

The Royal Psalms: Their Unique Contribution to a Christian Understanding of Political Science

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Introduction

Recently I received an appeal email that included the following:

Of course, America was not born as a perfect nation. And it's not a perfect nation now. But Americans like you understand that our nation was founded on important and unique principles:

All men are created equal.

We are endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights.

Just governments are based on the consent of the governed.

These principles are worth living up to. And they are worth protecting. (Alliance Defending Freedom, June 30, 2021)

Within this appeal there are at least two foundational questions that deserve examination before one writes their check.

Asking the Right Questions

First, is it true that the United States was founded upon these principles? This is an historical question. Answering this question requires a search of the relevant historical documents from the period of the founding fathers. This paper will not

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quibble with the truthfulness of this assertion, for I am ill-equipped to examine this question properly.

The second question, in contrast, is not historical but theological. Specifically, are these enumerated principles themselves true? These three statements are theological in that they ponder the nature of creation, whether God has given rights to the individual, and the proper foundation of righteous government. Determining the accuracy of these statements requires an entirely different approach. In this case, answers must be sought from divine revelation.

Unfortunately, honest biblical examinations of these types of questions are difficult to find. Ever since the rise of the Moral Majority and the Christian Right,² most white evangelicals reflexively accept the theology expressed above without a second thought.³ But this should not be. As Christians we must be quick

² For more information on the beginnings of this movement, see Bruce A. Baker, “Dispensationalism’s Evolving Theory of Political Action: How *Roe v. Wade* and Jerry Falwell Brought Dispensationalism from Rejecting Political Action to Embracing It,” *Journal of Ministry & Theology* 25, no. 1 (2021): 30–52.

³ In an interesting study conducted by Harvard University, evidence suggests that attending an Independence Day celebration as a child increases the likelihood that this child will vote Republican later in life. The researchers admitted they did not know why this trend exists, but stated, “the celebration of Fourth of July embodies certain ideas or values that are closer to the Republican Party” (Laura Riparbelli, “Fourth of July Celebrators More Likely to Become Republicans,” *ABC News*, July 1, 2011, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/fourth-july-makes-republicans-study/story?id=13979855>). These “ideas or values” are what is being expressed in the three statements under question. Additionally, in modern politics there has arisen what has been called the “God gap.” “Those who frequently attend religious services (regardless of faith background) are more likely to vote for Republicans, while those who rarely or never attend tend to vote for Democrats” (Amy Black, “Evangelicals and Politics: Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Headed,” *National Association of Evangelicals*, Fall 2016, <https://www.nae.net/evangelicals-and-politics/>). Therefore, it should not be surprising that those “ideas or values that are closer to the Republican Party” are widely accepted by conservative Christians since conservative Christians are most likely Republican. Even the federal government recognizes the relationship between Christianity

to recognize that any philosophy eagerly accepted by the world in general must be thoroughly examined in light of God's word. For those things that so often "sound right," regularly run afoul of divine revelation. Statement three, listed above, is a textbook example, for if the only just government is one founded on the consent of the governed, then our coming King will rule a patently unjust kingdom as he governs the world with an iron scepter and dashes the rebellious to pieces like pottery (Ps 2:9).⁴

Political Science and Theology

One of the challenges in examining the three enumerated principles above is that they are rarely recognized as theological questions. Instead, these statements (and others like them) are normally assigned to the area of political science. Political science is commonly defined as "the study of the state and its organs and institutions."⁵ In particular, political science is concerned with power, "defined as the ability of one political actor to get another actor to do what it wants—at the international, national, and local levels."⁶

Even though political science is not regularly considered an area of theology, few would deny that the Bible has a great deal to say concerning government. In the OT, we read how government itself was established by God (Gen 9:6). The history of the Jewish people from Moses forward is viewed through the

and the Republican Party. The IRS initially refused to give tax exempt status to Christians Engaged, a Texas religious group that encouraged prayer for the nation and application of biblical values to public affairs. The IRS had "initially cited a claim that prayer and Bible study favor Republicans as the reason for Christians Engaged's denial of tax-exempt status." The IRS has since reversed its position and granted tax exempt status to Christians Engaged (see Mark Tapscott, "IRS Reverses Course, Grants Tax-Exemption to Texas Religious Group," *The Epoch Times*, July 8, 2021, <https://reader.epoch.cloud?selDate=20210708&goTo=A01&artid=8>).

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citation are taken from the New American Standard Bible, © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation.

⁵ Michael G. Roskin, "Political Science," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 29 October 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-science>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

lens of the state.⁷ The second half of the book of Daniel and nearly the entirety of the book of Revelation is concerned with the rise and fall of political kingdoms. Indeed, both the first and second advents of our Lord—from the baby Jesus (“the King of the Jews,” Matt 2:2) to the returning Christ (“King of kings and Lord of lords,” Rev 19:16)—are described in terms reserved for the governance of a state. Not only so, but the apostles Peter and Paul deliver precise instructions on how church-age believers should respond to government.⁸ This being said, there is one segment of Scripture that is regularly overlooked during discussions of the Bible and political science: the royal psalms.

The Royal Psalms

Ever since Gunkel’s influential *Introduction to the Psalms* in 1933,⁹ most commentators have followed his general classification of the Psalter. In addition to other types of psalms,¹⁰ Gunkel listed ten psalms (with the possible addition of Psalm 89) as royal psalms: 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89 (possible),

⁷ Specifically, this history of the Jewish people is concerned with their kings, their kings’ relationship with the Lord their God, and the specific consequences—whether good or ill—upon the nation. This author in no way wishes to suggest that the Bible is primarily a political book. Making politics the center of the Bible’s message is a gross distortion of the sacred text. Still, one must admit that God deals with nations as well as people. The OT prophets proclaimed their oracles primarily against nations instead of individuals. In fact, the culmination of God’s plan for this world is expressed in the transfer of ultimate political power. “... then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24).

⁸ 1 Peter 2:13–17; Romans 13:1–7; 1 Timothy 2:1–4; Titus 3:1.

⁹ Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1966).

¹⁰ “As Gunkel sees it, there are seven classes to be observed. They are 1) hymns, 2) enthronement of Yahweh psalms, 3) national laments, 4) royal psalms, 5) laments of the individual, 6) psalms of individual thanksgiving, 7) lesser categories. In this last class are to be found six subheads: a) words of blessing and cursing, b) pilgrimage songs, c) hymns of victory, d) hymns of thanksgiving, e) the legend, f) the law” (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* [Columbus, OH: Wartburg P, 1959], 10).

101, 110, 132, and 144.¹¹ Bullock observes that this list has become “rather standard”¹² while Futato notes that “a fairly strong consensus” affirms Gunkel’s list.¹³

Even though Gunkel’s conclusions are the result of his adherence to form criticism, a careful examination using objective criteria shows that this list of eleven psalms is not without merit. Put another way, one does not have to accept the tenants of form criticism to accept the results of Gunkel’s work, at least in this area. This is because a more exacting and objective criteria for identifying the royal psalms may be found in the Psalter itself.

The activity in every royal psalm¹⁴ revolves around three major actors and a chorus.¹⁵ The first major actor is the LORD (יהוה) or God (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).¹⁶

The second major actor is the “Anointed One”¹⁷ (מְשִׁיחַ), sometimes called the “Son” or the “King.” It should be noted that all three of these titles are sometimes used for the same person, as in Psalm 2. This person is the Lord’s Anointed (מְשִׁיחַ) in verse

¹¹ C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction*, Encountering Biblical Studies (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 178.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Mark David Futato and David M. Howard, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 181.

¹⁴ For more information regarding the identification and structure of the royal psalms, see Bruce A. Baker, “A Biblical Theology of the Royal Psalms,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 16, no. 49 (Dec 2012): 7–34.

¹⁵ This use of the word “chorus” harkens back to ancient Greek tragedies where a group of performers commented on the main action, typically speaking and moving together.

¹⁶ Used in only one royal psalm: Psalm 45.

¹⁷ As the titles “King” and “Son” may refer to either David, one of his offspring, or to the Lord Jesus in his role as the coming messianic King, the issue of when to capitalize these titles can become somewhat confusing. For the sake of clarity, throughout this paper these titles will be capitalized when they are clearly referring to the Lord Jesus and left lowercase in all other instances. In those cases when I may inadvertently get it wrong, my request of the reader is that he or she will be merciful to me, a sinner.

two, “My King” (מֶלֶךְ) in verse six, and “My Son” (בְּנִי) in verse seven. While these three titles (Anointed One, King, and Son) appear to be synonymous in Psalm 2, the king and the son have more than one referent elsewhere. For example, Psalm 18:50 equates these three terms—the “king,” the Lord’s “anointed One,” and “David and his seed forever”—as synonymous. It is the mention of David’s offspring that shows a dual referent. On the one hand, the “anointed one” is David.¹⁸ On the other hand, this “anointing” extends to the royal line of David forever. As a result, these three titles may refer to either the coming Messiah, King David himself, or one of David’s offspring.

The third major actor in the royal psalms is the enemies. These foes are described by several different terms, such as the nations, the peoples, and the wicked among others. Psalm 2:1 speaks of the nations as a primary actor. This actor, however, is also described as the people (v. 1), the kings of the earth (v. 2), and the ones who rule (v. 2). What is important is not how they are described but the fact that they are in active rebellion against the Lord and his Anointed One.

In addition to these three major actors there is a chorus supporting the actions of the Lord and his king. They are described as either being the beneficiaries of the king’s goodness and protection, or as praising the king for what he has done. Their actual activity is limited and often merely implied with the first-person plural pronoun. The function of this chorus seems to be limited to highlighting the uprightness and strength of the king. Therefore, while they are present in each psalm under investigation, they are usually found to be the recipient of the actions of others, rather than initiators of actions themselves. In Psalm 2, this character group is described in the last verse as “all who take refuge in him” (v. 12).

When Gunkel’s list is examined with this criterion in mind—that is, the presence of these three major actors along with the minor character group, regardless of the specific vocabulary—one finds his list remarkably accurate. The following is an

¹⁸ It should be noted that at his death, David is specifically called the “anointed of the God of Jacob” (2 Sam 23:1).

examination of these psalms to see what contribution they may make to a biblical understanding of modern political science.

Methodology

At the outset of this investigation, one must recognize the dispensational challenge that is intrinsic to the study of these psalms. As discussed previously, an essential character in each psalm is an anointed ruler with whom God has established a covenant. The church does not participate in this covenant. It is true that the church will be a recipient of its blessings when the ultimate Davidic king rules the world and the church rules with him (Rev 5:9–10). Still, that time is not now. As a result, the blessings and curses that flow from the Davidic covenant cannot be directly applied to the church today. So where is one to look within these psalms for guidance on how to behave in the present?

As has been stated, there are four actors who comprise each psalm. Of these four, the church-age saint would do well to identify and mimic those loyal to the King. This is true not only because the righteous in Scripture are worthy of emulation regardless of the dispensation in which they appear, but also because we share a common position, namely, citizenship within the kingdom. Church age saints have been given a passport to the coming kingdom. Although it is true that we do not reside in this kingdom presently, it is equally true that our citizenship has been transferred into this kingdom (Col 1:13).

We should also notice that finding examples on how to behave is not the only benefit of studying the royal psalms. As citizens of the kingdom described in these songs, subjects of the Anointed King may learn a great deal about the world around them, particularly the political structures to which they must submit (Rom 13:1–2). The fact that the “nations” and “the kings of the earth” are often referred to with synonyms such as “my enemies,” “the wicked,” “the violent,” and so forth, removes any pitiable delusions about the virtuousness of this world that the believer may still possess.

The Disposition of Worldly Governments

The Bible clearly paints two different pictures of human government. On the one hand, human government is portrayed as a necessary gift from God, designed to act as a restraint upon the sinfulness of man (Gen 9:5–6; Rom 13:2–4). On the other hand, the Bible describes human governments as evil entities standing shoulder to shoulder in their defiance of God’s Anointed King (Ps 2:2–3).

As a church-age believer, how is one to reconcile these two opposing perspectives of government? Those of us who hold an exalted view of the Bible, especially believing in plenary inspiration, cannot simply grasp hold of the view we prefer and exalt it above the opposing view, in essence making a canon within a canon. Each viewpoint must be held as tenaciously as the other.

Two Vantage Points

One way to reconcile these seemingly opposing views is to recognize two possible vantage points from which we may view human government. For example, if one examines government from the viewpoint of the governed, then the restraining function of government is, without question, a blessing. From the biblical perspective, even bad government is better than no government at all. After all, government was instituted by God to bridle the excesses that arise from anarchy.¹⁹ The apostle Paul is quite clear that human governments are ministers of God for our good (Rom 13:4). As a result, every government must be viewed, at least in some measure, as a gift from God for the general good of mankind.

This being said, there is another vantage point from which one may investigate human government: the throne room of the

¹⁹ God’s assessment of mankind without government is clearly stated in Genesis 6: “Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth’” (Gen 6:11–13).

thrice-holy God (Isa 6:3). It is this perspective that is presented in the royal psalms.

As has been stated, each royal psalm speaks of the wicked, using a variety of terms. They are “violent” (Ps 18:48) and have “haughty eyes” (v. 27). They have “perverse” and “arrogant hearts” (101:4–5) and “secretly slander their neighbors” (v. 5). They are the “enemies” of God who hate him (21:8) and plot evil against him (v. 11), practicing deceit and speaking falsehood (101:7). None of this comes as a surprise to those who understand the biblical teaching of the depravity of man.

What might come as a surprise, however, is how often these enemies are associated with human government. The royal psalms describe the populace of this world and their leaders exclusively in negative terms. There is no mention of the “simple”²⁰ in the royal psalms. Those described in the royal psalms are either loyal to the King or are his enemies, but there is no neutral ground.

The royal psalms teach that the governments of this world, without exception, are in active rebellion against the Lord and his Anointed King. While in practice we know that not all governments show the same level of intensity in their hatred of God, at the most fundamental level each government rebels against the Lord Jesus as King. Even though we may observe a varying degree of bitterness and hostility directed at the Lord Jesus in the nations around us, no such distinction is made in the royal psalms. The nations of this world are completely given over to unmixed hatred of God’s King. There is no measure of neutrality that may be found. Interestingly, there are few reasons

²⁰ In the wisdom literature, the word “simple” refers to someone who needs instruction. The simple are neither wise nor foolish, but are instead naïve, lacking good sense (Prov 7:7). The simple become wise by hearing the law of the Lord (Ps 19:7; 119:130). Because the Lord is gracious, righteous, and compassionate, he preserves the simple (116:5–6). The expectation is that the simple one will not remain as he is but will become either wise or foolish. The wise, the foolish, and the simple are often contrasted within the wisdom literature. “When the scoffer is punished, the [simple] becomes wise; But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge” (Prov 21:11).

given within the royal psalms for this hatred of God and his King. In most cases, no reason is given. It is merely stated as fact.

For example, in Psalm 110:1 the psalm begins with the mention of “your enemies” without any mention as to why they are enemies. In verse 2, the Lord commands his King to rule in the midst of his enemies, while in verse 5 we read that the Lord’s chosen King will “shatter kings in the day of his wrath,” without bothering to mention why he is angry with them in the first place.

Additionally, the royal psalms make no distinction between the populace of a nation and its leadership. Whether we speak of the nations and the peoples, or the kings of the earth and its rulers (Ps 2:2–3), they all take their stand together against the Lord and his Anointed One (v. 2). The unstated assumption is that the two are of the same mind. This is why we see no neutral leaders or rulers in the royal psalms. Just as there is no neutrality in the peoples of this world, so the kings of the earth are always portrayed negatively.²¹

An Historical Complication

At this point, it seems prudent to pause and consider why the kings of the earth are always portrayed as enemies, for when we examine the history of the united kingdom of Israel (i.e., the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon), we find several instances where this pattern is broken. When David was fleeing from Saul, Achish, king of Gath, gave David the city of Ziklag (1 Sam 27:5–6) and took him into his service. When military necessity forced Achish to send David away, Achish was fulsome in his praise of David (29:6, 9). This relationship might not be the best example as David was undoubtedly deceiving Achish regarding his loyalty. Still, other instances are plentiful. Some unspecified

²¹ While it is true that the kings of the earth are universally portrayed as enemies of the Anointed One, hope is held out that they may become wise and do homage to the Son (Ps 2:10–12). This submission to the Son is presented purely in terms of self-preservation. If the kings show discernment and heed the warning of the psalmist, they may come to the place where they “rejoice with trembling,” and be among the blessed “who take refuge in him.” Still, this hope is presented in hypothetical terms and no evidence is given that the kings of this earth will partake of this blessing prior to the millennial kingdom.

kindness was given to David by Nahash, king of the Ammonites (2 Sam 10:1–2). Friendly trading relations existed between Hiram king of Tyre and David (5:11). This amicable relationship continued with David’s son Solomon because “Hiram had always been a friend of David” (1 Kgs 5:1). King Solomon, like his father David, also had friendly relations with pagan nations around him. Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter (3:1).²² The Queen of Sheba also was on favorable terms with Solomon, so that they traded gifts with one another (10:1–10). Each of these case studies points to the fact that the universal hostility shown to the king in the royal psalms was not acted out in the history of the kingdom.

At this point some might be tempted to resolve this apparent disparity by appealing to the distinction between genre and praxis. After all, the wisdom literature tends to state things in absolute terms which, in practice, are not always true.²³ This collection of psalms, it may be argued, is following that pattern. But this interpretation simply won’t do. The animosity between the rulers of this world and the Lord and his Anointed One in the royal psalms (Ps 2:2) is acted out in stark relief in the Gospels (John 15:18–25). As in the royal psalms, the NT also teaches there is no common ground between the world system and the believer (1 John 2:15–17). Thus, dismissing this absolute, total rebellion as merely a literary emphasis is missing the mark. Something else is at work here.

²² Interestingly, this marriage is not condemned. In fact, immediately after Scripture states this marriage, we read that Solomon walked in the statutes of his father David (1 Kgs 3:3).

²³ An example of this tendency may be found in Prov 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” This proverb states what normally happens but cannot be made absolute for there are simply too many examples where this simply isn’t the case. The unfortunate case of Joash is a prime example. From the time he is seven years old, “Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest” (2 Chr 24:2). After Jehoiada’s death, however, the officials of Judah came to Joash and persuaded him to abandon the worship of the Lord and to begin the worship the Asherim (vv. 17–19). As a child he was trained correctly, but it did not last when he turned old.

An Attack on National Sovereignty

When two or more nations interact on friendly terms, the unspoken assumption is that there is a joint recognition of each nation's sovereignty. When the sovereignty of a nation is threatened by another power, there are no longer friendly terms between those powers. Indeed, a threat to another nation's sovereignty guarantees a state of enmity will ensue.

It is this threat to sovereignty that explains the universal hostility of the nations towards the Lord and his Anointed One. God has installed his King (Ps 2:6) and this King demands universal allegiance. The response of the nations to this threat upon their sovereignty is to plot an organized rebellion designed to remove the bonds of this foreign administration (v. 3). The ridiculousness of this puny insurrection is not lost upon God, so that his response is to laugh and scoff (v. 4). To enforce his claim of absolute hegemony, the King judges among the nations and fills them with the dead bodies of the rebellious (110:6). As a result of his overwhelming military superiority, the King enforces his rule from "sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth" (72:8). While it is the duty of "all kings" to "bow down before him" and for "all nations" to serve him (v. 11), the nations of this world universally refuse this duty. It is only through the application of deadly force that this coming King enforces his rightful authority over the whole world.

Application

According to the royal psalms, all the nations of the world are active in their hatred of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As has been pointed out, there are no nations that are an exception to this rule. As a result, it is incumbent upon every believer to recognize that his or her nation falls under this indictment. There is no nation that is different from the rest.²⁴

²⁴ Those who claim an American exceptionalism must do so in the same spirit as Persian exceptionalism during the time of Cyrus the great (Ezra 1:1–11). It is true that the Lord chose Cyrus to be "His anointed" (Isa 45:1) and that he called Cyrus by name (v. 3). Indeed, he made great promises to Cyrus giving him honor and wealth (vv. 3–4). Yet in all of this, Cyrus remained the enemy of God. While God reveals himself to

This is not to say that the governments of this world hate everything that could be considered good or virtuous. This is clearly not the case. Nor is it the case that all governments are equally wicked or are wicked in the same way.²⁵ But it does mean that in every nation there will be sticking points where the will of the populace and the will of God collide. It is in the government's best interest to allow the populace to do as they please as long as these interests do not endanger the existence of the ruling establishment. As a result, every nation will, at some point, bring the force of law down on the side of unrighteousness to appease either the nation at large, the entrenched power structure, or both. God's commands will be considered chains and fetters that must be cast off. Therefore, every government, to one degree or another, becomes an enemy of God and thus, by extension, an enemy of the believer.

One must also realize that the mutinous insurrection by the governments of this world is not a periodic rebellion but a continuous one. All people currently are called to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as their rightful sovereign.²⁶ Because the

Cyrus and makes it known that he is the cause of all these blessings (vv. 3, 5), Cyrus did not worship or glorify God as the one true God (v. 5). The reason the Lord blessed Cyrus was for the sake of Israel (v. 4), and so that his name would be made known (vv. 3, 6–7). One should also notice that when Cyrus fulfilled the tasks set before him by the Lord, the Lord's blessing upon the Medo-Persian Empire was withdrawn so that they were moved from the world stage and replaced by the Greeks.

²⁵ It is not accurate, for example, to unfavorably compare the Biden administration with the brutality of Stalin's Russia or the horrors of Hitler's Germany. Even when one takes into consideration the atrocity of abortion, the United States still allows Christians to worship without fear, something that the other two governments would not allow. Although it is true that all three governments may be condemned as wicked, they are not all wicked in the same way or to the same extent.

²⁶ This is not to suggest that Christ is reigning on the throne of David now in some respect. He is currently a King in waiting (Ps 110:1). Nevertheless, it is now possible to be rescued "from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13). Even though this kingdom is still future, our loyalty to the King brings about suffering because of this world's hostility to our Sovereign (2 Thess 1:5).

King's claim to sovereignty is ongoing, it follows that the civic rebellion against God's Anointed One is an ongoing rebellion. The enmity of the nations does not only appear during times of crises or according to the current mood of the populace but is the default state of the governments of this world, a permanent condition into which they have settled.

As a result, those that currently claim loyalty to the King suffer for the crime of being associated with his kingdom. In fact, the reproach leveled against God's people is identical in tone and substance to the scorn directed at the King himself (Ps 89:50).²⁷ The only variable in this equation is the intensity this disdain takes. The more fervently the believer identifies with the King, the more out of step one will be with those around him and the more contempt will be directed his way.²⁸

Understanding the true attitude of worldly regimes toward the Lord and his Anointed One should also cause one to view with suspicion any benevolence offered by the powers that be. This is not to say that the believer should not exercise whatever legal protections are available to him.²⁹ What it does mean, however, is that the governments of this world will never love

²⁷ "Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Your servants; How I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the many peoples, with which Your enemies have reproached, O LORD, with which they have reproached the footsteps of Your anointed" (Ps 89:50–51). Such persecution should not take those who believe the words of Jesus by surprise: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; ..." (John 15:18–20).

²⁸ On the other hand, the one who keeps his true citizenship secret will largely escape the derision of this world. This means, of course, that there will always be contention within the true church between those who are steadfast in their loyalty to the King and compromisers who desire to escape the pangs of persecution. This may be seen in contemporary Christianity by the number of "Christian celebrities" who have softened their view of women in ministry, homosexuality, or any of a dozen other viewpoints that the current culture finds distasteful.

²⁹ The example of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:22–40 is a case in point.

righteousness for its own sake. Whatever steps the government may take in the assisting of the Christian church will always come with the ulterior motive of satisfying some existing political actor or actors.³⁰ These political actors may be as varied as an entrenched monarchical family, a voting block of unionized laborers, or an organized movement of conservative Christians. Regardless of the nature of these political actors, it remains true that these are the ones that human governments seek to appease rather than God himself.³¹ As a result, any assistance the government offers the church will inevitably include pressure upon the church to subtly change her message.³²

³⁰ “We must remember that politicians have no idea of principles, but only of existing influences to which they must be subject” (J. N. Darby, “Progress of Democratic Power, and its Effects on the Moral State of England,” in *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, ed. William Kelly, 34 vols. [Oak Park, IL: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.], 32:333).

³¹ This principle is true not only of governments but of all people generally within this world system. As Darby has observed, this world is a “system in which men seek honor one of another, and not the honor which cometh from God only” (Darby, “What is the World, and What is its End?” in *Collected Writings*, 34:111).

³² When the government gives benefits, it is almost inevitable that the recipient of those benefits becomes dependent upon them. Once that dependency is established, pressure may be placed upon the Christian individual or institution to change their convictions to mollify the demands of other political actors. This principle holds true across the vast spectrum of government largesse but is most easily seen in education. For example, access to federal funding for student loans as well as school eligibility for federal grants and loans requires accreditation (see “About Accreditation,” Council for Higher Education Accreditation, accessed August 15, 2021, <https://www.chea.org/about-accreditation>). Higher education is beyond the reach of most students without such financial assistance. This is one reason why most Christian schools offering higher education seek accredited status. In doing so the school is required to conform to standards set by the Department of Education: educational, financial, logistical, organizational, and so forth. But these standards are often open to interpretation. Recently the Human Rights Campaign (a gay advocacy group) published a wish list for the Biden/Harris administration entitled *Blueprint for Positive Change 2020*. Among its numerous suggestions is a demand that the Department of Education change its accreditation standards. “Language regarding

The Duties of Kingdom Citizens

As is true of every nation, citizenship in the United States brings with it certain duties. Obligations stemming from US citizenship include supporting and defending the Constitution against enemies foreign and domestic, paying taxes honestly and on time, serving on a jury, and bearing arms on behalf of the United States when required by law.³³ The United States is not

accreditation of religious institutions of higher education in the Higher Education Opportunity Act could be interpreted to require accrediting bodies to accredit religious institutions that discriminate or that do not meet science based curricula standards. The Department of Education should issue a regulation clarifying that this provision, which requires accreditation agencies to ‘respect the stated mission’ of religious institutions, does not require the accreditation of religious institutions that do not meet neutral accreditation standards including nondiscrimination policies and scientific curriculum requirements” (“Blueprint for Positive Change 2020,” *The Human Rights Campaign*, accessed August 16, 2021, <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/Blueprint-2020.pdf?mtime=20201110185320&focal=none>). To be clear, what the Human Rights Campaign is demanding is that accreditation be denied to religious organizations that do not conform their views on sexual orientation and gender identity to align with those of the LGBTQIA+ community. Albert Mohler calls this “an open threat to the ability of Christian colleges and schools to operate by Christian conviction.... This is an undisguised attempt to shut down any semblance of a Christian college or university that would possess the audacity to operate from a Christian worldview” (“A Direct Threat to Christian Education—The Human Rights Campaign Demands that the Biden Administration Deny Accreditation to Christian Colleges and Schools,” *Albert Mohler*, November 18, 2020, <https://albertmohler.com/2020/11/18/a-direct-threat-to-christian-education-the-human-rights-campaign-demands-that-the-biden-administration-deny-accreditation-to-christian-colleges-and-schools>). To be clear, at this writing it is an open question as to whether the Biden administration will institute the proposed reinterpretation of current regulations. But, for the sake of this argument, it makes no difference whether these proposed changes are instituted or not. The mere fact that they could be indicates the perils of entangling Christian ministry with government.

³³ “Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last reviewed July 5, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/the-naturalization-interview-and-test/naturalization-oath-of-allegiance-to-the->

alone in imposing obligations upon its citizens. Such responsibilities are the price of citizenship around the world.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that citizenship in the future kingdom brings with it obligations as well. Except for one requirement, what makes current citizens of the future kingdom unique is the marked difference between their duties and those duties imposed upon the citizens of the nations around them. Military duty, taxation, and other obligations common to earthly governments³⁴ have no exact equivalent for current citizens of the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.³⁵ This being said, the responsibilities of kingdom citizens, in one way at least, go far beyond what is expected of the citizens of this world.

Renounce and Abjure All Allegiance

As mentioned above, there is one demand placed on citizens of the future kingdom that is held in common with citizens of the earthly kingdoms around us. That is the obligation to have unmixed fidelity to the state of which we are citizens. The oath of allegiance required to become a naturalized citizen of the United States includes the following promise: “I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all

united-states-of-america. The obligation to bear arms on behalf of the United States may be amended to perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces or to perform work of national importance under civilian direction.

³⁴ By “earthly government” I mean those governments that originate from earth. Certainly, the future kingdom will be “earthly” in that it will be established on this earth. But it will be different in character than other governments because its origination is from heaven. See John 18:36.

³⁵ One could argue that the NT commands concerning giving is analogous to a tax upon the believer. But this would be a serious misreading of the NT. Taxes are compulsory. In contrast, Paul is quite clear that giving is a grace given by God (2 Cor 8:7). He expressly states that he is not commanding a tax but is instead testing the sincerity of the love expressed by the believers (v. 8). Indeed, the apostle Paul is clear that the believer should give, not in a predetermined way or amount, but instead as he has decided in his heart. The fact that NT giving should be “not grudgingly or under compulsion” (9:7) shows it to be the very opposite of a tax.

allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen....”³⁶ This same obligation is placed upon those loyal to the King in Psalm 45: “Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear: Forget your people and your father’s house” (v. 10).

Psalm 45 is a wedding psalm evidently meant to be sung at the nuptials of a Davidic king and his foreign bride. While there are numerous suggestions as to the identity of this Davidic king,³⁷

³⁶ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

³⁷ “The older and perhaps the more common interpretation refers it to Solomon’s nuptials with the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Hupfeld thinks that the princess here celebrated was not an Egyptian, but a daughter of Hiram, king of Tyre; and accordingly, in ver 12 [13], he renders the words, ‘daughter of Tyre,’ in the vocative, as if the Poet were there addressing the new Queen. The history (1 Kgs 11:1, &c.), he observes, mentions Zidonian (= Tyrian, Is. 23:12) princesses among Solomon’s foreign wives. Hitzig refers the Psalm to the marriage of Ahab with Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, ‘King of the Zidonians’ (1 Kgs 16:31) and sees an allusion to Ahab’s ivory house (1 Kgs 22:39) in ver. 8 [9]. Delitzsch thinks Joram, ‘the son of Jehoshaphat, the second Solomon of the Jewish history,’ is the king mentioned in the Psalm, and Athaliah the queen. This accounts, he says, for the use of the word שֶׁגַל (shégal), as applied to the queen-consort, which occurs elsewhere as a Chaldee (Dan. 5:2) or Persian (Neh 2:6) title; and which would be more of a North Palestine than a Jewish word. For Athaliah was of Tyrian origin, and of the royal family of Israel. Hence the peculiar significance of the exhortation to forget ‘her father’s house:’ and hence, too, the homage demanded especially of Tyre. Moreover, Jehoshaphat seems to have had something of Solomon’s passion for foreign trade (though he was unsuccessful in it), which explains, according to Delitzsch, the allusions to gold and ivory; or perhaps the ‘ivory palaces’ may refer to the ‘ivory house’ of Ahab, who was Athaliah’s father (1 Kgs 22:39, comp. Amos 3:15). Finally, some commentators have supposed the Psalm to have been written in honour of a Persian king’s bridal, because of the Persian title given to the queen, because the Tyrians bring tribute, and because the ‘princes in all lands’ (ver. 16 [17]) applies best to Persian satraps. But these reasons are of no weight at all, as may be gathered from what has been already observed; and, on the face of it, it is extremely improbable that such an ode as this should have been inspired by the harem of a Persian monarch” (J. J.

Ross is correct when he states, “There is no reason to speculate on the identity of the king....”³⁸ From early on this psalm has been considered messianic.³⁹ The NT applies this psalm to Christ.⁴⁰ Therefore, even though this song was not written to the church, applying the instruction of verse 10 to the body of Christ is not a tremendous hermeneutical leap.

The importance of this command is difficult to overstate. Three imperatives (hear, see, and stretch out the ear) are used to underscore the seriousness of this charge, solemnly given amid a joyful scene.⁴¹ The King already desires her beauty, but the implication is she will be more beautiful when she makes the King the sole object of her affections. To her outward beauty will be added an inward beauty that is appropriate for the bride of such a King.⁴²

Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms; A New Translation, with Introductions and Notes, Explanatory and Critical*, 5th ed. Revised., vol. 1 [London; Cambridge: George Bell and Sons; Deighton Bell and Co., 1883], 380–81).

³⁸ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms 1–89: Commentary*, vol. 2, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011–2013), 62.

³⁹ “The Messianic interpretation of the Psalm is the most ancient. The Chaldee paraphrast on ver. 2 [3] writes: ‘Thy beauty, O King, Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men.’ And even the later Jews take the same view. Ibn Ezra says: ‘This Psalm treats either of David or of his son Messiah, for that is His name, Ezekiel 34:24, ‘And David My servant shall be their prince for ever’” (Perowne, *Psalms*, 383).

⁴⁰ Quoting Psalm 45:6–7, the author of Hebrews writes, “But of the Son He says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy companions’” (Heb 1:8–9).

⁴¹ “Such repetition of verbs to get her attention underscores the urgency and importance of the instruction. The first imperative implores a hearing, but a hearing with obedience in mind. With the second imperative he directs her attention to the new relationship she is about to begin. And with the third he calls for her undivided attention to his words” (Ross, *Psalms 1–89*, 75).

⁴² *Ibid.*

From the beginning, leaving has been an intricate part of godly marriage.⁴³ The creation of God's ancient covenant people also involved the act of leaving.⁴⁴ Similarly, Jesus insists on a level of love and fidelity that makes other loves appear to be hatred in comparison.⁴⁵ With this in mind, it is of little surprise that the messianic King demands his bride to forget kindred and country so that she might give to him the entirety of her affections. While not often considered, this command is incumbent upon modern-day believers. To be sure, this is not a requirement for salvation (*Deo gratias*), but it ought to be the attitude every believer should endeavor to emulate.

The command to "forget" should be taken in the same way as the command to "remember." In Malachi 4:4 the people are told to "remember the law of Moses." Here the idea is not simply to remember, but to remember with the goal of obedience. In like manner, the command to forget does not have in mind the erasing of memory, but the attitude of not allowing these natural loves to compete with the bride's love for the King. In practical terms this means the forsaking of any love that would challenge love for the King.

It is important to notice that neither love for family nor love of country is evil in and of itself. But these loves are to be "forgotten" when placed in comparison to love for the King.⁴⁶ Of course, it is not only familial or patriotic loves which must be

⁴³ "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

⁴⁴ "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house to the land which I will show you'" (Gen 12:1).

⁴⁵ "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).

⁴⁶ One wonders what changes in this world would occur if the believer took this command to heart and entirely renounced and abjured all allegiance and fidelity to his political party or even his country. What would happen if such "patriotic" activities as watching the news were replaced with Bible study and prayer? This seems, at least to me, as the most obvious application of the command to "forget your people and your father's house" for the North American church at large.

kept in check. Love for any worldly activity should be included within this command to “forget.”

Freewill Offerings

Within the royal psalms, the most exacting statement regarding the responsibilities of those loyal to the King (Ps 110:3) is also the most difficult.⁴⁷ Questions concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of this psalm abound.⁴⁸ Still, the testimony of our Lord Jesus regarding the authorship of the psalm (Matt 22:42–45) as well as the subject it concerns is “difficult to explain away.”⁴⁹ Therefore it seems best to take the psalm at face value,

⁴⁷ “The expressions in verse three have proved to be the most challenging to scribes and scholars down through the ages. There are textual problems in the ancient manuscripts and versions that need to be considered, and there are unusual expressions in the clauses themselves that must be explained.” See Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms (90–150): Commentary*, vol. 3, Kregel Exegetical Library (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2016), 350–51.

⁴⁸ “According to the recent criticism, which calls itself ‘advanced,’ this psalm is the composition of an unknown prophet, addressed to his earthly sovereign, communicating to him certain Divine utterances, or oracles (vers. 1, 5), of great weight and strangeness, and promising him complete victory over all his enemies. The king is supposed by some to be David; by others, a Davidic monarch; by others, again, a Maccabee prince or king. According to its ‘title,’ it is ‘a Psalm of David;’ according to our Lord’s comment upon it (Matt. 22:43–45, Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44), it is an address of David to the Messiah; according to every Christian commentator for fifteen centuries, it is Messianic and Davidic. Even Professor Cheyne, who inclines so strongly to the sceptical [sic] school, grants that ‘it may perhaps refer to the ideal or Messianic King himself,’ though he thinks it ‘equally possible to explain it of some historical ruler.’ The style and language are generally allowed to be Davidic, and many, even of the ‘advanced’ critics, refer the composition to his time. Ewald suggested that Gad or Nathan might have been the author. Recently, Canon Gore has embraced the sceptical (sic) view, and has suggested that our Lord either did not know who was the author, or did not mean to touch the question of the authorship (‘Bampton Lectures,’ pp. 196–200)” (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Psalms, vol. 3*, The Pulpit Commentary [London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909]), 28).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

specifically, that it refers to the Anointed King establishing his worldwide kingdom.

On this mighty day, when the Lord Jesus is enthroned and he “rules in the midst of his enemies” (Ps 110:2), we read the following enigmatic description of those loyal to the King: “Your people will volunteer freely in the day of your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, your youth are to You as the dew” (v. 3). Even though the second line of this verse is extraordinarily difficult—as Ross observes, “The Hebrew is very cryptic....”⁵⁰—the first line provides a helpful description of kingdom loyalists.

The “your people” of verse three is placed in contrast to the “enemies” immediately previous. Again, one should note that there is no third category to describe the populace of this world. One is either an enemy of the King or one is loyal to the King, but it is not possible for one to simply remain neutral. One should also notice that the psalmist makes no mention as to how a person becomes one of the King’s people. There is no mention of tribe or nationality or any other distinguishing characteristic.

What may be said of these loyalists is that they have willingly joined the King’s cause. In fact, the extent of their willing self-sacrifice may be seen in the language used to describe it. Ross notes, “The actual word in the text is ‘freewill offerings’ (נְדָבָה), the plural amplifying the idea to mean willingness in all its aspects.”⁵¹ While some would take this language as merely figurative, the idea of people offering their lives in an act of worship is most appropriate when one considers the Melchizedekian priest described immediately after.⁵² It is also

⁵⁰ Ross, *Psalms (90–150)*, 352.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁵² “This interpretation harmonizes best with the priestly character assigned both to the warriors and to their leader. Otherwise the word often loses its sacrificial meaning; and so here many render, ‘Thy people are most willing,’ lit. “are willingnesses,” (plur. for sing. as more emphatic, comprising every possible aspect of the idea contained in the word, alacrity, readiness, devotion in every form). They are no hireling soldiery; they serve not of constraint nor for filthy lucre. . . . The reflexive form of the verb from the same root is used in like manner in Jud. 5:2, 9, of the

appropriate when one remembers a similar command from the pen of the apostle Paul: “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” (Rom 12:1).

What is conspicuously absent from this psalm is what *exactly* these people are volunteering to do. The King in this psalm needs no troops to support him and there is no reference in the psalm of people fighting on his behalf.⁵³ We learn from other places those who hold kingdom citizenship now will reign with Christ when he establishes his kingdom (Rev 3:21; 20:4), although what type of administrative duties will be required is not stated. We do know that reigning with Christ will include pronouncing judgments in some form or another,⁵⁴ but what kind of cases will be heard and what sort of verdicts will be rendered is still a mystery. We also know that some sort of priestly function will be required.⁵⁵ While it is not clear, the “holy array” of Psalm 110:3 may point to this.⁵⁶

people ‘willingly offering themselves’ for the war against Jabin and Sisera” (Perowne, *Psalms*, 306–307).

⁵³ The NIV’s “your troops” in verse 3 is more interpretation than translation. The Hebrew **עַמְּךָ** simply means people generally. Slight justification for translating “troops” may be found if one translates **לְחַיֵּי** at the end of the clause in the day of your “armies” (not “battle,” as the NIV). This would not be an unusual translation (see Exod 14:28, Deut 11:4, 2 Kgs 6:15), but the equally probable in the day of your “strength” (see Ps 18:32 [33], 39 [40]) makes better sense in the context (Perowne, *Psalms*, 307).

⁵⁴ See 1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 3:21; 20:4.

⁵⁵ See Revelation 1:6; 20:6.

⁵⁶ “The other prepositional phrase has been translated ‘in the beauty of holiness.’ The word ‘beauty’ (**תְּהִלָּה**), that is, ‘splendor, adornment,’ or ‘beauty’ (s.v. Ps. 96:6), describes something that inspires admiration and appreciation. The fact that it is in the plural may mean that it refers to beautiful garments such as those that the priests would wear (see 1 Chr 16:29; 2 Chr 20:21; Ps. 29:2; 96:9). The qualifying word ‘holiness’ (an attributive genitive) explains that these beautiful adornments are holy. This may be drawing on the beautiful, holy garments used by the priests in the holy place, indicating they are properly prepared for serving the Holy One.

“Thus, when the king appears to put down his enemies and establish his earthly reign, he will be accompanied by a myriad of willing servants

Regardless of the details, however, two important truths should be observed. First, those offering themselves as freewill offerings are eager to perform whatever tasks may please the King. The loyalists place no restrictions upon their service. Instead of *bringing* offerings to the king, they *are* the offerings being presented. Second, regardless of what other duties may be required, the volunteers in no way assist the King in establishing his kingdom. The Anointed King sits at the right hand of the Lord until the Lord makes his enemies a footstool for his feet. It is the Lord's work that is being chronicled. Even though the loyalists are at his complete disposal, he makes no use of them. Therefore, at least from a dispensational worldview, kingdom building should not be a task of the believer, not because the loyalist doesn't long to participate, but because the Lord has reserved this task for himself. It is the Lord who has sworn to establish David's line forever and to make his throne firm (Ps 89:3–4).

The Serious Obligation to Worship

The only activity specifically required of kingdom loyalists is to proclaim the perfections of the Lord and his Anointed One. This may be seen through direct commands to worship as well as the many examples of praise expressed in the royal psalms.

For example, Psalm 2 advises the rebellious nations who intend to “tear off their fetters” and “cast away their cords” to show discernment and take warning. Their current course of action ends only in disaster! Instead, they are to replace their rebelliousness with worshipful service.⁵⁷ This “worship,” however, like all worship, is not mere outward obedience, but is to be accompanied by a radical change of heart. As Ross correctly observes, “[t]his service was to be performed ‘with fear’ (פֶּחַד וְיִרְאָה), a term that includes fear, reverence, and adoration. One who fears God is drawn to him in love, adoration, and

who will be adorned in holy array, meaning that they have been set apart to his service and are characterized by holiness” (Ross, *Psalms (90–150)*, 352–53).

⁵⁷ “The call for them to submit to the Lord is expressed in terms of serving. The verb ‘serve’... has the religious sense of worshipping God and obeying his commands” (ibid., 211).

amazement because of his power and glory, but because of his power and glory one also shrinks back in reverence and even fear.”⁵⁸

Interestingly, there is some question concerning whose wrath is kindled when homage to the Son is not rendered. Specifically, is the Son angry at this snub of his royal person, or is it the Lord who is angry because his Anointed King is not being worshiped?⁵⁹ While either option is feasible, the context seems to favor the idea that it is the Lord’s anger that is in view.⁶⁰ It is also worthy of note that this idea is expressed in Psalm 89. The Lord declares, “But I shall crush his adversaries before him, and strike those who hate him” (89:23).

Even though reading the psalm this way does little to change the message of the psalm, understanding that it is the Lord’s wrath that is kindled places an emphasis upon the one who establishes the kingdom. It is the Lord himself who places Christ upon the throne. The kingdom is given as a gift to his Son. In making this emphasis, the establishment of the kingdom is moved even further away from the actions of the citizens who long for it. Put another way, not only is this kingdom not established by kingdom loyalists, but it is also not established by the King of the kingdom. This kingdom is established due to the direct actions of the Lord, without the help of others.

Regardless of what option is chosen, it remains clear that worship is due the Lord and his Anointed One because they are who they are. As a result, the withholding of praise is a crime of

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ While the singular “him” does not allow the possibility of both being in view, that idea is presented in Scripture elsewhere. “[A]nd they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (Rev 6:16–17).

⁶⁰ Earlier in the psalm we read of the Lord’s anger directed towards mankind. His wrath is against those who refuse to accept the King he has installed upon Zion (Ps 2:5–6). Also, the one the nations are commanded to worship is not the Anointed King, but the Lord himself in verse 11. Thus, the command to kiss the Son (v. 12) is best taken as part of this previous command to worship (v. 11).

the highest order. Therefore, worship in this psalm is commanded.

Even though worship is commanded in Psalm 2, a careful reading of the royal psalms suggests that the command to worship is only directed at those who *need* to be commanded to worship. The overwhelming evidence of the royal psalms is that praise springs naturally from the hearts of kingdom citizens. While it is true that the Lord and his Anointed King deserve praise for merely being who they are, most of the praise in the royal psalms is the consequence of experiencing the goodness of the Lord.

For example, in Psalm 132 the “godly ones will sing aloud for joy,” because God has satisfied the needy with bread (vv. 15–16). Likewise, in Psalm 144, there is no command to worship and/or praise. Nevertheless, praise springs naturally from the pen of the psalmist. “I will sing a new song to you, O God; Upon a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to you” (v. 9). The occasion of this praise is that God has rescued David from his enemies (v. 10). Salvation from one’s enemies is likewise cause for singing in Psalm 18.⁶¹ The Lord is worthy to be praised because of who he is as well as what he has done. He is “my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (18:2). Because he is who he is, he “gives great deliverance to his king, and shows lovingkindness to his anointed, To David and his descendants forever” (v. 50). In this case, his lovingkindness is seen in David’s triumph over his enemies and his escaping “the cords of death” (v. 4).

In Psalm 101 we find a different pattern, although the results are the same. The psalm begins with the Davidic king reciting a vow to sing praises to the Lord. While no reason for this vow is provided, it is implied that this is in response to the absolute holiness of the Lord. Clearly the king shares the love of

⁶¹ “For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said,” (Ps 18: title). Also, “Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD, And I will sing praises to Your name” (v. 49).

righteousness expressed by the Lord, for the king states that he hates those who fall away (101:3) and no one that has a haughty look or an arrogant heart will the king endure (v. 5). After all, the royal residence is in the “city of the LORD” (v. 8), and who knows when the Lord will come to visit him (v. 2)?

Other examples could be cited, but the pattern is clear. The wicked are commanded to praise the Lord. Kingdom loyalists are not commanded, not because their duty is any less, but because they willingly bring forth praise from a grateful heart.

Application

As might be expected, certain obligations are incumbent upon citizens of the future kingdom in the here and now. These requirements of citizenship should be no surprise to those who have read the NT and have taken its teachings to heart.

First, just as naturalized citizens of the United States, citizens of the future kingdom are called upon to renounce and abjure all allegiance to any people or nation that does not swear allegiance to the Anointed One of God. This does not mean that church-age believers should renounce their citizenship in whatever country in which they may live. What it does mean, however, is that kingdom loyalists should recognize that conflict between the kingdom in which they now live and the future kingdom is inevitable. When such conflict occurs, believers are called to act in such a way that it becomes obvious where their true allegiances lie.

Second, citizens of the coming kingdom are to present themselves as freewill offerings to the Lord’s Anointed King. When they present themselves as offerings, it automatically follows that whatever it is at their disposal is presented as well. The example of the Macedonian believers described in 2 Corinthians 8:1–5 should be the model for church-age believers.

Finally, the obligation to worship should be taken seriously by kingdom loyalists. While this obligation is always upon all people so that failure to do so is a serious crime (Rom 1:18–25), kingdom citizens who know God and acknowledge him as sovereign should have praise erupting spontaneously from their hearts because of who God is and what he has done. Worship

should never be considered optional but should be considered the joyful privilege that it is.

Conclusion

While nearly all of what may be learned from the royal psalms is taught in other Scriptures, this collection of songs is valuable to our study of political science in that they offer correction to long-held beliefs that deserve, but often lack, investigation. Specifically, their emphasis upon the conflict between the nations of this world and the Lord and his Anointed One is a valuable warning for the church-age saint. They show that political nationalism should place a distant second in the hearts of believers compared to their love for their current King and their longing for his coming kingdom. They help kingdom loyalists fashion realistic expectations concerning the governments of this world, cautioning believers about the potential problems of church/government cooperation. These songs provide hope to the oppressed by reminding them of a future day when the Lord overthrows the wicked governments of this world, establishes his King on his throne, and pours out his blessings on the earth. Understanding and applying the royal psalms' teachings enable those loyal to the King to live in a world hostile to him by remembering where their true citizenship lies.