

Week Four
Worshipping God
Psalms of God's Rule, King, and City

Preliminary Remarks

- The two great themes of the psalms are doing God's will by observing the law (Psalm 1) and submitting to God's rule over creation and history (Psalm 2).
- While both themes occur throughout the psalms, there are certain psalms that highlight them. Psalms 19 and 119 develop the theme of observing the law, and other psalms do the same for the theme of God's rule.
- In this session we examine (1) psalms that celebrate God's rule/ reign and proclaim that "the Lord is king"; (2) psalms that celebrate God's anointed one (*Christos*), the king; and (3) psalms that celebrate the royal city of God, Jerusalem, which is founded on Mount Zion.
- The purpose of these psalms is to remind us to submit ourselves to the rule or reign of God by doing God's law as taught by God's Messiah.
- For Israel this meant confessing and worshipping the one God, the Lord, *Yhwh*, in the temple of the royal city that was under the rule of God's appointed king. The king was to rule in justice and righteousness in accordance with God's law so that all might live in the fullness of God's peace and righteousness.
- For those who confess that Christ is the Messiah, the Anointed One of the Lord, it means submitting to the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed by observing the law as Jesus taught in order to offer God worship in the heavenly Jerusalem/Zion.
- When prayed in this way, the royal psalms take on a new meaning and become a "new song" for Christ's faithful who see the fulfillment of God's kingship in the kingdom of God and the destiny of Jerusalem in the heavenly Jerusalem that will be revealed at the end of the ages.

Psalms of God's Kingship (47, 93, 95—99)

- Psalm 47 celebrates the entrance of God as king into the temple in Jerusalem, God is the great king over all the earth, God reigns over all the nations. The Liturgy uses this psalm on the Feast of the Ascension to celebrate the entrance of Christ, the king, into the heavenly temple.
- Psalm 93 begins with the acclamation "the Lord is king," God is enthroned above creation and yet dwells in his house in Jerusalem.
- Psalm 97 also begins with the acclamation "the Lord is king." The whole of creation melts at God's coming to bring justice.
- Psalm 98 is a "new song" because the Lord, the king, has brought salvation to the ends of the earth. The Lord, the king, comes to judge the world with justice.
- Psalm 98 also begins, "The Lord is king." He is enthroned on the cherubim in the temple of Jerusalem. This mighty king is the love of justice.

Psalms of God's King (2, 20, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132)

- Psalm 2 was sung on the day of the king's coronation, the Christian tradition interprets the phrase, "You are my Son, it is I who have begotten you this day," in the light of Christ resurrection, which Christ was manifested in power as God's Son.
- Psalm 20 is a psalm asking God to grant victory to the king as he prepares for battle. In the light of the paschal mystery, it can be prayed as a psalm asking God to grant victory to Christ as he prepares to do battle with Satan at his passion.
- Psalm 45 is a wedding song for the king and his bride, in the light of the paschal mystery the king is Christ and the bride is his church. The first part of the psalm deals with the king/Christ, the second part deals with his bride/the church.
- Psalm 72 describes the ideal king who will bring justice to all the nations. In the light of Christ's death and resurrection this ideal king is Christ.
- Psalms 89 and 132 celebrate the covenant God made with David that David's dynasty would last forever. This promise has been fulfilled in Christ's resurrection.
- Psalm 110 celebrates the enthronement of the king who is a priest according to the line of Melchizedek, which the Christ tradition sees fulfilled in Christ, the priest-king.

Psalms of God's City (46, 48)

- Psalm 46 celebrates God as the refuge and strength of his people. The city of Jerusalem is an outward manifestation of God's protection. Those who trust in God find refuge in God's holy city.
- Psalm 48 celebrates Mount Zion as the city of the great king, the city of God. The city is a visible manifestation of God's protection for the people.
- For Christians, the City of God is the heavenly Jerusalem.

Conclusion

- The confession of God's kingship is also a confession of Christ's kingship and the kingdom of God.
- The celebration of the city of Jerusalem as God's city points to God's protection for his people and to the heavenly city, the city of God, yet to be revealed.
- The purpose of these psalms is to remind the Christian community that it will only attain the fullness of justice and peace when it submits itself completely to God's rule in Christ.