

The Kingdom Hope in the Psalms

Psalm 11 The Throne of God

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*1 In the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee as a bird to your mountain"?*
*2 For Look! The wicked bend their bow,
They make ready their arrow on the string,
That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart.*
*3 If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?*

As in the previous Psalm, the Psalmist echoes the sadness of God's people as they endure the oppression of the wicked and wait patiently for Him. Both openly and secretly, the wicked shoot their arrows at the upright. Verse 3 is rendered as follows in the LXX.

For they have pulled down what you framed, but what has the righteous done?

In other words, the wicked are continually tearing down the work of God. The things that He has framed are the objects of their scorn and the targets of their destruction. It is significant to note that the upright themselves are not the real target of the wrath and violence of the wicked; the real target is God and His works. The upright are innocent as implied in the question, "*but what has the righteous done?*"

*4 The LORD is in His holy temple,
The LORD's throne is in heaven...*

In the face of oppression, the upright places all his hope and confidence in God's faithfulness and in the fact that He sits on His throne in heaven. This is a point that requires explanation.

The Scriptures teach that the Lord has both a throne in heaven, and also a throne on earth. The throne mentioned in verse 4 is obviously His throne in heaven. The throne in heaven is the throne of God the Father. The throne on earth is the throne of God the Son **upon which He has not yet taken His seat**. In the letter to the church at Laodicea, the Lord said,

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." Revelation 3:21

This verse could not be more clear in identifying the two thrones. The one upon which Jesus now sits is not His own; it is the throne of His Father. When will Jesus sit on His own throne? Again, the Scriptures could not be more clear.

When *the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory."* Matthew 25:31

According to this verse, if the Lord Jesus has not yet returned to the earth in power and glory (and He hasn't), then He is not yet sitting on His throne. If we keep this extraordinarily simple truth in mind, we will avoid a world of confusion and error. In addition, there is often disappointment and grief when believers ask, "If God is on His throne, then why is there so much suffering and injustice?" The answer to this question is as simple as understanding these two thrones.

We will have many opportunities to say more about the throne of Christ upon which He will sit when He comes, but let us return to Psalm 11 and observe what it tells us about the throne of God the Father. Verses 1-3 describe the activity of the wicked who persecute the righteous. In the present age God allows the wicked to act wickedly, even to the point of persecuting His people, sometimes to the death, so much so that the Psalmist asks, "*For they have pulled down what you framed, but what has the righteous done?*" This thought is answered by a description of God upon His throne. What exactly is God doing on His throne in heaven, since He obviously does not prevent the ungodly from persecuting His people? Let's continue reading.

*4 The LORD is in His holy temple,
The LORD's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men.
5 The LORD tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

That God is on His throne in heaven is an assurance that He has not lost control of the affairs of men, even though He allows the wicked to pull down what He has framed. The wicked are permitted to do wickedly against God's people, within the bounds He has set. But to what end? The present age is a time of **testing**. Both the righteous, and the wicked and violent, are being tested under the watchful eyes of God on His throne. The Lord is observing both, the one with loving compassion, but the other with impending wrath. There is another variation between the Hebrew text and the LXX worth noting. Verse 5 is rendered as follows in the LXX.

The Lord tries the righteous and the ungodly: and he that loves unrighteousness hates his own soul.

Those who reject the mercy of God to follow ungodliness and violence, do so to their own eternal destruction. Whether the Masoretic text or the LXX is correct, the bottom line is still that the wicked is walking in the shadow of God's impending wrath and judgment.

*6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind
Shall be the portion of their cup.*

This is a description of the wrath of God poured out at the second coming of Christ on the ungodly who reject the Gospel of Christ and persecute God's people. There is much injustice in the world and the Lord is allowing this to continue within the limits that He has set. But one day, there will be righteous judgment. Compare Verses 4 – 6 with 2 Thessalonians 1 where the thoughts are identical.

*3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God **for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure**, 5 which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, **that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer**; 6 since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to give you who are troubled rest with us **when** the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.*

Notice the word "when" in Verse 7. We may not like it, but the implication is clearly that persecutions will continue until the Day of Christ's return. Only then will we be given "rest." Until then, we must continue in patience and faith. It is remarkable that our patient endurance in the face of suffering constitutes evidence that God's judgment against the wicked is just. Furthermore, our patience in suffering qualifies us as worthy recipients of the Kingdom of God.

We must also not shrink from the idea of God's impending wrath against the ungodly. The judgment and wrath of God is not a popular subject in today's church, but it is a teaching found on virtually every page of the Bible and must be taught. If we shrink from this doctrine, we will have lost the only proper motivation for showing genuine compassion on the wicked by warning him to repent of his wickedness. It is only as we see him as the object of God's wrath that we are fully equipped to declare as did Jesus, "*unless you repent, you will perish.*"

*7 The LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
The upright will see His face.*

The Day of Judgment will come when the Lord Jesus returns. This is the Day of Retribution that we have read of already in Psalms 1, 2, 3, 7, 9 and 10. Until then, we should not think it strange that we must endure suffering, persecution and injustice. God is watching all that happens in this age. When He returns, He will bring in everlasting righteousness and justice at His appearing and His Kingdom. **In that day, the upright will literally see His face!** This is our blessed hope. This is our longing. Compare this with 1 Peter 4...

*12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;
13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*