

Trust in the Name

Psalm 20:1 *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

- May the LORD answer you in **the day** of trouble! May the **name** of the God of Jacob protect you!
- ² May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!
- ³ May he **remember** all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah
- ⁴ May he grant you your heart's desire and **fulfill** all your plans!
- ⁵ May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the **name** of our God set up our banners! May the LORD **fulfill** all your petitions!
- ⁶ Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand.
- ⁷ Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we **trust** in the **name** of the LORD our God.
- ⁸ They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.
- ⁹ O LORD, save the king! May he answer us **when** we call."

Psalm 21:1 *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.*

- O LORD, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults!
- ² You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah
- ³ For you meet him with rich blessings; you set a crown of fine gold upon his head.

- ⁴ He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever.
- ⁵ His glory is great through your salvation; splendor and majesty you bestow on him.
- ⁶ For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence.
- ⁷ For the king trusts in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.
- ⁸ Your hand will find out all your enemies; your right hand will find out those who hate you.
- ⁹ You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The LORD will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will consume them.
- ¹⁰ You will destroy their descendants from the earth, and their offspring from among the children of man.
- ¹¹ Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed.
- ¹² For you will put them to flight; you will aim at their faces with your bows.
- ¹³ Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength! We will sing and praise your power."

Psalm 20-21

What's in a Name?

SAMUEL CLEMENS AND MARK TWAIN.

Cassius Clay and Muhammad Ali.

Henry Deutschendorf and John Denver.

Norma Jean Mortenson and Marilyn Monroe.

Jorge Bergoglio and Pope Francis.

Prince (that was actually his birth name) and, well:



What's in a name? Apparently, a lot of people think that something very important is in a name. That's why so many "important" people change them.

Not all for the same reasons, of course. Mark Twain was a pen name, and sometimes it is good to hide your identity when you are writing. Muhammad Ali became a name that identified Cassius Clay as a Muslim. It was a change of religion. If my last name was Deutschendorf I might change it too, especially to the place where I belong: Denver. A friend of mine now passed used to go to the bus stop with Norma Jean every morning on the way to school. She would agree that Marilyn Monroe just "worked" better in her industry. Francis harkens back to St. Francis of Assisi and no modern pope is known by his real name. And Prince? Well, he took an unpronounceable symbol as his name for a time in protest of the recording label that he felt was stealing all his money.

When you read name changes, sometimes it is not immediately evident why they chose the new name.

Sometimes, they are just running from an old name and don't care about the meaning. Maybe it's the sound or only the sound or it has some kind of personal history to them. Other times, you can tell immediately why the name was changed. What better way to tell the whole world that you are a Muslim than to take the name of the founder as your own? Why not take the name Denver if you are going to move there? As for Prince, well, who can say?

So what's in a name? Consider how often it is that [in the Bible a person's name defines them](#). Nabal means "fool," and was the quintessential fool if ever there was one. Malachi means "messenger," and he is the last prophet to deliver messages of the coming Christ in the OT era. Jacob means "deceiver," and he sure did that a lot. Almost every name in the Bible has some significance to that person's character. And God changes people's names often to reveal a new character. Jacob becomes Israel. Abram becomes Abraham. Sarai becomes Sarah. All for reasons that mean the person will become identified as much for the new name as they were for the old one.

Thus, theologians have long pondered this very important question of what are names, what do they do? It

gets at the heart of why people change their names. Beginning a long discussion of the divine Name, Jarl Fossum writes:

The very young child does not remember when or under which circumstances he first heard the name of things and persons whose names he knows; he believes that he came to know them by looking at them, and that the name came into being with the object. The name therefore expresses the object; it actually is a quality of the object, situated within it as it were. ‘Where is the name of the sun?’ ‘Inside the sun,’ a child of seven said. In regard to personal beings, ‘the name is an indispensable part of the personality.’¹

In this regard, the Reformers understood that the name points to the *whatness* or essence of a thing.² So for example, we could talk about the name as the immaterial image, an invisible counter to the physical image. Something looks

¹ Citing “*onoma*,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 243; Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), 84.

² Including Calvin, Zwingli, Vermigli, Bullinger, Musculus, Zanchi, Gomarus, and Hyperius. See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy; Volume 3: The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 246-70.

like a “dog,” because it is a dog. You look like a “human” because you are a human. Your body is the physical representation of your nature. Likewise, your name is the immaterial representation of your personal being. It expresses what the particular person is. That is why names are so very important in a biblical worldview.³

So the Reformers said that the name of God is fundamental to the understanding of the divine essence or nature. It is the ground for all discussion of the essence and attributes of the Trinity. It is “**the chief way of knowing God**” (Bullinger). It is a central issue in all right religion. Keep this discussion of the name in mind as we move now to our psalms.

Our Psalms in Context

Reading Psalm 20, it can be tempting to think that this song is all about us. This is especially true in a culture where

³ In a fascinating discussion, Origen talks against Celsus who, like many today, believed it didn't matter what you called God (Jupiter, Zen, Adonai, Ammoun). Origen said, no it matters very much because names identify the what-ness of a being, and the name is not something we give to God (*thesei* or created by humans) but that he gives to himself (*phesei* or given by the divine), but something that And even if a name is translated (for example Baal and Zeus both mean “lord”), the translation does not carry over (this is what I find the most interesting about his discussion). See **Origen**, *Contra Cels.* V.45.

God is viewed more like **Genie** and prayer is viewed more like rubbing his **bottle**. How tempting it is to take something like **Ps 20:4** and preach a whole sermon on it: “**May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans!**” **Yes, God has a wonderful plan for your life, see it says so right here!**” But this verse has a context, and if we wrench it out of context, we do harm to both it and ourselves. I mean, what if we tell people this but God doesn’t answer it? We can absolutely destroy faith in God while simultaneously teaching them some very untrue things about him. Besides, we actually miss what is actually so amazing about it, which always happens when we focus on ourselves instead of God.

The context comes in the midst of **Book 1 of the Psalter** which are almost all psalms of David. Hence it opens again, “**To the Choirmaster**” (**For the End**). **A Psalm of David.**” Psalm 21 begins the same way. These two psalms are also part of a smaller unit of psalms that were placed together for a reason. They come in the middle of a host of lament psalms that exist on either side. They jar us out of lamentation and into the heart of the throne room of God, always a good thing to do when life is sad.

Psalm 15 entrance liturgy
Psalm 16 psalm of trust
Psalm 17 prayer for help
Psalm 18 royal psalm
Psalm 19 Torah psalm
Psalms 20–21 royal psalms
Psalm 22 prayer for help
Psalm 23 psalm of trust
Psalm 24 entrance liturgy

Let's think about this unit for a moment. As we recall, these **ten psalms** climax in **Psalm 19** with God's revelation to the world being the centerpiece of a masterful unit of songs. On either side of Psalm 19 there are royal psalms (**Ps 18, 20-21**). We are in these latter Royal Psalms today. These act in the psalter almost like the two cherubim on top of the ark of the covenant. The king's job is to guard the Revelation of God (*torah*) from any who would seek to obscure or destroy it. In turn, the king does this by praying for help (**Ps 27, 22**). He can't do it alone. God must be with him. Therefore, he must trust in the Lord (**Ps 16, 23**). He must personally have faith and believe in God. Therefore, he will worship (**Ps 15, 24**). This is the only proper response, and ironically, it is the beginning of the ability to guard

God's word. So the whole unit teaches you the very basics of what it means to be a Christian.

Psalm 20 is meant to be read together with Psalm 21, though it can certainly be read by itself as well. There are several points of connection between them. They are both Royal Psalms. They are both about the King (20:9; 21:1, 7) who is called the "anointed" (*messiah*; 20:6). They both deal with "salvation" (*yeshuah*; 20:5; 21:1, 5) of a man who "trusts" in God [*shem* and *Yahweh*] (20:7; 21:8). Psalm 20 asks for God to give the hearts desire (20:4), and Psalm 21 has it answered (21:2)! This right here provides the vital context for the Psalm and we will get to it shortly.

But, and this is important to this vital context, there are crucial connections even with Psalm 22. For example, Psalm 20 clearly has as its main point the "name" (*shem*) three times: "May the name of the God (Elohim) of Jacob protect you" (1), "In the name of our God (Elohim) [may we] set up our banners" (5), "We trust in the name of the LORD our God (Elohim)" (7). In fact, vs. 5 is the conceptual heart of Psalm 20, hence the opening of the sermon. Psalm 21 does not talk about the "name" *per se*, though it does use the covenant name *Yahweh* many times. But Psalm 22 returns

to “the name” theme in vs. 22, “I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation (*qahal/ekklesia*) I will praise you.”

This becomes super important when we realize that there is this amazing change in 22 that is directly related to 20 and 21. In 20 the prayer is that the LORD will answer. In 21, the king has been answered. But in 22 it suddenly changes, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me? Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer” (22:1-2). Yet, it too is a Psalm of David! Read together, this is quite jarring. David, I thought you had just been answered. Now, in the first five verses of 22, after just telling us you have been answered, there is no help and no answer?⁴ This seems to be a deliberate placement. You are meant to ask this. Yet, at the end of that Psalm, an answer comes quite unexpectedly. In fact, it is one of the high points of the gospel in the entire Old Testament. And the singer never gives up his trust, continues to proclaim the name, and not only himself, but we also are saved because of it.

⁴ Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, “An Intertextual Reading of Psalms 22, 23, and 24,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition & Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint & Patrick D. Miller (Boston: Brill, 2005): 143 [139-52].

The point here is to reinforce what we have seen many times in our study of the Psalms together already. Reading the songs together is actually part of the broader context of the Psalter, and in this case it is actually tremendously helpful for seeing what God inspired these songs to mean in their fullest expression of application. How so? Let's turn to the songs.

Psalm 20: A King's Prayer for His People

Psalm 20 begins with five petitions of prayer, First, “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you” (Ps 20:1). We are going to spend the most time on this petition. It is important to remember that this is poetry and therefore there is parallelism going on. It looks like this:

Yahweh (LORD)	...	answer	...	Day of trouble
name of the God of Jacob	...	protect you	...	(protect you)

The song is obviously thinking about bad times, but it doesn't say what they are. It is general. When you are in

trouble, when you need protecting. Though most of us can't understand what it was like to have your literal life hunted like a dog as David did, most of us have experienced attacks on either a spiritual, health, or lesser physical level with people who are "out to get us."

The amazing thing is that in the verse, "the name" parallels "Yahweh," almost like it is a separate thing from Yahweh, even though Yahweh is itself a name. To put it another way, it is almost like "the name" becomes a name! Or maybe it becomes even more than that.

The word **Yahweh** refers to **God's everlasting nature: I AM WHO I AM**. He is eternal, unchanging, the covenant God of his people. But what of this name thing? Notice that it is singular, not plural. It is not *names*, of which God has many. It is "the name." Looking at how the rest of Bible talks about this is very helpful, because this becomes the main theme of the psalm. It is much more fascinating than just a concept conveyed by a word(s).

When you understand that the nature of a thing is grasped in its name, then you can see how knowing a name mediates a direct relationship with the nature, and how the

name actually becomes an expression of their character.⁵ **To make that concrete** for you, this is why I shouldn't have been surprised when my oldest girl, whose name means "Truth," without fail in watching *Little House on the Prairie* as a little kid was obsessed with it. Her question every show (sometimes repeatedly) was, "Are they lying?" To my amazement and joy, she continues to this day to want to know truth about everything. That is her name after all, and it has become *who* she is.

In the OT, "the name" becomes personified. It becomes quite literally an independent subject of divine action. Thus, "The name of God is coming from afar: burning in his anger, his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is like a devouring flame" (Isa 30:27). "The name of Yahweh is a strong tower" (Pro 18:10). The name of Yahweh made heaven and earth (Ps 124:8), or as Clement says, "**Your name, which is the primal source of all creation**" (1Cl 59:3).

There are five verbs commonly used in connection to the name. The name "**exists**" (1Kg 8:16). "... **that my name might be there.**" This associates the name with Yahweh: I

⁵ The following discussion is from Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents & Early Evidence* (Boston: Brill, 1998), 70-77.

AM. The name is “put” (Dt 12:5). God puts his name in a place. God “builds” a place for his name. Particularly, the tabernacle. It becomes a “house for my name” (1Kgs 5:5). Curiously, God is said to be in heaven, but the name can be on earth in the tabernacle. The name “dwells” (Dt 12:11). The word is actually “tabernacles.” And the tabernacle-temple is actually “called” by “the name” (1Kgs 8:43).

It isn't just the OT. The NT actually thinks very seriously and specifically about all this. Consider John's prologue. “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God ... [and now] the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (John 1:10-14). The order here is important. First, he creates. Then he comes into that world that he created, i.e. to Adam and everyone after him. But they didn't recognize him. Then he came to the Jews, i.e. to Abraham and all of his descendants. Some of them believed in “the name.” But now, he he has tabernacle in human flesh. This is John's argument about Jesus being there in the OT, and he

deliberately uses many ideas that are associated not only with the logos, but with the name.

Hence, later in this Gospel John identifies the name as Jesus. “Whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18). “Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me” (John 17:11). “Father, glorify your name” (12:28). What I’m suggesting right up front in this psalm, and this is hardly unique to me, is that it is not talking about names of God here, but literally it is talking about the Son of God. The Son is the Name, and he is the way you know God, as he told Philip, “If you have seen me you have seen the Father” (John 14:9). This is what a name does. As the Name of God, he reveals God’s nature perfectly. Hence, I would capitalize “Name” here (and will from here on out). God is not changing his name (he has many of them). No, we are changing the way we think of “the name.”

This is why our psalm says, “May the Name of the God of Jacob protect you.” Scholars puzzle over why this language of “the God of Jacob” here. The answer is simple, though many have missed it. When Jacob wrestled with

him, he wanted to know his “name.” “Please tell me your name?” he asked (Gen 32:29). “Why is it that you ask me name,” came the response from “the man.” Jacob got no answer, so he named the place Peniel, because he saw “God” “face to face.” He saw God’s presence (*panim*). The presence was the name.

But we can know more about this person he wrestled with. An almost identical passage has Samson’s father asking the very same question. But this time the man is identified as “the Angel of the LORD” (Jdg 13:17-18). “What is your name?” “The Angel of the LORD said to him, ‘Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful.’” But Jacob identified his God, that is the God who protected and delivered him, as the very same Angel of the LORD. He says,

“The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys”
(Gen 48:15-16)

What does this Angel have to do with the name? Look at it: The Angel of *Yahweh*. Thus, God warned the people,

“Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my Name is in him” (Ex 23:20-21). This Angel, and this angel alone, bears the divine name. He is the Angel of Yahweh. But he actually *is* God’s Name. He is a separate person from the Father. He is the Father’s Name on earth. The Father is always in heaven. But the Name comes down to earth. And his Name shall be called “Wonderful,” Isaiah said. Beloved, David knew his Bible well. And now he is calling upon Christ to protect in the day of trouble.

We can be much quicker now in the other four petitions of the prayer. The **second** is, “May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion” (Ps 20:2). Remember how the Name dwells in the tabernacle? He also dwells in Jerusalem. It is the place the LORD was pleased to make his name dwell (Psalm 102:21; cf. Dt 12:5, 11, etc.). So this is a natural thing for David to pray.

Third, “May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burn sacrifices! Selah” (3). We have not seen a *selah* for many psalms now. Therefore, we are to **pause**

right here. It seems obvious that we are to consider Jerusalem and the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered. Those sacrifices can be of any kind, and burnt offerings could be for guilt, sin, new grain, freewill, and other things. The point is, he is calling out the one who is worshiping the God who is being called upon for protection. In asking him to “remember” the offerings, it is for God to have them be acceptable in his sight.

Fourth, “May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans!” (Ps 20:4). We come to verse we started thinking about earlier. It might seem like a timeless proverb, but it is directed towards someone who is offering sacrifices to Yahweh. And it is sandwiched between that idea and the one that follows.

“May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions” (5). The tribes of Israel each had their own banner that represented them. Judah was a lion. Dan was a serpent. And so on. When they marched around the

tabernacle, they set up their banners and each tribe rallied to it (See Numbers 2).⁶



The Banners or Standards of Israel (see fig. 1 handout)

⁶ For a full discussion in the context of a sermon see my sermon on Genesis 49:1-28, “A Boot to the Head.”

But there is One Banner above them all. After a battle with the fierce Amalekites, where Moses spread out his hands in the form of a man dying on a cross, it says, “Moses built an altar and called the name of it, ‘The LORD is My Banner’” (Ex 17:15).⁷ Therefore, the banner is a military symbol and God is the one leading the charge, protecting his people from their enemies. And God does this especially in the person of Christ, who is our Banner.

As said earlier, this first part of this verse is actually the poetic center of the song (see below). Thus, shouting for joy over salvation and doing so in the Name of God with banners held high is David’s main idea that he wants to convey. The Name begins the poem, and the Name now becomes its main focus. How appropriate that Christ is our Banner and that we have come to worship him today for the salvation he has won.

This (true worship of the living Christ) provides context for granting your heart’s desire. Beloved, how are you to understand this verse? How shall you interpret it? How shall I preach it? Notice the word “fulfill” (*mala*) on either side:

⁷ The rare word used here is *nes*. Its next appearance is in the serpent on the pole which John says represents Jesus on the cross (cf. Num 21:8-9; John 3:14-15). It appears in Isaiah 11:10 where the Branch of Jesse becomes a banner for the peoples (Isa 11:10).

“... fulfill all your plans” (4) and “... fulfill all your petitions” (5b). These are the two phrases that could easily be taken out of context to turn God into the Genie who grants whatever three wishes you happen to have. But now we see that those plans and petitions culminate and are founded in true worship of the living Christ. How many things that people desire in the flesh would fit this description? Winning the lottery? Having a new Lamborghini? Probably not, but certainly there are many good things that we can desire that could have it. And that is what you need to keep in mind as you pray about your desires. How do those desires line up with the worship of Christ?

We are not finished thinking about this. Moving out, notice how on one side it is sacrifices offered to the LORD (3) and on the other it is salvation and trust. “Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the Name of the LORD our God” (6-7). The key word here in the Hebrew is *zakar*. It is translated as “remember” in vs. 3 (ESV) and as “trust” in vs. 7. But it is the same word. These

ideas further define not only what you should desire with your heart, but what it means to think properly about the Name of God and to pray for your desires.

Whatever plans you have and whatever petitions you make are to be captured between the the humility of a sinner in need of atonement, the worship of one desiring the Name, and the recognition that God is the one who wins your victories. Winning victories is summarized in the idea of “salvation” (5) or being “saved” (6). Salvation from what? From enemies. But those physical enemies of Israel are object lessons of 1. real physical enemies we have today, or 2. greater enemies we face spiritually. To say that the king only cares about physical prosperity of the people is to completely short circuit not only his heart for the LORD, but the Lord’s work on our behalf! Thinking properly about these things is what keeps our thoughts in line with God’s thoughts, our prayers in line with his revealed will, our worship in line with his answering our petitions. Far too often we do not speak about praying for things like this at all.

It is curious to me that the word rendered “remember” is later translated as “trust.” Psalm 20:7 becomes one of the

most famous verses in the OT with this word. Some things to think about in this verse are 1. Trusting is a synonym of remembering in this instance. **To trust in the Name means you remember all of the things the Name has done in history.** This includes especially his saving might through the Right Hand (which I also take to refer to Christ). 2. It **defines what we trust in:** chariots, horses, our might, our power, our strength, our riches, our keeping up with the Jones'? So often, what we pray for actually reveals what we trust in.

As we continue reading, one more thing arises. **“They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright” (Ps 20:10).** This is part of what it means to remember and trust, especially in light of the enemies that so often fill the psalms. And it serves as part of the background for our petitions. Indeed, salvation from the enemies is the great request of this song.

As we conclude the song, there is an idea that begins it and ends it. It is the idea of time. **May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble (vs. 1).** Now it ends, **“O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call” (9).**

The Day

Remember (*zakar*)

Fulfill

Shout for Joy and set up banners in the Name

Fulfill

Trust (*zakar*)

When we call

Thus, trusting in the Name of the LORD means believing that God will answer you as you are calling out to him. The prayer is for an immediate answer, in the day and when you call.

So how should we conclude our look at psalm 20? **Athanasius** sums up Psalm 20 by saying, “**When you see others in affliction, comfort them in the words of Psalm 20.**” This is a very curious way of summarizing a psalm that until now I’m sure most of you have been thinking of as applying to yourself (which is not wrong). Why would he do this?

The answer to this is our **transition** into Psalm 21. Let’s ask the question, who is the object of the prayers in this psalm and who is offering them up? Clearly, it is a song of David, and it seems that David—the king—is offering up

prayers for “you” (the pronoun is singular in the first four petitions). The “you” is thus any one of God’s people who are in line with God’s vision, plans, and purposes for them, who bow and worship his Name. This singular “you” then becomes the whole congregation “we” in the last petition (vs. 5), so that as the individual requests are granted, the whole church will shout for joy, like the heavenly host singing for joy over a lost lamb who repents, over the salvation of one.

The “we” becomes “I” for just a moment in this song. “I know that the LORD saves his anointed” (6). This is the trust of the king himself in his God whom he believes has the power to answer his prayers for his people. And this becomes the foundation of moving back to the we, as he places himself along side of his brothers, singing of trust in the Name. Basically then, I look at this psalm as a prayer of David, and through him of Jesus (the King and Anointed), on your behalf, so that as you come to trust in the Name you offer up your petitions and prayers in the right context and with the right attitude, and then when they are answered the church may rejoice and worship together and offer corporate prayers to the living Christ.

Psalm 21:

Now we now come to Psalm 21. We notice (after the introduction) that it immediately opens with the theme the previous psalm concluded with: “O LORD, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults!” (Ps 21:1; cf. Ps 20:6). The focus is now on the king himself. The first is a Royal Psalm of prayer for you; this will be a Royal Psalm of prayer for *himself*. The purpose of it is to give him strength, as the verse puts salvation and strength in parallel.

“You have given him his heart’s desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah” (2). The second and last *selah* of our psalms today, we are to pause and reflect on how we have just seen the king pray that our heart’s desire be met, and now we see that the king’s heart’s desire has been answered. God has not withheld the request of his lips. No wonder he has confidence to pray for his people.

How has God answered him? “For you meet him with rich blessings; you set a crown of fine gold upon his head” (3). This was, ironically, not because David asked for it as you remember, but because God chose him to be king. But

in the choosing, God blessed David not only with the kingship, but with abundance, and at the end of his days with peace from his enemies.

“He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever” (4). This verse sees a very mysterious and glorious change begin to be subtly introduced. Whereas Psalm 20 was more about you trusting in Christ, Psalm 21 is about David, and therefore ultimately about Christ. For who is it that has “days forever and ever?” David? Well, yes in that he is a believer and will be resurrected one day. But ultimately only the Son of God can say this. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, he is the Son of God forever.⁸ “Father, glorify your Name ... I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again” (John 12:28). Jesus was praying this very prayer in John’s Gospel. To be glorified is to have eternal life (John 17:2). In these ways the NT is itself reflecting upon things like Psalm 21:4.

Notice the next word of the Psalm. “His glory is great through your salvation; his splendor and majesty you bestow on him” (Ps 21:5). Think of David here, but also

⁸ I’m thinking here of Hebrews 7:3 and Melchizedek, who I take to be the preincarnate Son of God from that text.

think of the Lord Jesus. His resurrection was his “salvation,” not like you and I experience it, where we are saved by faith in Christ through grace. But his was salvation in that he earned life through his obedience. And when he was raised, he was made majestic and splendor and glory such that he frightened people just by looking at him.

“For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence” (6). We saw earlier how the presence became Jacob’s way of identifying the name, as he saw God face to face. But the Son himself enjoys eternal life, not only after, but eternally prior in the presence of the Father and Spirit. It is joy that never ends. Glory, majesty, blessing, gladness. And anyone who trusts in the Name as the previous song has said, experiences this receiving of their heart’s desire as this psalm sings, for this really what David wanted more than anything else. And it is what Jesus wanted, wants, wants eternally for himself and for you his bride.

Again we see the theme of “trust.” “The king trusts in the LORD, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved” (Ps 21:7). This is as true of Jesus as it

was of David. The one stands for the other. Jesus trusted the Father implicitly.

“Your hand will find out all your enemies; your right hand will found out those who hate you” (8). There are so many fascinating words in this song that, like “the name,” are actually used through the Bible to describe the Son. “Glory” (5) is one. “Presence” (6) is another. “Right hand” (8) is yet another. The Right Hand of God is the one who carries out his will, particularly in battle. Throughout the OT, this was the Angel. And so David is invoking Christ, even as the prayer itself is ultimately the very song of our Savior. He defeats his enemies. He destroys those who hate the LORD. It is the Day of Judgment, and we have seen it before in the Psalms.

What is it like? “You will make them as a blazing over when you appear” (9). Malachi uses similar language to refer to the coming of the day of the LORD. “Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand ... for he is like a refiner’s fire” (Mal 3:2). And who is he in Malachi? The Angel of the Covenant (vs. 1). “You will destroy their descendants from the earth, and their offspring from among the children of man. Though they plan evil against you,

though they devise mischief, they will not succeed. For you will put them to flight, you will aim at their faces with your bows” (Ps 21:10-12).

Oh, beloved. Do you hear the words of judgment that are coming upon those who hate the Son? You have been called to trust him today. Now you are hearing of **his impending judgment** upon you if you do not. Not because he hates you, but because your sin has separated you from the love of God the Father and therefore from his love. He is coming to judge the wicked and the dead. And no one will stand at the day of his coming. Every knee will bow. Do not do so because he makes you. Do it because he is showing his love to you and calling you to himself this moment by his Spirit.

I want to just mention here again the relationship to **Psalm 22** again as I’m asking you to consider your relationship to him. For in Psalm 22, the Son who is praying here, who has had his very heart’s desires answered by his Father, and who is coming to judge, this Son condescends to become a man in one of the great prophecies of the coming Messiah in the entire Bible.

When he came here, **he became as one of us**. He took on our nature. He did all the works the Father sent him to do. But he was forsaken by his Father. His Father did not listen to him for those moments of his death. He turned his back to him. Why would he do this? It is because he was dying for your sin. He was taking the judgment of Psalm 21 upon himself. He laid aside the continuous eternal prerogatives that come with beings God, so that as a man he would atone for what you have done.

Therefore, the words here of judgment of Psalm 21 and of having your hearts desires answer, they both find their existential meaning in Christ. The harshness of judgment is tempered by the harshness of him not being heard. This was so that you could not say that this God is a tyrant who cares not for men, but only loves to judge. Rather, he experienced the very thing that is promised to the wicked, so that some who are his enemies might have their hearts desires answered.

And so look not upon the coming judgment of Jesus as something that he has no personal, human ability to understand. Do not think of it as a judgment of an uninvolved, emotionally detached or deranged deity

capriciously deciding to punish because that is what he loves to do. Think of it as judgment that comes because people refuse to see the unspeakable grace he has shown them in paying the debt that they deserve, when he himself deserved nothing but blessings of God.

Then, as we come to Psalm 22 next time, you will be able to appreciate all the more the incredible climax that leads him to sing the praises of the name of the LORD to his own brothers in the congregation. And it will allow you to sing the last words of Psalm 21 with him:

*Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength! We will sing and praise
your power*

Psalm 21:13

Power in frailty, humanity, suffering, and death.

Power in glorification, resurrection, exaltation, and conquering.

Praise to the Name of God in the congregation.