

Summerlink week 3: 14 July 2021: Psalm 72

God's concern for all peoples is to bless them through a king

Interview

Group discussion on text:

1. Divide Psalm 72 into sections, giving each subdivision a short title. What makes this exercise hard in this case, and how is this difficulty instructive for our understanding of the psalm's overall message?
2. v12 begins with the word 'for'. What is the connection between the prospect of all nations serving the king (v11) and the benevolent rule of which v12–14 speak?
3. What features of Psalm 72 overlap with Psalm 2 and thus suggest that ultimately the king on view on these two psalms is the same?
4. Optional extra: compare Psalm 72:6–7 (part of David's final prayer) with 2 Samuel 23:3–4 (some of David's final words).
5. Optional extra: if you have already benefited from a Bible-overview course at St. Helen's, look back over your notes from 2 Samuel 7, and connect that passage appropriately to Psalm 72. What ambiguity regarding the referent of David's son/seed did you come across in 2 Samuel 7, and to what extent is that ambiguity parallel to what we have seen in Psalm 72?
6. Optional extra: Psalm 72 is not alone within Book Two of the Psalms in showcasing Solomon. Compare Psalms 45 and 72. To what extent do we find the same ideas in both psalms? To explore further how these psalms fit within the unfolding flow of the Book of Psalms, see, eg: www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/56740/.
7. Optional extra: compare Psalm 72:1–7 with Isaiah 11:1–5. How is this illuminating? What is the particular emphasis of the Isaiah passage that we don't find in Psalm 72?

8. Optional extra: there is considerable continuity between God's promises to Abraham and his promises to David. Remind yourself of these by comparing (a) last week's passage (Genesis 12:1–9) plus Genesis 17:6, 16; 35:11 with (b) 2 Samuel 7:8–16 and Psalm 72. Lest we should lose sight of what is distinctive about these respective covenants, see (a) Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; (b) 2 Samuel 7:16.

Talk

- Who is this king? (mainly v1–11)

- What does the blessing look like? (mainly v12–17)

Group discussion on application and prayer:

1. How should we articulate the tension between what is already fulfilled and what is not yet fulfilled with regard to the key ideas of this psalm? How should this tension impact our expectations for this life and the life to come?

2. Call to mind some cases of injustice and/or oppression which have affected you/loved ones/brothers and sisters at church over the last year. Pray Psalm 72 by way of reaction.

3. How should this psalm shape our attitude towards people from a range of ethnic backgrounds that we rub shoulders with in our home/neighbourhood and work contexts?

4. Optional extra: the New Testament also speaks of the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Which NT passages come to mind? To what extent would our grasp of the rule of Christ be impoverished if we didn't 'make room' for Psalm 72 in our thinking (what are the distinctive contributions of this psalm relative to these other passages)? What steps should we take in order to make sure that we cherish this psalm appropriately? How does a (new-found?) grasp of this psalm yield deeper appreciation of our Lord's (future) reign? Do you plan to pray Revelation 22:20c more readily and regularly?