

PSALMS: THE PRAYER BOOK OF JESUS

Session 11: The Messianic
Psalms



PSALM 20, *Exaudi te Dominus*

May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble, *

the Name of the God of Jacob defend you;

Send you help from the sanctuary, *

and strengthen you out of Zion;

Remember all your offerings, *

and accept your burnt sacrifice;

Grant you your heart's desire, *

and accomplish all your plans.

We will rejoice in your salvation, and triumph in the
Name of the Lord our God; *

may the Lord grant all your petitions.

Now I know that the Lord helps his Anointed,
and will answer him from his holy heaven, *

**even with the saving strength of his right
hand.**

Some put their trust in chariots, and some in
horses, *

**but we put our trust in the Name of the
Lord our God.**

They are brought down and fallen, *

but we will arise and stand upright.

O Lord, save the King, *

and hear us when we call upon you.

THE MESSIANIC PSALMS

- Messianic Psalms are psalms directly applied to Christ by the apostles in the New Testament.
- The New Testament explicitly quotes them as referring to Jesus.
- They contain imagery or claims too large for any historical king, pointing toward a greater fulfillment.
- Christian tradition—from the apostles through the Church Fathers and beyond—interprets them Christologically.
- The principles used by the apostles to interpret these psalms teach us how to see Christ in all the Psalter.
- While scholars differ on how many should be counted, most Christian traditions include the following core groups:

THE MESSIANIC PSALMS

Typological or Indirectly Messianic Psalms. These speak of David (or the king) in such exalted terms that they are seen as anticipating the Messiah:

- Psalm 8 – Humanity crowned with glory (applied to Christ in Hebrews).
- Psalm 21 – The king's victory and eternal blessing.
- Psalm 41 – Betrayal by a close friend (applied to Judas).
- Psalm 72 – Global justice, peace, and blessing.
- Psalm 118 – “The stone the builders rejected” becoming the cornerstone.
- Psalm 132 – The promise of David's throne and Zion's election.

THE MESSIANIC PSALMS

Direct or Explicit Messianic Psalms. These contain language early Christians understood as explicit prophecy of Christ:

- Psalm 2 – The Lord's Anointed; Sonship; the nations as inheritance.
- Psalm 16 – The Holy One not seeing corruption (fulfilled in the Resurrection).
- Psalm 22 – Suffering, mockery, pierced hands/feet, casting lots for garments.
- Psalm 40 – "Behold, I come... I delight to do your will" (quoted in Hebrews).
- Psalm 45 – The royal bridegroom; king whose throne is forever.
- Psalm 69 – Zeal for God's house; reproach; gall and vinegar.
- Psalm 72 – The universal reign of the righteous king.
- Psalm 89 – God's everlasting covenant with David.
- Psalm 110 – The Lord at God's right hand; a priest forever after Melchizedek.

THE MESSIANIC PSALMS

How the Early Church Read Them

- From the apostles onward, Christians read the Psalms through the lens of Christ's death, resurrection, and kingship.
- **Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and Psalm 118** are among the most frequently quoted psalms in the New Testament.
- Early Fathers—Athanasius, Augustine, Chrysostom—argued that in these psalms **Christ speaks, the Father speaks of Christ, or David speaks prophetically of Christ.**
- Augustine, for example, consistently interpreted the Psalms as the **voice of Christ and the Church**, woven together into one mystery.

THE ROYAL PSALMS

Why These Psalms Are Messianic

- They emphasize themes fulfilled perfectly in Jesus:
 - **Kingship** over the nations (Ps. 2, 72, 110)
 - **Priesthood** beyond the Levitical order (Ps. 110)
 - **Suffering and vindication** (Ps. 22, 69)
 - **Resurrection** (Ps. 16)
 - **Eternal covenant with David** (Ps. 89, 132)
 - **The rejected yet exalted cornerstone** (Ps. 118)
- No merely earthly king fits these descriptions entirely.

THE ROYAL PSALMS

Their Use in Anglican Tradition

- The Messianic Psalms appear prominently:
- In versions of the **Daily Office** lectionary based around the Church Year (1979, etc.), especially during Advent, Holy Week, and Easter.
- In **Holy Communion**, where they serve as Old Testament readings pointing to Christ.
- In **Anglican hymnody**, which draws heavily on Psalms 2, 22, 45, 72, 110, and 118.
- Anglican theology has long emphasized that the Psalter is not only Israel's prayer book but **Christ's own prayer book**, and through Him, ours.

PSALM 8, *Domine, Dominus noster*

O Lord our Governor, how excellent is your Name
in all the world; *

you have set your glory above the heavens!

Out of the mouth of babes and infants you have ordained
strength, because of your enemies, *

that you might still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider your heavens, even the works of your
fingers, *

the moon and the stars, which you have ordained,

What is man, that you are mindful of him, *

the son of man, that you visit him?

You made him little lower than the angels, *
to crown him with glory and honor.

You made him to have dominion over the works of your
hands, *

**and you have put all things in subjection under his
feet:**

All sheep and oxen, *

even the beasts of the field,

The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, *

and whatsoever walks through the paths of the seas.

O Lord our Governor, *

How excellent is your Name in all the world!

PSALM 22

- **Core themes:** Lament, unjust suffering, divine abandonment, eventual vindication, global worship.
- Psalm 22 begins in the depths of anguish—abandonment, mockery, pierced hands/feet, public humiliation. It shifts dramatically toward trust. In the end, universal praise erupts.
- Jesus quotes its opening cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)
- The vivid description of suffering aligns with Christian descriptions of Jesus’ passion.
- The final movement envisions worldwide worship, linking the Messiah’s suffering to cosmic salvation.
- This psalm gives voice to the agony of the faithful sufferer, but also testifies that God brings vindication. It forms the theological grammar of redemptive suffering.

PSALM 45

- **Core themes:** Divine kingship, idealized royal figure, beauty, righteousness, eternal throne, wedding imagery.
- Psalm 45 is a court poem celebrating a royal wedding. Yet it so exalts the king—“Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever”—that it transcends ordinary royal propaganda. The king’s reign is characterized not by power alone but by justice, truth, and humility.
- The king is described with divine attributes and an eternal throne—far beyond any historical monarch.
- The New Testament explicitly applies parts of this psalm to Christ’s exaltation.
- Its wedding motif becomes deeply connected to imagery of Christ and the Church.
- It depicts the Messiah as the radiant, righteous bridegroom—the one whose reign is rooted in holiness and whose union with his people brings joy and flourishing.

PSALM 110

- **Core themes:** Enthronement at God's right hand, subduing enemies, priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek."
- Psalm 110 is remarkable for combining kingship and priesthood—roles normally kept distinct in Israel. The Lord exalts this king to sit at his right hand, a position of divine authority, and declares him a priest forever in a mysterious, non-Levitical line.
- Its opening line is foundational in early Christian reflection on Jesus' exaltation.
- The eternal priesthood motif becomes a key lens for understanding Christ's unique intercessory role.
- No historical king ever fulfilled both roles in the manner envisioned.
- Psalm 110 is the cornerstone of the theology of Christ's ascension and heavenly priesthood. It assures believers that the Messiah eternally intercedes and rules from God's right hand.