

# A Composition concerning the King

## Reflections on Psalm 45

by Arthur Goodwin

### Song book for the future

The Psalms are divided into five books, each ending with a doxology and a close study of them indicates that there is a similarity to the first five books of the Bible, indeed the Psalms have been called the Pentateuch of David.

Book 1 corresponding to Genesis is from Psalm 1-41, and is concerned with Israel particularly the Jewish remnant.

Book 2 corresponding to Exodus is from Psalm 42-72, and speaks of suffering and deliverance as some of the children of Israel journey to the land of promise.

Book 3 corresponding to Leviticus is from Psalm 73-89, and here we find the holiness of God is predominant.

Book 4 corresponding to Numbers is from Psalm 90-106, and portrays the experience of the wandering nation being brought to the land of rest.

Book 5 corresponding to Deuteronomy is from Psalm 107-150, and has the past and future of Israel as its content. The last Psalm is the great Hallelujah Psalm and in it the word 'praise' is found twelve times.

Whilst the Psalms, being a part of the inspired Scriptures, are for the profit and instruction of believers today they are the song book of the remnant in a coming day. Sixteen of the 150 Psalms are considered Messianic, for they are quoted in the New Testament specifically as applying to Christ — although without doubt many other Psalms also have reference to Him. Six of these Psalms appear in book two and our study now is of Psalm 45, which has as its theme the Lord Jesus Christ as King.

### The King

When I was a boy at school I was privileged as one of my school party to witness the pageantry that took place at the Coronation of King George the 6th. We stood on the Victoria Embankment for many hours firstly watching and listening to the bands of the different regiments of the British army and other services marching in all their splendid uniforms and then later, the moment we had been waiting for, the new King and Queen in a magnificent carriage heading the procession of British and foreign dignitaries. It was a glorious sight full of majesty and splendour and it brought forth resounding cheers from all the onlookers. We young people joined in the tumult waving our arms, throwing our caps in the air and shouting at the tops of our voices in an endeavour to show our loyalty to the now crowned monarch.

This scene is a faint picture of what is here revealed in Psalm 45. It is the Psalm of the King and without doubt prophetic in its nature.

The headings of the Psalms are important for they give us guidance as to the subject matter that follows. It is upon *Shoshannim* which means *lilies*, and in Scripture these flowers indicate purity, graciousness and charm. It is also headed *Maschil* which means instruction, and there is certainly much instruction for the child of God in this Psalm. Then, we are told, that it is a song of love, or better translated a song of the Beloved.

The King of course is the Lord Jesus Christ, still in manhood even though King. When He came to earth He was disowned and rejected, subjected to all manner of indignities and hostilities. He was perfect in all His ways, yet He was nevertheless crucified with common criminals and finally buried. But in that death on Calvary's Mount He paid the penalty for the sin of His people procuring for them an eternal redemption, and so God raised Him from among the dead. For 2000 years He has been seated on the Father's throne and now the time has come for Him to take His seat upon His own throne. This is the answer to the remnant's cry in Psalm 44:26, "Rise up for our help, and redeem us for thy loving-kindness' sake".

The psalmist whom the Holy Spirit uses to pen this majestic Psalm is given an awe-inspiring sight, and his heart indites, that is overflows - bursts forth - wells forth; such are the various translations used here in the first verse. Surely he is given a vision that eclipses all else and he has to speak, to make a permanent record of what he has seen, in order that we, Christians in this present day, may share in this spectacle. The Holy Spirit is the ready writer. In the first verse who else could be referred to other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Critics have sought to make this Psalm applicable to other personages; for instance to some, the historical reference is that the Psalm refers to Solomon and his marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh, others have said that it has Joram as its subject and even to some an unknown Persian monarch is the king.

Surely not, this One is fairer than the children of men, grace is poured upon His lips. In Isaiah 53:2 Israel saw no beauty in Him — and the expression carries the thought of not merely external appearance but also that which is moral. The ancient Jewish Targumim translates this verse in our Psalm: "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than the children of men". 'Grace' is mentioned only twice in the Psalms, here and in Psalm 84:11. In this latter verse grace is *given*, in our Psalm grace is *displayed*. In Luke 4:22 we read: "All bore Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth". As the Holy Spirit inspired these words so also is it His blessed task to lead us to Christ as John 16:14-15 tells us.

## The King coming to reign

Then verses 3-5 depict Christ the King coming to reign. Enoch ("the seventh from Adam") knew and prophesied of this event as verse 14 of Jude's epistle indicates. Revelation 11:16-19 describes the event in detail. His sword is girded upon His thigh and He rides prosperously. It is clear from these and other passages of Scripture that His kingdom is not gained by treaty, nor is He invited to come and reign. No, He comes into the place of power by conquest. The modern conception is that this world, under the influence of the gospel, is gradually getting better and better and eventually the time will arrive when the King can come and take His place. Such a theory is far from the truth. In Revelation 6:16 we read of "the wrath of the Lamb", and we must remember that the Lamb of God is also the Lion of Judah. The Saviour is also the Judge.

In Psalm 2, another prophetic Psalm, we read: "(...) the nations rage (...) against Jehovah and His Anointed", and we see that they are in a state of rebellion (vv. 2-3). But in verse 6 God declares that He will set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. In our Psalm 45 the time has come for this to take place. The mighty One, in all His Majesty and splendour, rides prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness.

This reminds us of Christ's appearance before Pilate when the governor asked: "What is truth?" (John 18:38), little realising that the epitome of truth was standing before him and at that very moment was depicting His meekness and the very fact that righteousness demanded judgement which He was about to exhaust. In Isaiah 26:9 we read: "When thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness". Before this mighty King with all His attendant hosts the people fall under Him.

To any dispassionate onlooker it must be very evident that the world today is ripening for judgement. Almost every country has its political problems which in many lands have developed, if not into outright war then into riot, rebellion or insurrection. Corruption is found in many of the great institutions be they either corporate or political and social; morality has collapsed. I am convinced that this world has little time left, soon the Lord will appear and take His Church to be with Himself for ever, the event which we term the rapture. The Holy Spirit, the restrainer of evil will withdraw from this world and the hatred of men for God will burst forth. Satan, the great Archenemy, will come in like a flood. A time of great tribulation will follow and then the event which we are now considering will take place. The King will come, His enemies will be subdued and the reign of righteousness will begin.

## The Son of God is the King

Then verses six and seven describe the great characteristic of this reign. Verse six is quoted in Hebrews 1 specifically applying it to the Son of God, thus clearly proving that He is the great subject of our Psalm, although, as we have already said, in this Psalm He reigns in manhood. The Speaker in the first chapter of Hebrews is clearly God and it is He who says in verse 5: "Thou art my Son", and in verse 6 He commands all the angels to worship Him. In verse 8 He says: "Thy throne O God is for ever and ever". The higher critics and other deniers of the Scriptures have attempted to explain away the Messianic truth of this Psalm by applying it to Solomon, but could Solomon ever be addressed as *God*?

Human thrones end with either death or conquest but this throne is for eternity. His sceptre, the insignia of royalty, is a right sceptre and the word *right* means right - plain - level - upright; surely it is a sceptre of righteousness. How are the nations of the world governed today? Whilst not denying that which is commendable, do we not have ample evidence that deceit, corruption, greed, the lust for power, recourse to violence and many other such vices are seen throughout the stratas of power. The ways of God are given scant attention and unrighteousness prevails. With Christ on the throne equity and justice will be the great characteristic of the age. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright" (Psa. 11:7).

Because of this His God - remember here He is Man and therefore the expression *His God* is appropriate - has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows or companions. The kings of old were anointed with oil, but the Lord was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and moreover these words show that in kingship He has companions. Who are they? As we have already emphasised, Psalm 45 is Jewish and the truth of the Church was a mystery not announced in the Old Testament and only revealed in the New. But could there not be a hint here that these companions are those gathered out during this present dispensation — that is the Church. Could it not be that in the day of His manifestation these may be the many sons He is bringing to glory as stated in Hebrews 2:10?

## The royal court

Verses 8 to 15 give a description of the Royal Court. Firstly in verse 8 we have a poetic description of the perfections of the King in His manhood. His garments are surely righteous garments. He clothes us with the robe of righteousness, His raiment could be no less glorious. We are told in Exodus 30 that myrrh and cassia were used in the preparation of the holy anointing oil for the priests, whilst aloes was one of the chief spices and was brought by Nicodemus with myrrh for the preparation of the Lord's burial. His whole life on earth had been one which had sent up a constant sweet savour to God. Ivory would suggest *beauty* as in Song of Solomon 7:4 and *majesty* as in 2 Chronicles 9:17. The word 'whereby' is a peculiar translation, for it really means 'stringed instruments' and suggests that the King comes into His palace accompanied by music and the singing of His praises.

Verses 9 to 12 speak of those who surround the throne. The King's daughters are there and on His right hand is the Queen in gold of Ophir. It is vital in considering these verses that we remember that we are witnessing an earthly scene, albeit a millennial one. Many commentators fail to give a clear exposition of Scriptures such as we are considering, because they fail to distinguish between

the position of the Jewish nation and the Church. The Jewish nation is earthly, the Church is heavenly. There is an earthly people and there is a heavenly people, an earthly Jerusalem and a heavenly Jerusalem, an earthly kingdom and a heavenly kingdom. Here the Lord is taking His seat upon His earthly throne in the earthly city as King over His earthly people, although of course all other nations will be subject to Him.

We would not wish to be dogmatic in our interpretation of this Psalm, but we cannot help but feel that the Queen in verse 9 must be Israel. Hosea 2:19 and Isaiah 61:10 would be seen to support such a contention. Being clothed in the gold of Ophir would remind us of her divine glory and righteousness. The King's daughters, honourable women, may be typical of those of the Gentile nations who will form part of the millennial kingdom. Deuteronomy 21:13 speaks of Israel taking as wife one who before was an enemy, and verse 11 in our Psalm seems to have a similar connotation. Israel despite being a privileged nation, because of her sin changed her position to that of an enemy, and instead of being near she was afar from God. Once she gloried in Moses, the fathers and the prophets, and at the fact that she was indeed God's chosen people. Now she is Queen, all has changed, the past is all forgotten and her affections are now solely upon the King, and His desire is towards her. The Song of Solomon, which also speaks of Christ and His earthly bride, has many passages which portray this mutual love.

## Gifts for the King

Tyre, the great maritime nation that was noted for its wealth is there with a gift. All the nations bring of their treasures to the King. We read of Solomon, whose kingdom is a type of the millennial age, that all the kingdoms brought presents to him (1 Ki. 4:21).

Verses 13-16 give another portrayal of the Queen, but this time as the King's daughter. She is of royal birth and this would remind us of Hebrews 3:11 — "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one". She is all glorious within. Within? What does that mean? Perhaps it is a reference to her appearance within the royal apartments or her father's house before leaving for the marriage. But it could refer to a moral description and this is what I prefer. Not only is she glorious outwardly but *inwardly, spiritually*; unlike what she once was.

In Revelation 19:8 the heavenly bride is clothed in fine linen and we are told that this is the righteousnesses of the saints. Here in verse 14 the earthly bride is clothed in "raiment of embroidery" and in verse 7 we learn that the King loves righteousness. Is there a similarity of raiment of the two brides? I am inclined to think so. Who would the accompanying virgins represent? Again without wishing to be authoritative I would suggest that they may be those converts from among the Gentiles, saved during the period of tribulation. After the rapture and before the return of the Lord in power there will be faithful Jews who will go out as missionaries preaching the gospel of the Kingdom and no doubt there will be many converts.

In verse 15 we have the gathering to the great marriage celebrations. The King in all His splendour is waiting, the bride in all her glory enters, the music strikes up and the singers begin their song. What a spectacle! The last two verses seem to refer to what takes place in a national way as the outcome of this union. Israel will have a prominent place in the earth and the King will be for ever the subject of the praise. In conclusion may I say that endeavour has been made to give a true interpretation of this Psalm with its Jewish overtones. But there is of course much in it by way of guidance, encouragement and blessing for Christians living in this dispensation. Israel's King is our Lord. Scripture never presents Christ as King over His Church, He is Lord of His people and head of His Church. The Church is the object of His love, for He died for it. We who form the Church will soon be His Bride, we will reign with Him and He ever will be the One who claims our utmost affection and worship.