

benediction, then, is justification and adoption of children, through Christ. And, as all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed in him, so, on the other hand, "all nations shall magnify him;" will praise and glorify him.

17. "Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who alone doth wonderful things." Such is the praise in which all nations will magnify him, for they will acknowledge and proclaim that the wonders Christ did in justifying the wicked, rescuing them from the power of darkness, and transferring them to his own kingdom could have been done but by him alone.

18. "And blessed be the name of his majesty forever: and the whole earth shall be filled with his majesty. So be it. So be it." The Prophet ultimately wishes, that the name of the Divine Majesty may be blessed to all eternity by all, not only in heaven, where he is constantly blessed by the angels, but also on earth, so that all the earth may be filled with the glory of the Lord; and that all men may acknowledge and praise the Lord; and he concludes with great affection, by repeating: so be it. So be it.

19. "The praises of David the son of Jesse are ended."

END OF PSALM 71

You are Psalms

Some people think you never get discouraged, but the fact is, when you do, you know where to run. Your prayers are open and honest because you realize that God already knows your heart, He's just waiting to hear you spill it. And when you do, what starts out as heavy ends up becoming a song of praise. You may struggle... and often you do... but each time, you grow in your understanding of God's faithfulness. You're just a song waiting to happen.

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PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 71

**A prophecy of the coming of Christ, and of His kingdom:
prefigured by Solomon and his happy reign.**

1. Give to the king thy judgment, O god: and to the king's son thy justice: to judge thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment.
2. Let the mountains receive peace for the people: and the hills justice.
3. He shall judge the poor of the people, and he shall save the children of the poor: and he shall humble the oppressor.
4. And he shall continue with the sun, and before the moon, throughout all generations.
5. He shall come down like rain upon the fleece: and as showers falling gently upon the earth.
6. In his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away.
7. And he shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.
8. Before him the Ethiopians shall fall down: and his enemies shall lick the ground.
9. The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts:
10. And all kings of the earth shall adore him: all nations shall serve him.
11. For he shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that had no helper.
12. He shall spare the poor and needy: and he shall save the souls of the poor.

Continued >

(continued from preceding page)

13. **He shall spare the poor and needy: and he shall save the souls of the poor.**
14. **And he shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquity: and their name shall be honorable in his sight.**
15. **And there shall be a firmament on the earth, on the tops of mountains; above Libanus shall the fruit thereof be exalted: and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth.**
16. **Let his name be blessed forevermore: his name continueth before the sun. And in him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed: all nations shall magnify him.**
17. **Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who alone doth wonderful things.**
18. **And blessed be the name of his majesty forever; and the whole earth shall be filled with his majesty. So be it. So be it.**
19. **The praises of David the son of Jesse are ended.**

The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.

PSALM NUMBER: 71

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "Give to the king thy judgment, O God: and to the king's son thy justice: to judge thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment." A kind prayer of David's, imploring the divine assistance on his son Solomon to judge would justice. The holy man does not ask for riches or power for his son, as the children of this world are wont to ask: but he asks to give him the grace of properly discharging his duties. He knew that kings were created for the people, not the people for kings; and, therefore, that he alone could be called a good king who ruled the people with justice. Solomon himself, no doubt, instructed by his father, asked the very same thing of God, as we read in 3 Kings 3. He, therefore, says, "give to the king thy judgment." Give my son Solomon, just anointed king, "thy judgment;" judgment like your own, right, wise, just; or rather the grace of judgment, of judging agreeable to your wish, according to your laws; and repeating the same, he adds, "and to the king's son thy justice." Give it to him, that he may "judge thy people with justice;" "and thy poor;" that is, thy people, "with judgment." A mere repetition of the first sentence. He designates God's people as God's poor; for all men, however rich they may appear to be, are poor in God's sight. They need his assistance in everything, and whatever they have, they have from God, not as a gift, but as a loan; and, therefore God can demand it back, and take it away from them without offering them any injury; and though the heathens do not understand these things, God's people should understand it, and profit by it. This seems to me to be the literal sense of this passage, still I will not say

the poor is honorable in the sight of God; and by their "name" we are to understand men created to God's image. For, though man became very wretched and despicable through sin, still, human nature and man's name is not vile before God, nor does he despise his own image. And, in truth, the Incarnation of the Son of God is a manifest proof how precious is human nature in his sight, a consideration that should move all mankind to love him, when they see themselves so dealt with, beyond their merits far and away.

14. "And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Arabia; for him they shall always adore, they shall bless him all the day." Having alluded to Christ's death in the preceding verse, which was the redemption and a propitiation for our sins, he now thinks proper to allude to his Resurrection, and his life eternal; and, therefore, he says, and "he shall live;" that is, after he shall have redeemed them by his death, he shall live again. "And to him shall be given of the gold of Arabia;" the shall be worshiped with most costly presents; "for him they shall always adore;" those that shall have been redeemed by him will adore the true God according to his own rite, doctrine, and institution, to the end of the world. "They shall bless him all the day;" constantly praise and glorify him.

15. "And there shall be a firmament on the earth, on the tops of mountains; above Libanus shall the fruit thereof be exalted: in they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth." He now describes the fruit of the apostle's preaching after Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. The word "firmament," however, requires some notice previous to an explanation of the text. It means such a supply of corn, oil, and other necessaries as may supply a family; but here it is to be understood in a spiritual sense, and means an abundance of spiritual graces, as may be inferred from the words, "and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth," where the metaphor contained in the preceding words is explained. The meaning of the passage, then, obscure enough as it is, seems to be: "there shall be a firmament on the earth;" an abundance of spiritual food, the word of God; "on the tops of the mountains;" in places naturally barren; for it is in the valleys, and not on the tops of mountains, that corn usually abounds. "The fruit thereof shall be exalted;" the fruit of such corn, when sown, shall increase and multiply "above Libanus." The fruit of this seed so committed to the earth will rise higher than the cedars of Libanus, the tallest in the world; "and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth," and such fruit will not consist in mere ears of corn, but in the crowd of believers; for, out of the city of God, Jerusalem, of which Isaias 2, says, "from Sion will go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;" and the believers will flourish, and be multiplied in such numbers as to resemble the growth of the grass on the land. And that such was the case Saint Luke tells us, Acts 6, where he says, "and the word of God increased, and the number of believers was greatly multiplied."

16. "Let his name be blessed for evermore: his name continueth before the sun. And in him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed: all nations shall magnify him." The Prophet concludes the Psalm with prayer and praise of the future Messias. "Let his name be blessed forever." Let Christ's name be blessed by all, everywhere and at all times. "His name continueth before the sun;" will continue as long as the sun exists. His persecutors may endeavor to extinguish that name, but they never will succeed. "And in him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;" words taken from Genesis 28. "And in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed;" and explained by the apostle, in Galatians 3, "he saith not, 'and to his seeds' as of many, but as of one, 'and to thy seed,' who is Christ;" all nations, then, will be blessed by Christ, who is God; that is to say, nobody will be blessed but through Christ, and in him will be blessed as many as shall have been regenerated, and persevered in him. To them will be said on the judgment day, "come, you blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." That

hardships, but even their very life to Christ their master.

10. "And all kings of the earth shall adore him: all nations shall serve him." All this, to a certain extent, has been accomplished as regards Christ, and will, unquestionably, to the letter, be ultimately accomplished. It is not unusual in the Scriptures to speak in such general terms, though there may be many exceptions. Thus, we read in Genesis, "that all flesh had corrupted its way;" and yet, in the very same place, we find Noe called "a just and perfect man;" so we read in Matthew, that "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him;" still we know that Simeon the just man, and Anna the prophetess, and many other just people, so far from being troubled, were just as glad as the wise man who came in search of the Redeemer. In a similar manner, then, it is said, that all the kings of the earth will adore Christ, and all nations will serve him; because a great many princes and nations will be converted to the service and worship of Christ. If we refer the passage to the day of judgment, it is true to the letter, for then every knee will be bent to Christ. Finally, if we refer it to the actual power that Christ has over all princes and all nations, so that, with or without their knowledge, with or without their consent, he may deal as he pleases with them, treat them as he likes, and compel them to do his bidding, the prophecy will be always fulfilled in him; "for all power is given to him in heaven and on earth," Matthew 28. And Apoc. 1, "he is the prince of the kings of the earth;" an Apoc. 19, "and he hath on his garment and on his thigh written King of kings, and Lord of lords."

11. "For he shall deliver the poor from the mighty, and the needy that hath no helper." Kings and people will serve Christ for this reason, because, through him they will be delivered from the power of the devil, from the cruel tyranny of the prince of darkness, and will be introduced to his own most peaceful kingdom. The poor man named here signifies the human race, despoiled of all the blessings enjoyed in a state of innocence, by the devil. The mighty is the devil, turned from a crafty into a mighty one by our iniquity; for, if man had not yielded to temptation he never could have been subdued by the devil. By his sin, though, he became the captive of the devil, and the devil acquired a mastery over him. Now, man begins to acquire his liberty when he begins to see his own poverty, and thereby to humble himself, and to trust in the Lord, and not in himself. He will, therefore, deliver the poor man from the powerful devil; "and the needy that hath no helper;" whom neither man nor angel, nor any other creature could have helped.

12. "He shall spare the poor and needy: and he shall save the souls of the poor." He now tells us in what manner Christ will deliver men from the devil, by forgiveness of their sins, and restoration of grace; for, when the sins are forgiven, the chain which held them captives to the devil is broken. Our King, therefore, "shall spare the poor and the needy;" will forgive the sins of those who acknowledge them, avowing their inability of discharging their debts, and he will, along with it, bestow grace and justice on them, and so "save the souls of the poor."

13. "He shall redeem their souls from usury and iniquity: and their name shall be honorable in his sight." Man, through original sin, became a debtor to the extent of everlasting death. Such was the original debt, and so long as it remains unpaid, the devil, a remorseless creditor, exacts usury thereon, daily urging us to the commission of fresh sin, that being the punishment of the first sin; and, so long as the punishment of those sins is deferred, the interest is added to the principal. Thus, the longer the sinner lives, the more the debt increases. Christ, then, that kindest of Masters, not only remits, through his grace, the original sin, which may be called the original debt, but he even frees from the usury; that is, from the actual sins added thereto, and from the iniquity of so severe an exactor. This was foretold by Isaias when he said, "for the yoke of their burden, and the rod of their shoulders, and the scepter of their oppressor thou hast overcome." "And their name shall be honorable in his sight." The word "and" is to be read as "because;" for the meaning is: God has such love for man, because the very name of

that it may not be taken to apply to Solomon's authority as a king and a judge, so that the meaning would be: grant, O my God, to me, and to my son, the king elect, such judiciary power that he may justly judge your people; or if one choose to apply the passage to Christ, the meaning will be: O God the Father, grant to Christ your Son, the King, the grace of judgment; for according to John 5, "the Father does not judge anyone, but has given all judgment to the Son." Between judgment and justice there is a difference, justice being a virtue, and judgment is an act of justice; here, however, they are synonymous, are taken for the same thing, for the power or the grace of judging rightly, or the actual judgment. St. Augustine remarks that in this Psalm, and throughout the Psalms, the same idea is repeated in different words, and thus not only here, but in various other parts of the Scriptures, justice and judgment are used to convey the same idea. Titus, in 2 Kings 8, "and David did justice and judgment to all his people;" and in Psalm 118, "I have done judgment and justice, give me not up to them that slander me."

2. "Let the mountains receive peace for the people: and the hills justice."

3. "He shall judge the poor of the people: and he shall save the children of the poor: and he shall humble the oppressor." He continues the pray for his son, King Solomon, begging that during his reign peace and justice may settle on the land, and on all its inhabitants; and as the country was a hilly, mountainous country, he says, "let the mountains receive peace;" that is, may peace descend on all its hills and mountains, and may all its inhabitants receive it. "He shall judge the poor of the people;" where peace and justice reign, few are found to injure their neighbor by word or deed; and, therefore, the king of such a place will have no great trouble in protecting the poor from the few oppressors, who must, of necessity, be found in every community.

4. "And he shall continue with the sun, and before the moon, throughout all generations." He now begins to pass from Solomon to Christ, this verse being quite inapplicable to Solomon, but not so to Christ, a descendent of Solomon, whose kingdom is to flourish for all eternity. And Christ, of the family of Solomon, "shall continue;" shall govern the world "with the sun;" so long as the sun shall shine, "and before the moon," which means in presence of the moon; "throughout all generations;" to the end of time. We are to observe here, that when the Prophet says, that Christ's kingdom would continue as long as the sun would shine, he by no means implies that there would be an end to it when the sun would cease to shine, for Christ's kingdom will endure forever; though the sun will one day cease to shine. The expression, "throughout all generations," is to be understood in a similar sense; when all generations shall have passed away, Christ's kingdom will not also pass away, no more than Christ meant to tell his apostles he would desert them at a given time, when he said, "behold, I am with you all days, to the end of the world;" which meant, that as he would be with them here, through his grace and his help, so they would be with him in the world to come, in happiness and glory.

5. "He shall come down like rain upon the fleece: and as showers falling gently upon the earth." As he said that Solomon's reign was to continue to the end of the world; looking upon Solomon as the type of Christ, he now describes the coming of Christ, the propagation of the peculiarities of his kingdom; and he describes it coming, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, under the figure of rain, a fleece, and earth; such as the signs Gideon got formerly by the liberation of the people; for, when he asked a sign from God, it happened that the fleece of wool, placed on the floor for the purpose, was completely saturated by dew from heaven, the whole floor around remaining perfectly dry; while, on the following night, the fleece remained quite dry, while the whole floor around was completely wet; in like manner, Christ first descended on or came to the Jews, represented by the fleece or wool; while the whole world beside was perfectly arid and dry; for Christ himself said, "I am not sent the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then he came to the Gentiles, through the preaching of the apostles, and then the earth all round was saturated with the rain of the truths of salvation; for the same Lord said, "go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and the fleece alone remained dry, in the dryness of incredulity, even to the present day. Such is the interpretation of St. Augustine, to which St. Bernard adds, that Christ came "like rain upon the fleece;" when he came silently into his mother's womb, as rain would upon the purest wool, by virtue of his heavenly power, and that he came "as showers falling gently upon the earth," when, through the miracles of the apostles, and through their preaching, he made the earth resound as it would under a torrent of rain.

6. "In his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away." The first fruit of Christ's coming will be true justification, and the most perfect peace with God and with all men. "In his days shall justice spring up," which means, when the Savior shall have come all sin will be destroyed, and instead of it, "everlasting justice will be brought." For, though truly just persons appeared from the beginning of the world, such as Abel, Henoah, Noe, Abraham, and others; they will all, however, justified through the merits of Christ; for the angel truly said to Joseph, "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins;" and that was the joy the angel announced to the shepherds when he said, "for today is born a Savior unto you." "Justice," then, will "spring up" in the hearts of men, through faith in Jesus Christ; and thence will follow "an abundance of peace," because real justice consists in love, and the offspring of love is peace, that peace which the world cannot give, but true, permanent peace; and in such abundance as to fill the heavens and the earth; and as a sign of it, universal peace existed under Augustus Caesar at the time of the birth of Christ. That justice and peace will continue in the world "till the moon be taken away," that is to say, the justice of faith and peace with the conscience, but not without persecution from abroad, will continue as long as the moon, that is, to the end of the world.

7. "And he shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The propagation of Christ's kingdom, which is the Church spread all over the world, is now described; taking it as to length, from the Indian Ocean to the Sea of Gibraltar; and as to breadth, from the river Tanais in the north, to the extreme boundaries of

Ethiopia on the south. Others say the river means the Euphrates, which is not probable, because Christ's kingdom neither begins nor ends at it, but lies at both sides of it. A better interpretation is that which makes the river to be the Jordan, where Christ was called "my beloved Son," way he was baptized, way he commenced his preaching, and where his kingdom had its rise; and thus, according to St. Augustine, the words, "from the river unto the ends of the earth," are only an explanation of "from sea to sea;" as if he said: he will rule over the whole world, from sea to sea; for the earth is everywhere surrounded by the ocean; and that will come to pass, because the preaching will commence at the River Jordan, and will be spread throughout all countries, even to the ocean that surrounds it on every side.

8. "Before him the Ethiopians shall fall down: and his enemies shall lick the ground." The Ethiopians are specially named, either because Ethiopia lies in the ends of the earth, and to which he alluded in the preceding verse, all because the Ethiopian eunuch was the first convert among the Gentiles, or because the Ethiopians, looking at the darkness of their color, and the savageness of their manners, seemed to be the farthest removed from the worship of the true God. The next sentence, "and his enemies shall lick the ground," is a mere explanation of the preceding, for they who fall down become as prostrate as if they were licking the ground; and it conveys to us the total subjection and prostration of Christ's enemies; that is, of the sinners and infidels, converted through faith to do penance. And they who will not willingly fall down before Christ, and piously, and faithfully adored him, will be compelled on the last day, to fall down before him, and "to lie under his footstool."

9. "The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts." Having said that Christ would rule from sea to sea; that is, throughout the whole earth surrounded by the sea, lest it may be supposed that the islands were excluded, he adds, "the kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents." The meaning of the "kings of Tharsis" has been explained in Psalms 47, and the most probable opinion is, that the islands alluded to are those in the eastern sea, which are very large and very numerous, and from which a great quantity of gold and spices were, every third year brought to Solomon, as we read in 3 Kings 10; and the meaning is: "the kings of Tharsis;" that is, the islands in the east; "and the islands;" that is, the people of the islands also, shall offer precious gifts to Christ their King. To these kings and people he then unites "the kings of the Arabians and of Saba," these being the countries from whence was had the greatest quantity of gold, silver, precious stones, and all sorts of spices; for, as we read in the passage just cited, 3 Kings 10, "the queen of Saba brought Solomon an immense quantity of gold, silver, precious stones, and spices." We cannot avoid considering here what presents we should offer to Christ, and what presents are most agreeable to him; and they are the gold of love, the incense of prayer, and the myrrh of patience, or rather, faith united with prayer, hope with a longing for the things above, charity with the fruit of good works, which charity causes those who are inflamed by it to offer without difficulty, not only the wealth of this world, and all manner of