

# **"The King"**

## **Psalm 20 and 21**

These two psalms are to be considered together. Psalm 20 is a prayer for the king before he goes to war against a formidable enemy, and Psalm 21 is a psalm of rejoicing for the prayer of Psalm 20 being answered.

These psalms, as we saw in the last one, were meant to be sung in a place of corporate worship (this is seen in the simple title of the psalms). It's unclear what the occasion was for these psalms. There is speculation that it was the battle with the Ammonites and Syrians as recorded in Second Samuel ten, but we cannot know for sure. What can be understood is that it would have been on an occasion similar to that one where there was great jeopardy for the king and his armies.

There is also a slight view of the Messiah in these psalms, although I don't consider them to be Messianic in nature as some do. I do, however, think that we can see our Saviour found throughout the stanzas and because of this there is a clear application to be made for the church today.

What I wish to focus on as way of that application is how important it is that we pray for our leaders - both our leaders in the church and more specifically our leaders in government. We may not have a monarchy as existed in the time of the Psalms but considering that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine..." we can apply these principles and truths to whatever form of government may exist in our day.

There is a text in First Timothy that draws our attention to this psalm. It gives us the admonition to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority..." If we want to know how we are to pray for those in authority, this psalm will help.

## 1 Timothy 2:1-4

<sup>1</sup> I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;

<sup>2</sup> For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

<sup>3</sup> For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

<sup>4</sup> Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

I realize that the psalms under review are written with a godly king in view and one that trusted in the LORD and that we may not have that now but considering the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in the days of the Emperors of Rome and they were certainly not in any way godly, I personally believe that these psalms would have been on his mind when he wrote that text. I find here a basic principle for how and what to pray concerning our "king" - a metaphor for all those in authority over us in today's terminology.

### I. PRAYER FOR THE KING - PSALM 20

#### A. What to pray - vs. 1-4, 5a

This is not David praying - this is the people praying for him.

1. For the LORD to come to his aid ("hear") and defend him in the day of trouble - vs. 1

The parallel here: "defend thee" corresponds to "hear thee" and "the name of the God of Jacob" to "the LORD."

2. For help and strength from heaven to withstand the enemy - vs. 2

The parallel here: "Send thee help"

corresponds with "strengthen thee" and "from thy sanctuary" to "out of Zion."

3. For remembrance of the king's trust in the past  
- vs. 3

The parallel here: "Remember" corresponds to "accept" and "all thy offerings" to "thy burnt-sacrifice."

4. For the LORD to answer the king's prayers - vs. 4, 5b

The parallel here: "Grant thee" corresponds to "fulfill" and "according to thine own heart" to "all thy counsel." The latter part of verse five is a concluding part to the prayer by the people: simply answer the king's prayers.

## **B. Why pray - vs. 5a, 6-9**

1. Because we know there is a God in heaven that will hear - vs. 5a, 6

This is the response of the king (David) to the prayers of the people. He recognized their faith in the LORD and their trust in the ability He had given David as king, and it encouraged him.

[2 Chronicles 7:14](#)

<sup>14</sup> If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

[Isaiah 57:15](#)

<sup>15</sup> For thus saith the high and lofty One that

inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

#### Isaiah 63:15

<sup>15</sup> Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

2. Because we know that that God is far greater than anything the enemy can bring against those that trust in Him ("chariots" and "horses") – vs. 7-8

#### Isaiah 31:1

<sup>1</sup> Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

#### 2 Chronicles 14:9-12

<sup>9</sup> And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah.

<sup>10</sup> Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

<sup>11</sup> And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

<sup>12</sup> So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.

## **II. PRAISE FOR ANSWERED PRAYER – PSALM 21**

### **A. Praise for victory given – vs. 1-7**

1. The prayers of the people were answered – vs. 1-3

The word for “preventest” in verse three is a unique one. In its use in this verse, it means that the blessings “went before” him – before he needed them, they were already on their way, so to speak.

Isaiah 65:24 [this is a prophecy of the Millennial Reign of Christ and speaks of God dealing with His people in that kingdom]

<sup>24</sup> And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

2. The prayers of the people were greatly exceeded – vs. 4-7

### **B. Praise for victory in the future – vs. 8-12**

“The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teaches them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer, upon what God would further do for them” (Henry).

It's unclear whether these verses are addressed to the LORD or to the king (David). It seems most likely that it is addressed to the LORD, considering the previous verses, but either way it doesn't change what it teaches for the LORD works

through the king (and others) to accomplish His purposes.

Conclusion: Verse 13 of Psalm 21 is a fitting conclusion. Because of the prayer for the king before he went to battle, and then the subsequent praise for that prayer being answered, the nation lifted the LORD up above all else, recognizing it was He that caused the victory.

If we want to live that "quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" spoken of in Second Timothy, we need to pray for those in authority over us. We might think we are our own authority; we might think we have rights, and no one has the right to tell us what to do, but this text, among many others, tells us otherwise. If we want our nation to be godly, we need to pray that way.

One of the sweetest prayers for those who guide national affairs was made by a seven-year-old girl. Though so young, she had been allowed to drive her father's car; but always she sat in his lap and his hands were placed over hers that held the wheel. One morning at family prayer her father prayed for the President and asked God to guide him. When it came the child's turn to pray, to her own usual prayer she added: "Dear God, please put Your hands over the President's hands as he guides our country."

("Choice Illus." W.W. Clay, pg 79)