want you to think about this.

[5 : 35] Christ's eternal reign should give you absolute certainty that his kingdom will never be destroyed. You know, in Madame Tussauds' wax museum, they supposedly had a chair owned by the philosopher Voltaire.

You know, he's one of the greatest French philosophers. And Voltaire, he's incredibly famous. He was instrumental in the French Revolution. He had a great hatred for Christianity.

And one day there was a tour going through the wax museum. And a minister heard that that chair over there was Voltaire's chair. And so the minister leaped over into the exhibit, immediately sat down in the chair and declared, Jesus shall reign wherever the sun doth his successive journeys run.

Now, that's a little dramatic. And I'll admit that freely. But it's true. Because where is Voltaire? He's dead. And where is Christ?

He's alive. At the right hand of God the Father. His reign endures for all time. And so you should trust in your Savior.

[6 : 46] Whoever lives to rule and defend you as your once and always king. You shall never sit underneath a different king than Jesus Christ.

Because his reign is truly endless. Now, I want us to move on to verses 8 to 14 and see an endless dominion.

These verses are describing a great dominion. And once again, in some way, they apply to Solomon. Think about what Solomon ruled.

He ruled everything from the Euphrates down to the border of Egypt. It was the high watermark of the kingdom of Israel. And when the Bible describes those boundaries, your ears are supposed to perk up.

Because that is a fulfillment of Exodus 23. After hundreds of years, Israel is finally taking control of all the land that God has promised it.

[7 : 48] All the territory that has been promised by God. With Solomon, there is this massive expansion of the power in Israel. So that it starts to take on international fame.

Kings from all over the globe start asking, Who is this in Jerusalem who has all this wisdom? And so famously, the Queen of Sheba comes all the way there to see Solomon.

She's mentioned twice in this psalm. In verses 10 and 15, which say, Rulers from Sheba will bring gifts and give gold.

And that's exactly what we read about in 1 Kings 10. The Queen of Sheba meets Solomon. She sees all of his power. She hears about all of his wisdom.

And then she declares this. She declares, Blessed be the Lord, your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel. Because the Lord loves Israel forever.

[8 : 46] He has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness. And then she gives him 120 talents of gold. Look back at Psalm 72.

Justice and righteousness are really the main themes of this psalm. They're mentioned in the very first lines. The Queen is coming before Solomon and essentially saying, This psalm is fulfilled in some way by you.

You are the ruler who gives justice and righteousness. Here are, here's 120 talents of gold. This is a fulfillment of this passage, a fulfillment of this psalm.

But as much as we see the dominion of Solomon, We see a much greater dominion in Jesus Christ. Revelation 11 describes the kingdom of heaven in this way.

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. And he shall reign forever and ever. You know, imagine the kingdom of the world.

[9 : 53] In all of its splendor, in all of its glory, in all of its vastness. That is what is Christ's. Christ is given dominion over all the world.

And on the final day, what will happen? Everyone shall come before Christ and bend the knee. Tribute will be offered to him and they will acknowledge that he is Lord of all.

We're going to see a day when this psalm is very visibly and publicly fulfilled for all to see. There is not a person, alive or dead, who will not acknowledge the dominion of Christ.

And in some measure, we witness that today. You can look up the statistics about the outreach of Christianity. There's roughly 1.5 billion people who do not have the Bible in their own language.

And there are about 3 billion people who are still considered unreached. And those are large numbers. But those are numbers that are decreasing every day.

[11 : 00] God's word is going forth. And what we see in missions is in some way the expansion of Christ's dominion. We see people converted.

Brought in from every tribe and tongue and nation. And they are brought in to kneel before Christ.

And we even now, we get to see Christ ruling spiritually before he rules physically on the final day.

I want to give you just one more thought. A thought that I think is very helpful. When we look around us and we see the world seemingly out of control. Do you realize the massive impact that Christianity has had on this world?

It is an absolutely massive, staggering influence. Think just for a moment about our culture. A large portion of our culture is obsessed with the idea of victimhood.

There's the idea that if you become more of a victim, you actually have more power. And so you actually try to identify as many marginalized groups as possible.

[12 : 07] Now I want you to think for a moment. Where does an idea like that come from? Because it hasn't actually occurred anywhere else in human history. I don't want you to misunderstand me when I say this.

But that idea can only arise in a Christian world where the cross is pointed to. And where Christ becomes weak and therefore becomes strong.

You know, I'm not saying the culture is right. I think the culture is very, very wrong. But what I am saying is that even those who point to the church and say, you have mistreated me, you have made me a victim.

Even they are using ground that only makes sense because of what we believe. Because of what Christ has done. Even in their rebellion, they cannot escape him.

And they are forced to fight him on his own terms. That doesn't make what they do good. But it is an expression of Christ's dominion.

[13 : 09] And it's one of the great ironies of rebellion in our day that they can't get away from him. No matter how much they try. And Christian, on the final day, we're going to see that Christ doesn't just outlast his enemies.

But that Christ has conquered them. There isn't a hint of helplessness in this psalm. Because it sees that the end is coming. This dominion of Christ will be shown to be from sea to sea.

Every portion of the earth will submit to him. And so, you should not fear because your king is in control of all things by his sovereign will.

And he shall come. And until that day, we cry out, Lord, come quickly. But we cry out that prayer with certainty. With absolute confidence.

That all will be seen in submission to Christ. And now I want us briefly to take a look at these final verses. In verses 15 to 17.

[14 : 12] Here we see the endless blessings that come with the Messianic King. Let's just very briefly go through them. The Messianic King, he has a long life.

Gold is given to him. Prayers are made continually for him. With him comes abundance of grain in the fields. And prosperity in the cities. His name and fame endure forever.

And why is he called blessed? At the end of verse 17. Because in him, all the people are blessed. It is in him that the blessings of God spread throughout all the earth.

This is in some way shown in Solomon. Just a foretaste. But if you have a keen ear, when you read 1 Kings 1 to 11.

You understand this. There is a very deep irony that runs through a description of Solomon's reign. Because we understand, when we read those chapters, what's going to happen.

[15:16] We understand that Solomon is going to fall. We see that Solomon broke all the rules that a king of Israel was supposed to follow. There's a set of rules that are actually in Deuteronomy 17.

It's just a few verses. And he breaks every single one of those. He isn't supposed to have an alliance with Egypt. Or have many horses. He isn't supposed to have many wives.

And he isn't supposed to have excessive silver and gold. And what does Solomon do in 1 Kings?

He's grabbing power. And it's that which leads to his downfall.

We see in Solomon a biblical example of what happens when blessings become curses. These blessings of money and power actually lead to the spiritual destruction of Israel.

It's spiritual deformation. It leads to idolatry in the land. And ironically, what happens at the end of Solomon's reign after he dies? All the people rise up and they cry out, we are tired of these heavy taxes.

[16:25] We are tired of working so much. And those are ironically the exact same problems they had in Egypt. On one level, they have all these blessings.

And on another level, they're still in slavery. Look at verse 17. And just think about Solomon.

Despite all his fame and prosperity, the people were not truly blessed in him.

And the Bible itself does not call him blessed. Not in the sense of this psalm. Only Christ is the one who can bring blessings that are true and lasting and truly and completely for your good.

And not have those blessings be turned into curses. Christ's dominion is not like an ordinary empire that so often begins to oppress their own people.

When Christ's dominion goes forth, blessings go forth with it. It is in Christ that we have blessings.

He is the one who lives forever. He is the one who is continually praised by his people and is called blessed.

[17:37] He is the one who allows the blossoming of all people like the grass of the field in verse 16. And he is the one whose name shall endure forever and ever, blessing everyone around him.

What is being described here is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. When God comes to Abraham and he says, Through you all the offspring of the world will be blessed.

And it is in Christ that God blesses us. It is in Christ himself. It is Christ himself who blesses us. We are blessed as Christ's people in him and in him alone.

Without Christ, nothing is truly and fully a blessing. The greatest pleasure and joy simply becomes idolatry and it quickly loses its luster.

But when we meet with Jesus and we commune with him, we find that our restless hearts finally have their rest in him. And that is why we pay such close attention to the means of grace.

[18:46] That is why we partake of the sacraments. It is because in them we partake of Christ and his benefits. It is in the means of grace, the sacraments, the preaching, the singing, and the praying of the word as the people of God, that we commune with Christ and that we enjoy him and all his blessings.

Look at these verses here. This final stanza of verse 17. May his name endure forever.

May he continue as long as the sun. Then all nations will be blessed through him and they will call him blessed. David did not fully understand just such a wonderful fulfillment of this psalm we have in Jesus Christ.

Where we are able to feast on Christ's own flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper. Where we would be taught by him when we open up the scriptures and simply read them.

Where we would commune with him by prayer, both by having our prayers answered and being changed as we pray to him by the Spirit. And a day is coming when we shall dwell with him forever.

[19:58] And we shall finally have a glimpse of him in the new heavens and the new earth. And our faith shall be sight. And we shall see the light of his glory as we sing his praises and enjoy everlasting peace.

That is what true blessedness looks like. That is what a true messianic king looks like. And that is what Solomon could not possibly hope to be.

And brothers and sisters, as we're closing, I want us just to very briefly look at these closing verses. These final two verses. Verses 18 and 19.

These two verses, they're a doxology. They are a doxology that seems to switch the subject. But from king to God. Praise be to the Lord God.

The God of Israel who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to his glorious name forever. May the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen.

[21 : 03] And Christian, one of the most wonderful things that we should see in this psalm is that the subject hasn't changed from verse 17 to 18. This psalm is crying out that all nations, that may all nations call him blessed.

And what happens? It immediately praises Christ. Christ. Christ is our great king. He has an endless reign, an endless dominion, an endless blessings.

And what is it all connected to? That he is God in the flesh. And it is in him that we are called blessed. And it is in him that he blesses us all the day long.

We get to see God come to earth and bless us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That is the great fulfillment that we need to see today.

It is a fulfillment that should warm our hearts and focus us even when all the earth seems to give way. Because our king and our God is everlasting.

[22 : 10] And he shall reign from sea to sea as long as the moon endures. Amen. Let us pray. Most gracious and loving heavenly Father.

Lord, we are thankful for Jesus Christ.