

4. PSALMS

The Messianic Psalms have various authors. David composed half of the Psalms; other major contributors are the sons of Korah and Asaph. Many of the Psalms are Messianic, giving prophetic details about the Messiah's person and activities during his first and second comings into the world. See Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 87, 89, 102, 110, 118. They speak about his birth, betrayal, agony, death, resurrection, and ascension, and what concerns us here; his coming glory, his battle against the nations, and his worldwide reign from Zion.

The book of Psalms is not just a Jewish songbook where songs composed over hundreds of years were thrown together in any fashion. There are five sections, each section terminating with a doxology. There are identical Hebrew words that connect one Psalm to the next, but the most significant thing is that there is a Messianic prophecy pervading the whole book. David's name is connected with nearly half the Psalms and many of them were regarded as prophetic, although it may only be a small part of the Psalm that relates to the Messiah. Jesus said that everything written about him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled (Luke 24:44). A few Psalms are comprehensively Messianic: 2, 22, 45, 97, 110, and are acknowledged in the NT to be so. For our purposes here, we are restricted to end-times Messianic activity; not the ministry and suffering, or resurrection of Jesus at his first coming. The following six Psalms or parts thereof will be examined.

Nations will conspire against the Lord and his Messiah

Psalm 2:1-12

“Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together

against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,
“Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.”
He One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
He rebukes them in his anger
And terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
“I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”
He said to me, “You are my son;
today I have become your father.
Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.
You will break them with a rod of iron,
you will dash them to pieces like pottery,”
Therefore, you kings, be wise;
Be warned, you rulers of the Earth.
Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.
Kiss his son, or he will be angry
and your way will lead to your destruction,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment.
Blessed are all those who take refuge in him.”

It is the Day of the Lord. The nations are raging and plotting in vain against God and his Messiah just as they are doing today (2024). They surround the holy city of Jerusalem, ready for the battle of Armageddon. The Messiah hasn't arrived yet, but during the preceding years, the world's attention is drawn to Jerusalem. This will be a world war, the Gentile nations against Israel, but why? What is their purpose? Speaking prophetically for God, Ezekiel says: “I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshek and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel” (Ezek 39:2). So, this battle will happen according to God's plan. Then, there is another reason: “Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the Dragon, out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the False Prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty” (Rev 16:13-14). These armies, which are numbered at 200 million, come from the direction of the Euphrates River, the gateway to the East, and they are

brought to the place called Armageddon, which is related to a city called Megiddo, strategically placed along the main highway from Egypt to Syria.

The Psalmist says their purpose is to tear off the chains with which the Lord and his Messiah have shackled them. It is a rebellion against God's authority, against the claim by Israel to be God's chosen people and the rightful owners of the promised land. There are other considerations. Gog's armies are allied with Muslim nations, Iran, Sudan, and Libya, who have always laid claim to Jerusalem as their second most holy city. In addition, the Antichrist by this time will have set himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God.

Whatever the politics of the situation, God sees this battle as a rebellion against his authority and against all that belongs to him; his world, his people, his land, his city, and his Church. This is war, and despite the tragedy of the situation, the Lord laughs and ridicules them. He declares that he has installed his king (the Messiah) on Zion, his holy mountain. He is the creator and sovereign over the universe. It was at Jesus' resurrection that God declared him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, but it is not until Jesus returns, that he is installed as King of kings and Lord of lords on David's throne. He is begotten as God's regent, king of the kingdom that has its origin in God.

God rebukes the nations and says he has installed his king on Zion his holy mountain. He begat Jesus into royal existence when he raised him from the dead saying: "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." The Messiah's rule will be characterized by peace and righteousness, but as he restores his ungodly subjects to that condition, he will rule them with a rod of iron. There will be no mercy shown to offenders under the Messiah's rule. He will shatter them like pottery. So they are advised to be wise and serve the Lord with fear, to rejoice at the honor of being permitted to serve such a great God, and at the same time, to tremble and pay due homage to him.

Messiah's kingdom is forever

Psalm 45:6-7

“Your throne, God, will last forever and ever,
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You love righteousness and hate wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

These verses are quoted in Hebrews to show the superiority of the human Messiah above angels (Heb 1:8-9). The angels are never called God. The word “God” in the first line is vocative, a form of address, imputing deity to the Messiah. Compare Isaiah 9:6, where the Messiah is called Mighty God. His kingship is forever and is characterized by righteousness. Nations will praise him forever and ever (verse 17). The context is here on earth, not in heaven. The word ‘forever’ in an earthly context means as long as the heavens and earth exist.

Some see the bride (vs 9) as the community of God’s people, and ultimately the Church, the wedding being the eschatological banquet described by several prophets and in Revelation 19:6-9. The Messiah is Lord of the church who is to bow to him, and the nations will praise him forever.

The Messiah will reign from sea to sea

Psalm 72:7-11

“In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
And from the (Euphrates) River to the ends of the earth.
May the desert tribes bow before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him.
May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts.
May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.

This psalm of Solomon is a prayer for his own reign which blends into the worldwide rule of the Messiah. The Jewish Targum (an Aramaic paraphrase made in the first century BC) interprets the king as the

Messiah. The Lord had promised David that the kingdom of a certain offspring of his (the anointed one) would continue forever, so this was a constant hope. The righteous will flourish under the Messiah's reign and peace will prevail. He will rule the whole world and all the nations will submit to him. Even the kings of Spain and Yemen, the remote West and remote East, will bring tribute to the Messiah at Jerusalem.

Psalm 72 describes the reign of an ideal king, the reign of a king who is God's regent, reigning with God's authority, doing what is right and just, and resulting in peace and prosperity for everyone. His reign is both universal and eternal and everybody, small and great, recognizes his authority and willingly submits to his gracious rule. *All* kings will fall down before him and *all* nations will serve him.

The Messiah will arrive in power and glory

Psalm 97:1-9

“The Lord reigns (or, has begun to reign)! Let the earth be glad;
let the distant shores rejoice!

Clouds and thick darkness surround him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Fire goes before him
and consumes his foes on every side.

His lightning lights up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.

The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,
before the Lord of all the earth.

The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
And all peoples see his glory.

All who worship images are put to shame,
those who boast in idols –
worship him, all you gods!

Zion hears and rejoices and the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments, Lord.

For you, Lord, are the Most High over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

Psalm 96 finishes with the statement that the Lord will come to judge the earth and its people fairly and reliably. Now in Psalm 97, he has arrived. He has come to reign as king. He is Jesus the Jewish Messiah. This is the visible arrival of the Lord, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole world, including the islands of the sea and all its coastal areas, should rejoice because he comes to rule the world with righteousness and justice.

But he comes in judgment on the Day of the Lord to fight against his enemies at the battle of Armageddon. Thick clouds surround him as he descends from the sky, and fire, in the form of bolts of lightning, precedes him and consumes his enemies. The earth quakes at the visible presence of Almighty God, mountains crumble, cities fall, and islands disappear. The powerful events in the sky proclaim the righteousness of God's administration of justice, and all the people see his power, glory, and majesty.

Zion and the towns of Judah will rejoice because the Messiah has arrived to give them victory and to usher in the Messianic reign.

The Messiah will crush kings on the day of his wrath

Psalm 110:1-7

“The LORD says to my lord:

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying,

“Rule in the midst of your enemies!”

Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.

Arrayed in holy splendor, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning's womb.

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind:

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”

The Lord is at your right hand;

he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.

He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.

He will drink from a brook along the way,
and so he will lift his head high.”

The LORD (the Father) tells David’s Lord (the Messiah) to sit at his right hand (in heaven) until he makes his enemies (on earth) a footstool for his feet. Jesus quoted this Psalm to the Pharisees as evidence that the Messiah was divine. He said: “If David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” (Mt 22:45). The inference is that the Messiah is not only a son of David; he is also the Son of God.

What does “sitting at the right hand of God” mean? It means that kingship has been delegated to him. Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). Who are the enemies and how are they made his footstool? The enemies are the wicked on earth who become his footstool, as he judges and crushes the rulers of the whole earth. Jesus the Messiah is called the Son of God and is regarded in Scripture as deity, but being himself in submission to God. Every knee will bow to him, while he in turn, after defeating the enemies, will deliver the kingship back to the Father.

The Messiah will be God’s regent on earth. He is the visible image of the invisible God. His throne on earth is that of David in Jerusalem. As Jesus will reign as God’s regent on earth, it is not surprising that he currently sits on the throne with the Father. He intercedes for us there and is above all powers. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to him. Many NT verses declare that Jesus is presently seated at the right hand of God, but none of them suggests that he has begun his Messianic reign. He has the status of King of kings and Lord of lords, but his earthly reign has not yet begun. He has made us a kingdom of priests, but we are not reigning yet either. Jesus is waiting until the time when God will defeat his enemies. The world empires and their rulers are still in charge. When Jesus returns, he will sit on his own throne, the throne of David. That will mark the beginning of the Messianic reign on earth, the time when the saints will reign over the earth (Rev 5:10).

The point is that he will reign as God’s regent over the earth. That is the battlefield where the enemies are to be defeated. This is a job for the God-man, Jesus, and for his servants whom he has saved from the

world and who will reign with him from the Holy City, the heavenly New Jerusalem. Israel will be God's nation on earth organizing the temple worship for all nations.

The Messiah will rule from Zion, his scepter is the symbol of his authority. His troops that he will have on the day of his power when he comes to crush the kingdoms of the world and establish his worldwide kingdom, will consist of the newly resurrected saints who will rise and come to him in holy white garments as dew covers the ground in the morning. Compare the Messiah's coming in Revelation 19:14, where the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, follow the Lord on white horses. Isaiah compares the revitalizing dew that gives new life to the grass with resurrection:

“But your dead will live Lord; their bodies will rise
– let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy –
your dew is like the dew of the morning;
the earth will give birth to the dead” (Isa 26:19).

When the saints rise from their graves, holy and immortal, they will be forever with the Lord and ready to serve him in whatever capacity.

The Messiah is a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The significance here, as expounded in Hebrews 7, is that this is a new age, with a new covenant and a new priesthood to accompany it. The Mosaic law will no longer be in force. When there is a change in the priesthood, there is a change in the law as well. Jesus' substitutionary death has eternal value and supersedes all the old sacrifices and their ritual. However, many prophets (Isa 61:6, 66:21-23, Jer 33:17-22, Ezek 40-48, Zech 14:20-21) declare the continuation of the Levitical priesthood during the millennium in whatever form that should take. A priest draws people near to God and makes them acceptable to him. Our high priest is seated at the right hand of God and he exists eternally. He offered himself without blemish to God once and for all to bear the punishment for our sins. His blood purifies us and enables us to serve God willingly and acceptably with thanksgiving.

Verse 7 may seem out of place, but it is a metaphor for enduring and final triumph. The battle is won, and the Messiah refreshes himself and holds his head high as the victor, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. As he told his disciples, all authority in heaven and on earth has

been given to him. After this victory, the prayers of the saints over the millennia will finally be realized:

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The Lord has chosen Zion where he will create a power base for his Messiah

Psalm 132:11, 13-18

“The LORD swore an oath to David,
a sure oath he will not revoke:
“One of your own descendants I will place on your throne.”
For the Lord has chosen Zion,
He has desired it for his dwelling, saying,
“This is my resting place forever and ever;
Here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.
I will bless her with abundant provisions;
Her poor I will satisfy with food.
I will clothe her priests with salvation,
and her faithful people will ever sing for joy.
Here I will make a horn grow for David
and set a lamp for my anointed one.
I will clothe his enemies with shame,
but his head will be adorned with a radiant crown.”

In verse 11 the oath sworn by the Lord to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 is repeated: God would one day set a certain son of his on his throne in a future dynasty. This son (the Messiah) would build a house or community for God, and God would establish his throne and his kingdom forever. Jesus said he would build his Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matt 16:18).

God did not choose a Messiah who would live in a vacuum. As he is a human being and his future kingdom is here on earth, his throne will be here on earth, not in heaven. He will rule from Zion, the seat of the Davidic throne because the Lord has chosen Zion and has desired it to be his dwelling place. “The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, city of

God” (Ps 87:2-3). This future Zion is to be identified with Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel. There the Messiah will dwell, and from there he will govern the world. There will the temple of the Lord be together with the Levitical priesthood. The presence of God is now associated with his regent, the Messiah, rather than with the ark of the covenant as it had been in the Tabernacle and Solomon’s temple. There the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples and the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious (Isa 11:10). The Lord says he will rise upon Zion and his glory will appear over her. The nations will come to her light and kings before her dawn and the wealth of the nations will be brought to her (Isa 63:2-3, 5).

God will abundantly bless Jerusalem’s food supply so that the poor are satisfied. The priesthood will be agents of spiritual salvation and the saints will ululate; they will emit cries of joy in response to God’s great mercy. It will be there in Jerusalem that God will make a horn grow for the house of David and a permanent light for his anointed one, the Messiah. The horn sprouting up can be compared with the shoot coming from the root of David. His enemies will be ashamed, while the Messiah’s crown will sparkle because of his victory and success. Amillennialism denies the existence of a millennium, even an earthly Messianic reign of any length, but God has chosen Jerusalem to be the Messiah’s resting place and all of Israel will be saved as his earthly people. He will take care of the poor and rule from sea to sea.