

## The Book of Psalms

### Psalm 21

#### Opening Prayer

#### ***Read Psalm 21***

#### Overview

Psalm 21 is a royal psalm of both thanksgiving and anticipation. It is a celebration of the victory God has given *now* and the anticipation of the victory that God will give, the *not yet*. The psalm is neatly divided into two halves this way and the halves are identifiable by the way the verbs work. In the first half, 21:1-6, the verbs are past tense and thus celebrate a victory that has been accomplished. The second half, 21:8-12, the verbs are future of what the Lord will do and anticipate victories yet to come. That means that verse 7 acts as the “hinge” moving the reader from what the Lord has done, *now*, to what the Lord will do, the *not yet*. It also means that 21:13 concludes the psalm with a brief “praise”.

The entire psalm could be viewed as a psalm of praise. Praise is what naturally flows from the Lord-given victories of 21:1-6 and the anticipated Lord-given victories of 21:8-12. The joy of both finished and anticipated victories finds its culmination in praise! C.S. Lewis in *Reflections on the Psalms* speaks of this natural flow of praise from joy:

*I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise...Praise almost seems to be inner health made audible...I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it...The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what men do when they speak of what they care about...I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation...the delight is incomplete until it is expressed.<sup>1</sup>*

So what we have in Psalm 21 is an invitation to praise for the victory that the Lord has given and the victory that the Lord will give.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

## Structure/Outline

The outline follows the pattern laid out in the overview.

- I. In praise of the victories the Lord has given the king – 21:1-6
- II. The king trusts in the Lord for what the Lord has done and for what the Lord will do – 21:7
- III. In praise for the victories the Lord will give the king – 21:8-12
- IV. Call to praise for the strength and power of the Lord – 21:13

### In Praise of the Victories the Lord has Given the King -21:1-6

- :1-2 - When we look at verse 1 and verse 13 we see that the psalm begins with “Your strength” and ends with “Your strength”. This is called an *inclusio* and demonstrates that the psalm was constructed in a deliberate way and most likely written as a liturgical piece for use in worship.
- “You have not withheld the request of his lips” – God answered the requests of the king. Given the context, those requests probably had to do with victory in battle.  
*God answers our prayers as well, what are the three answers that God gives to prayer?*
- :3 - “crown” - This may be a general reference to the coronation of the king, but it may also be to a specific reference of David receiving the crown of another king. **Read 2 Samuel 12:30**. If the reference is to this instance in which David received the crown of the king of Rabbah, it may give us a historical setting for the psalm. Yet there isn’t enough evidence in the psalm to definitively tie it to this historical circumstance.
- :4 - Taking the verse as a whole it isn’t possible just to understand it to mean that the Lord gives long life to the king. The “forever and ever” at the end of the verse points to a promise beyond this mortal life. Since the Fall our years on this earth have been limited by our death because of sin.  
**Read Psalm 90:10**  
*Given that our lives are so short in the grand scheme of things, what does this prompt us to do? Read Philippians 1:21-24*  
**Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-57**  
*Why does the Christian need not fear death?*
- :5-6 - These two verses are a celebration of the many things that the Lord has given or bestowed upon the king: “glory”, “salvation”, “splendor”, “majesty”, “blessing”.

- Verse 6 also points out that joy comes from the presence of God. At the end of Matthew Jesus tells his disciples that He would be with them until the very end of the age.

*What comfort does the constant presence of Christ bring?*

*How should it bring joy? Since it brings joy, what else should mark our response? (See the overview)*

### The King Trusts in the Lord for What the Lord has Done and for What the Lord Will Do – 21:7

:7 - This is the transitional verse and the foundation for the psalm. It moves us from the first six verses with their past-tense verbs of what God has done to verses 8-12 and their future tense verbs of what the Lord will do.

- *Hesed* – This Hebrew word translated as “lovingkindness” in the NASB is the foundation for David’s thanksgiving of victory and his hope of future victory. Since the *hesed* is also tied to the “Most High”, David wishes to show that God accomplishes that which His love desires through power.

*We have talked in many of the psalms of the relationship of love and power, how are they demonstrated in the cross and resurrection of Jesus?*

### In Praise for the Victories the Lord Will Give the King – 21:8-12

:8-9 - Verse 8 begins the looking forward to the victories that the Lord will bring the king. Yet, it isn’t just victories but victories with power. The “right hand” is the place of power. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God.

- “fiery oven” or “blazing furnace” – this is the same word used for a household. *See Exodus 8:3; Leviticus 2:4* – The wrath of God is often depicted as fire. *Read Malachi 4:1; Revelation 19:20*

:10 - This verse is meant to show the completeness of the victory that the Lord will give. Not only will the enemy be destroyed but even his descendants will be wiped off the earth.

:11 - the wicked plots of the enemies will not succeed. There is an implied pride in the scheming of the enemies similar to what we saw in *Psalms 10:2-4*.

:12 - Eventually the oncoming destruction of the enemy will cause them to flee and run away, however as they turn and look back they will see that it is the Lord who brings about their destruction. Thus, “You will aim Your bowstring at their faces.”

*To what extent should the church preach to the world about the coming wrath of God versus preaching about the salvation found in Jesus Christ? How do we determine what message to bring to what people?*

Call to Praise for the Strength and Power of the Lord – 21:13

:13 - Remember that we began with the notion that praise is the fulfillment or consummation of joy. Since God had delivered the king (21:1-6) and based on that deliverance there was anticipated victory to come (21:8-12) the king has joy that manifests itself in praise.

*How does previous victory assure us of future victory from the Lord?*

- We live in a the time of an *inaugurated eschatology*. What that means is that the last days have begun but are not yet fulfilled. All around us we see reminders and signs that we are in the last days.

***Read Matthew 24:4-14***

*What are some of the signs that Jesus warns about?*

*What should believers expect?*

Summary

Psalm 21 is a now and not yet victory psalm. It is both a celebration of what the Lord, *Yahweh*, has done and what the Lord will do. Both the already experienced victories and the anticipated to come victories are causes for praise. Our praise is generated because of the joy we have knowing the already completed victory of Jesus over sin and death and the anticipated victory of Jesus upon His return and the remaking of the heavens and the earth!

Closing Prayer