

Psalm 45

1. *My heart is astir with gracious words; as I make my song for the king,
my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*
2. *You are the fairest of men; full of grace are your lips,
for God has blest you for ever.*
3. *Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one;
gird on your majesty and glory.*
4. *Ride on and prosper in the cause of truth
and for the sake of humility and righteousness.*
5. *Your right hand will teach you terrible things;
your arrows will be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies,
so that peoples fall beneath you.*
6. *Your throne is God's throne, for ever;
the sceptre of your kingdom is the sceptre of righteousness.*
7. *You love righteousness and hate iniquity;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness above your fellows.*
8. *All your garments are fragrant with myrrh, aloes and cassia;
from ivory palaces the music of strings makes you glad.*
9. *Kings' daughters are among your honourable women;
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.*
10. *Hear, O daughter; consider and incline your ear;
forget your own people and your father's house.*
11. *So shall the king have pleasure in your beauty;
he is your lord, so do him honour.*
12. *The people of Tyre shall bring you gifts;
the richest of the people shall seek your favour.*
13. *The king's daughter is all glorious within;
her clothing is embroidered cloth of gold.*
14. *She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needlework;
after her the virgins that are her companions.*
15. *With joy and gladness shall they be brought
and enter into the palace of the king.*

16. *'Instead of your fathers you shall have sons,
whom you shall make princes over all the land.'*

17. *'I will make your name to be remembered through all generations;
therefore shall the peoples praise you for ever and ever.'*

Refrain

Your name shall be remembered through all generations;
the peoples shall praise you for ever and ever.

Psalm 45 is one of the royal psalms (like Psalm 72). This one was probably composed for the wedding of Ahab to Jezebel. It was so popular that it was used for later royal weddings and probably also for the enthronement of the king.

In vv. 1-9, the psalmist addresses the royal bridegroom and stresses the two main functions of the king, to lead in war and to maintain justice (vv. 3-7). This reminds us of Psalm 72, 'Then shall he judge your people righteously and your poor with justice,' and, 'May his foes kneel before him and his enemies lick the dust.'

The monarch becomes a son of God at his coronation, and his adoption is symbolised by the oil of anointing. This, and the blessing of God, were the sources of his majesty. The climax of his royal splendour can be seen in the new queen, standing in the place of honour beside him.

The second part of the psalm is addressed to the bride. She must forget her foreign origin and devote herself to the king. By doing this, she will receive the homage of her subjects.

Then she is reminded of her entry into the palace (vv.14 and 15, 'She shall be brought to the king in raiment of needlework; after her the virgins that are her companions. With joy and gladness shall they be brought and enter into the palace of the king.').

She is assured that her fame will rest with her children, who will occupy the throne for ever (vv.16 and 17, 'Instead of your fathers you shall have sons, whom you shall make princes over all the land. I will make your name to be remembered through all generations, therefore shall the peoples praise you for ever and ever.').

There are some similarities between all of this and what takes place today in our own country. The Coronation service makes it clear that the power of our monarch is delegated by God for the service of the nation. This is also expressed in the Prayer for the Queen in the Book of Common Prayer (see below).

The Crown Jewels all have a significance. The sword represents the monarch as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army and Defender of the Faith. The Sword of Mercy and Justice makes us think of Psalms 45 and 72, both of which see the king as being the human agent, through whom God's justice reaches the nation.

The Ampulla and Spoon are used to anoint the sovereign as Supreme Governor of the Church of England. As we see in Psalm 45, the monarch's adoption as a son of God was symbolised by anointing.

The sceptre is derived from a shepherd's staff, and is a token of temporal power as Head of State. The Israelite kings, especially King David, were seen as shepherds of their people.

The Sovereign's Sceptre with a dove, or rod of equity and mercy, is an emblem of the monarch's spiritual role. So, as with the Israelite kings, the monarch is seen as being the vehicle, whereby God's justice is revealed.

The ceremonial described in Psalm 45 reminds us of the pageantry, which we see on royal occasions, for example, the Coronation or the State Opening of Parliament, as well as royal weddings.

Prayer

The Collect for the Queen (Book of Common Prayer)

Almighty God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and power infinite;
Have mercy upon the whole Church; and so rule the heart of thy chosen Servant Elizabeth our Queen and Governor, that she (knowing whose minster she is) may above all things seek thy honour and glory: and that we, and all her subjects (duly considering whose authority she hath) may faithfully serve, honour and humbly obey her, in thee, and for thee, according to thy blessed Word and ordinance; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

Amen.