

Long Live King Jesus

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[0 : 00] For the people of God, and if you receive it that way, please say joyfully, thanks be to God.! May he grant you according to your heart's desire and fulfill all your purpose.

We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God, we will set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.

Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed. He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God.

They have bowed down and fallen, but we have risen and stand upright. Save the Lord. May the King answer us when we call. The word of the Lord for the people of God.

Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Isaiah 40 tells us that the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

[1 : 36] And in Luke 1, the angel Gabriel, who ministers at the face of God, he says, No word from God shall be void of power. Please pray one more time with me.

God, please illumine your word to your people. Through this earthen vessel of the preacher, Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit will cause your people to behold Jesus Christ by faith through your own living word.

Lord, please do this all for your glory. We ask. Amen. Well, people have prepared themselves for war differently over the centuries and in different continents.

Some of this has been carried on into sports traditions and celebrations. One of the guys I played soccer with had this chant from Africa. No one even knew what the words were, so we probably shouldn't have been chanting it.

But it was a pump up, you know, pat your legs and then start clapping. And it was like a battle cry. If you've watched, if you haven't, all the dads need to go show the kids later on. The all black rugby team of New Zealand, I think it is.

[2 : 53] And they do the famous haka. It's like a war cry where they get themselves worked up and ready to go play. On a more serious note, we're following the headlines of global geopolitics.

And there are nations, as we speak, preparing for war by secretly stockpiling components of nuclear bombs. With the intent of calling one another's bluff and causing destruction that world history has never seen on such a scale.

What about God's people? What about the church? God's people, both in Psalm 20 and also the church today, we prepare for war as well.

What Psalm 20 teaches us is that God's people prepare for war by singing together. Isn't that awesome? It's a beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Long live King Jesus. That's our battle cry. I want to walk through this Psalm. I want to try to wrestle with some of the questions, starting with the grammar.

[4 : 03] But because it's also about war, I hope it's not as dry or boring as that might sound. And then I want to say, how is it that Jesus would have prayed and sung Psalm 20?

And then in light of Christ, how can we and how must we as the church sing Psalm 20?
Through Christ to one another before God. So first, what the people wish for their king.

That's what I think we have in verses 1 through 5. Picture the gathered congregation. And if they're a ring themselves for war, it's most likely divided by tribes.

There's an elder of each of the tribes coming forward. They're lifting up these banners, these emblems. And the regiments line up behind them. Can you picture this scene?

An army arraying itself for war behind the different regiments with banners over each one. And King David, God's anointed king, gives an order to the chief musician.

[5 : 00] Implying there are many other musicians. We're going to do some corporate congregational singing now. Preparing for a great battle. And the people sing verses 1 through 5.

Now we don't know for certain this is how it's arranged. But the grammar forces us to certain conclusions. And what I'm sharing with you is the best I've learned and gathered from my studies of how others and how the church have read this psalm.

Would you look at verses 1 through 5 with me? One commentator said it's not even so much a prayer as an expression of a desire before God.

So they say in verse 1, May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob defend you. So they're directing their desire, their wish before God to someone.

The chorus in one voice, it's singing their loyal support to the king. One of the most thrilling songs someone pointed out is to imagine yourself there.

[6 : 14] Seeing the army ready, preparing itself for war. And it's a day of trouble. So it's a day when the nation is hard pressed on all sides.

If you remember from 1 Samuel, David inherits a kingdom in chaos, divided and at war with massive threats. To the west, toward the Mediterranean Sea, it's the Philistines.

And to the east, it's even worse. Both sides have chariots and horses and power. To the east, they're coming around, gouging out the right eye, making it so no one can go to war against them any longer.

It's doomsday for Israel. And now the king is low before the Lord. They're asking for God to come and defend him.

God, please lift this king up out of this trouble. The God of Jacob. This is the God who took Jacob and blessed him.

[7 : 10] And he renamed this man Israel. And he's further advancing his covenant promises. To send forth a promised seed like he promised to Eve.

And it'll come through Jacob. Through Israel. Through one of these 12 tribes. And they make this profession of their faith. It's the people are publicly stating together in one voice, the true source of their help.

Look at verse 2. May he, God, send you, the king, help from the sanctuary. Referring to God's throne in heaven. The holy temple where the host of angel army are gathered before God.

Zephaniah, our passage we read, refers to God, the king of Israel. The true king. And David, his anointed. And the people trust in the true source of their strength.

They say, may God strengthen you, king, out of Zion. Remember, Zion is that fortress of the Jebusites that had become the hub now for God's kingdom under David on earth.

[8 : 19] Verse 3, the people say, may God remember, David, all your offerings and accept your burnt offerings. They have a mediator that comes before God as a sinful man.

That needs first to be washed clean before God will accept David into his presence. And if David as king and leader over these people is going to ask God to bless them and defend them in war, David better not approach this holy God presumptuously.

So the people, they're very interested to make sure that God will accept their king through the blood sacrifice, through the forgiveness of sins. May God forgive our king's sins and hear his prayers for the nation.

Zion then becomes this place where David sits on a political throne. And it's also now the place where the tabernacle and soon the temple will be built. Where the priests will do their mediatorial work.

And so Zion becomes a place where through blood, both God and man can commune together. It's the temple and the throne combined on one hill where God descends, making it holy.

[9 : 42] And so the people are publicly pledging their loyalty to God's kingdom, trusting that God will save their king. And in verse five, they say, we will rejoice in your salvation.

In the name of our God, we will set up our banners. It's the honor of God that we will fight for. It's not Saul's pride, Saul's army, Saul's agenda.

It's the name of God. We are fighting for his glory. We will rejoice in the salvation our God will provide.

And as our king makes himself low before God, we ask that the Lord will be gracious to our king and fulfill his petitions. The people's future is intertwined with the future of their king.

If their king perishes, if God chooses to curse their king rather than bless him, then the people will perish and receive curses as well. But on the other hand, if the Lord will be gracious and will bless their king and give their king victory in battle, then the people will get to share in this victory.

[10 : 52] They're intertwined with their king. This is what the people wish for their king. Now, I think that over the course of history, this psalm has been sung wrongly.

There have been monarchs who have used this song and basically requiring that the people view that monarch of England, for example, as the next David, pledging your loyalty.

You know, long live the king of this monarchy and may our empire expand to the end of the world. And of course, these promises are the opposite of that.

It's not the glory of a man or the glory of a king. It's the glory of God. It's the name of God that's on the banner. That the people will defend. And so it's quite opposite from powers of the world.

And the people wish for their king to be blessed. Now, here's what the king sings back to the people. I believe in verse six, because the speaker changes.

[11 : 59] First, we had the people saying, may the Lord do this for you. But now notice in verse six, it's first person singular. Someone says in a voice, I know that the Lord saves his anointed.

And the word anointed is in the Hebrew Messiah. I know that the Lord saves his Messiah. He, God, will answer his Messiah from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

This speaker in verse six is declaring truth to the army, to the people of God. It's the tone is confident.

He's preaching to himself and to the people. In verse one, they're calling for God to answer in the day of trouble. And now verse six repeats that word, showing that it's what you can trust in.

You ask God to answer, says, I know God will answer you. This closes this little inclusio, the other side of the bracket. I know God in heaven in the holy sanctuary will hear the prayer of his Messiah.

[13:15] That's what he proclaims back. Then in verses six through eight, the language changes one more time. You have to skip down to verse seven to see that.

Then I'll read these. So look at verse seven. We will remember the name of the Lord. It's all of us corporately together. Now, first person plural. Here's what we're going to sing as one voice. Verse seven suggests that the people believe what the king preached to them.

They embrace it. They develop and add to their king's declaration as their own unique corporate identity in this truth that they've received. Verse seven reads some trust in chariots and some in horses.

They're thinking of their immediate surroundings and these armies trying to wipe them out of existence and conquer them and cripple them financially. But they're also thinking to God's faithfulness when he parted the waters of the Red Sea.

When Pharaoh hardened his heart and God hardened Pharaoh's heart and the Egyptians chased after the Israelites through these parted waters. God's people passed on dry ground.

[14:23] And then these walls of water come crashing down and bury the chariots of Pharaoh in the bottom of the ocean. And then the Israelites, the army on the other side, without fighting, without using their own strength at all, simply trusting in God.

They see the bodies, the corpses of these soldiers from the Egyptian side that were coming to slay them, wash up on the shore. This is the illusion.

This is their identity. Remember who we are. This is the Lord God. It's his powerful name that delivers his people. In the Hebrew, the verb trust only occurs once at the very end of the sentence to heighten the attention and the contrast.

Literally, this verse seven reads like this. Some chariots, some in horses. But we, this is the emphatic name of the Lord.

We in Yahweh, our God, do trust. The postures now are reversed. In verse one, the people see their king down low.

[15:35] They say, may God hear your prayers as you pray and you lift up your petitions. May God defend you. And they ask God to lift up their king from his trouble.

In verse eight, they say, they, the mighty giants of this world, they are now the ones who are bowed down and fallen. And it's God's people, the weak army of God, who started off by being bowed low in prayer, in trouble and asking God to lift us up.

They're the ones who are now risen and who stand upright. God reverses the fate of the enemies of God with that of his people.

The people encourage their king. Their anointed king encourages the people. And the whole nation trusts God so entirely that they celebrate as if the battle were already won.

It's a celebration of faith, not by sight. You look around and it looks like we have no hope. But by faith, they can say, we know the Lord saves.

[16:41] The Lord is victorious. It's Yahweh's name that we trust. This is an encouragement for us because we look around at our world.

We look at our own lives. We see how weak we are, how dependent we are on everything upon the Lord. But we receive his words by faith. And that's why God's people are.

They're ones who receive his words by faith and rest in his salvation. Trusting that it's accomplished already, though it's being worked out.

Jesus, he said this in John 17, 8. I have given my disciples the words which you, God, have given me. And they have received them.

Maybe you have a lot of questions. Maybe you look around and there's so many doubts going through your mind. And you look at the remaining corruptions in your own heart and sin in your life.

[17:41] And you feel powerless. If you're one who will receive by faith what God has revealed to you, it's undeniable. He is my Lord.

He is my Savior. He strengthens his people from within. We live by faith and not by sight. That's our identity as his people. We trust the words of God, the true king of his people.

Well, now we have a challenge to work out in verse 9. He repeats the themes of the whole psalm. And the future of the king is bound together with the future of the people.

Both the people and this man, this king, installed from their nation to be God's temporary steward king. They have every reason to pray fervently for God's salvation.

They pray that God would find their king, his petitions acceptable and receive them. This was something that God told the people would be a condition of having a king on this earth.

[18:49] 1 Samuel 12, 13, the Lord set Saul as king over them. Samuel told the people, here's the condition. If you people do not obey the voice of the Lord but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you as it was against your fathers.

So both the king and the people under this old covenant in Israel were required to keep the law of God and to be satisfactory in the sight of God.

With the threat, there will be curses upon your disobedience. And so goes the rest of the history of Israel. When the king does not walk with the Lord, the whole nation suffers consequences, David included.

Every now and then there's a king who will be humbled and put himself under God's word and the word of God will be restored and God will rule over his people and they'll enjoy peace and blessings. Well, you know how this story with Israel goes.

The people and their king so rebel against God one after another that they get banished and they receive and bring upon themselves the curses for disobedience because the destiny of the people and the destiny of the king are intertwined.

[20:02] So in verse 9, they pray, save Yahweh. But according to verse 9, who is it that the people expect to answer their call?

They say, we're going to call now in our time of trouble. Answer us. But is it the king who will answer the call or is it God who will answer the call? Different English translations are split about half and half on this one.

If we did a sampling, we could get exactly that. Half the hands would say, mine says, you know, God save us or God hear the king and save us. Others would just say, may the king save us, the people, when we call to him.

Well, the word for word is reads like this. Save Yahweh. So God save us. The king, he shall answer you in the day of our calling.

It's not super clear. And again, this poetry can be taken in a few different ways. So I'm going to give you my best efforts to wrestle with this. The first observation is that verse 9 echoes what they prayed in verse 1.

[21:11] Verse 1 speaks of the day of trouble. And literally, verse 9 says, may he answer you in the day of your calling. You will call to him on the day of trouble.

Maybe that be the day where he answers you. And it's not up for dispute whether it's God who saves. That says it right there in verse 9. Save, O Yahweh. And also verse 6 made it clear.

Now I know that the Lord, Yahweh, saves his Messiah. But I think that verse 9 leaves off with us wondering that. How does God save?

How is it through the king? What's the king's role here? And are we as the people totally dependent on this man from Israel being our king? Because our destiny is intertwined with the destiny of this king.

Here's what I think we can see first. The people recognize that God must save the king. And the structural center of Psalm 20 is God accepting the sacrifice of the king.

[22:14] So God's people long to see God accept their Messiah's offering. And for God to hear the prayer of the Messiah and save. That's what the people long for.

The people recognize that their salvation depends upon whether or not God will save their king. And they sing, God save our king.

And because they have no hope of salvation, if their king disqualifies himself from receiving God's blessing, they know that the holy God must first find this anointed king to be pleasing in his sight in order for the just holy God to rightfully bless this nation through this king and give them a victory in the war.

Then, I think the people also recognize that when they are in distress, they need salvation from something bigger and more powerful than their own individual selves.

They need to be able to call to their king and trusting that God will save them too through the king's mediation and prayers. Just as God will save the king, there are times when the king will step in and be the instrument through which God brings their deliverance.

[23:28] This made me wonder. That's all it can be. Maybe this is an allusion to Christ's interpretation when he says, pray in my name and whatever you ask in my name, it will be given.

Lord Jesus says that with confidence. And I'm reminded how even at the beginning of his ministry, God the Father says, this is my son with whom I am well pleased.

So in order for God's promise to save his people to be fulfilled, I'd love to rehearse with you how King Jesus had to sing Psalm 21.

At Christ's first coming, think about it. Israel, they were slaves within their own land. They were cursed by their own sin.

Their own law keeping had been powerless to bring them any blessing. They were losers in a war with no king from David's line, on whom all these promises were hinging.

[24:37] Many within Israel trusted in chariots and in horses, so to speak. They trusted in the Roman Empire over them or the corrupt religious system and were very happy to compromise at some point.

Think of Matthew and Zacchaeus who worked as tax collectors within Israel, siphoning money away from the poor people, sending it off to the Roman Empire. And others trusted in their own might.

They tried to force a revolution. Remember Simon the Zealot and even Simon Peter who pulled out a dagger and sliced off the ear of the guard in the garden.

Well, our Lord's first coming was a time when the people were living only by what they could see, for the most part. On the whole, this nation did not recognize God as their Savior nor their King.

Yet God descended. The King of kings came as a humble servant. And at our Lord's first coming, He found no one to welcome Him and give Him the glory He was due, unless the Spirit anointed and caused them to recognize Him.

[26:00] You and I are the same. I was so convicted this week how I'm so often tempted to trust only or mostly in what I can see, what is earthly.

We're too quick to put our hope in what is of this world. Our flesh thinks our security is in horses and chariots. Even within the church, this can be a great temptation.

We can try to trust how many clicks a certain link gets. Churches can be tempted to trust how many people they get to hire on as staff or how much money they can raise.

Without the Holy Spirit, you and I are no different in that we don't pray for God's kingdom, for the advancement and the glory of King Jesus, as we should.

We're too quick now to put our attention and our hopes and little fiefdoms of man instead of the real spiritual kingdom of God through Jesus. We bless King Jesus too little, who sits on His throne and already rules over all creation as the Lord of all.

[27:11] We forget that He has all power and He has all authority already given to Him by the Father. Instead, we set our hearts on little kingdoms of men.

With the Fourth of July, you know, we see the fireworks and they're pretty amazing. But we got to visit the Creation Museum with our relatives recently and we got to sit in this simulation of the galaxies that God created.

What is man that God is mindful of us? It's like cheering for our favorite little sparkler in the dark rather than marveling at the sun rising in majesty and color, the advancement of Christ's kingdom.

So because of sin, theirs and ours, King Jesus first had to sing Psalm 20 alone without His people.

Psalm 20, God breathed it out through David so the King would stand and be blessed and having the support and loyalty of His army. And instead, Jesus sang this as a solo.

[28:30] At His first coming, He would have had to prepare for battle alone as we read in Mark. He prayed alone. As we sing, He suffered and died alone.

King Jesus fought the battle on earth alone. Without any help from any sinful people, our King Jesus was victorious. He single-handedly defeated the forces of darkness.

King Jesus took God's wrath and suffered the death that we deserve. He took all of this upon His own body. God, in His covenant of grace, think of this, that's why God intertwined the destiny of His people with the destiny of the King.

As goes the King, so will go His kingdom. And where we failed Him, Jesus Christ was victorious and secured all of God's blessings.

There's nothing the Father withholds from God the Son. Why did He do this? He became our King so He could turn around and give undeserving sinners like you and me all the blessings of heaven without any help from man.

[29:49] for God's glory alone. And if you are in Christ, everything Christ secured and received from the Father, the full victory that's His, He shares with you.

And that's how the one holy Christian church can sing Psalm 20 now. This is how believers from every continent and all generations, we must sing Psalm 20.

We are in the time between Christ's first and second coming. Hebrews 2a says that God, listen for the already not yet language, God already has put all in subjection under Jesus Christ.

He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we do not yet see all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, not visibly, but by faith.

We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels and is suffering in death. And He is now crowned with glory and honor. The Bible reveals two ages.

[31:03] In the last days, it's this age and the age to come. And we are at that overlap of the ages. Spiritually, the age to come is already inaugurated.

The victory of Christ is already secured. Spiritually, we already taste this. We're already living in our souls by faith in the age to come with Christ united in Him.

But our bodies are in this broken world, still in this present evil age. There's a not yetness to it as well. The ruler of this present evil age is, his head is crushed on the cross by Christ's work, but he's still fighting against God's kingdom.

So we hold on to the promise of God. 1 Corinthians 15, 24. Then comes the end, when Christ Jesus will deliver the kingdom of God, the Father.

King Jesus will put an end to all the rule and all authority and power of darkness. And he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.

[32:08] The last enemy to be destroyed is death. And so we wait for the consummation of King Jesus' final victory. And when he returns in glory, there will be no more death.

We will be with the Lord forever. Psalm 20, verses 1 through 5. What the chorus sings to the King.

In one voice now, the church singing to Jesus. It helps us express two longings that we have in this time period of redemptive history. Number one, that Jesus Christ will be honored here and now on earth.

We are called as a church to sing like we do in verse 9. Save, Lord God. In Jesus' name, answer us when we call. We will rejoice in your salvation.

We will remember the name of the Lord our God. In the name of our God, we will set up our banners. And so we pray that King Jesus may be honored on this earth.

[33:13] We set up our banners. We proclaim him to the world unashamed. He says, If you will be unashamed before me in this corrupt generation, I will not be ashamed of you when I return in glory with a host of angels at my side.

We honor him. Revelation 19, 6. It gives us just an idea of the sound that will come forth on that great day of Christ.

Whole multitude of saints, the great cloud of witnesses, and the chorus of angels singing. The voice of a great multitude as the sound of many waters, as the sound of a mighty thunderings, they will be saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns.

Let us be glad and rejoice and give him glory. So when we sing here in a sweaty gym, carpeted floors of a school, this is the banner of God's people.

It's the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit with the great host of his army of every generation joining our voice with heaven with all the angels proclaiming his salvation.

[34:26] Christ exalted is our song, our anthem through eternity, praises rise and wake the dawn, heralding his majesty. Christ without a rival reigns over all creation, name above all other names, enthroned in adoration.

So we pray that Jesus Christ will be honored here and now on earth. But yet there's one more way that we sing Psalm 20 for our encouragement and for God's glory.

We look forward to the great day when he will return. We sing Psalm 20 trusting that his salvation has already come though it's still coming more.

In verse 2 of Psalm 20, we join our voice now in saying, O God, you will send the host of angels' armies along with all your saints from every generation.

And we will be charging with you triumphantly behind King Jesus who comes down to save his people from his sanctuary in heaven.

[35 : 37] And you will strengthen your church. Right now your church is militant. And Hebrews talks about the heavenly Zion. And the kingdom of heaven will descend onto this earth.

And O God, we remember how your son, our Lord Jesus Christ, he offered up his own life as our burnt sacrifice, a payment for our sin. And so Lord, please look at Christ's person and work, we say, as they did in verse 4.

Look at King Jesus. We know he is pleasing to you. We know he's the perfect sacrifice. You will not reject his sacrifice. You have to answer his prayer.

It pleases you to answer the prayer of Jesus and to give him victory in this war. Glorify him. Put all things under his feet. Fulfill all your purposes from eternity past to raise up from the dust a kingdom on earth for your son.

It's the spirit of God within his church that sings, come quickly, Lord Jesus. And we comfort one another with this promise. 1 Thessalonians 4.16, the Lord will himself descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[36 : 59] Then we who are alive and remain, we shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, and we will meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

We sing glory, glory to the King, crowned with countless praises. Christ exalted, we will sing throughout unending ages.

May King Jesus come again soon to remake this world and reign forevermore. Long live our King.

Amen? Amen. Let's pray. Lord, we praise you for your great work.

We thank you for the perfect life of our Lord Jesus, the King, the Priest, the Prophet, the one who reveals God to man, and who makes a way for people like us to be brought into the family of God, safe, secure, in you forever.

[38 : 11] Thank you that you accepted Christ's work on our behalf, that the victory is already His, that we already enjoy salvation that you have given for your people.

Thank you that your banner over us, the cause of your mission, is your love. Oh, we praise you, our great Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen.