

Psalms 20:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

Analysis

Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call. This concluding verse returns to direct petition, bracketing the psalm with prayer (verses 1 and 9). 'Save' (hoshi'ah, הוֹשִׁיעָה) is an imperative plea for deliverance, using the same Hebrew root found in 'Jesus' (Yeshua)—salvation is the psalm's central theme. The verse creates a triangular relationship: the people call to God, God hears the king, and the king hears the people. This intercessory dynamic reflects the mediatorial role of Israel's king in the covenant community.

The phrase 'let the king hear us' has occasioned interpretive debate. Some understand 'the king' as the human monarch, making this a prayer that the king will respond favorably to the people. Others see 'the King' as YHWH Himself—a reading supported by the Septuagint and many Jewish commentators. Given the psalm's theological emphasis on God as savior and the parallel with verse 1 ('The LORD hear thee'), this latter interpretation is compelling: the people pray for God the King to hear them.

This dual kingship—divine and human—points forward to Christ, who is both God and man, both King of kings and the people's representative. Jesus perfectly fulfills the mediatorial role that Davidic kings imperfectly filled. He hears our prayers as God and represents us before the Father as the Son of Man. The salvation we seek is found ultimately not in political deliverance but in Christ's finished work on the cross, where He cried 'It is finished' (John 19:30), securing eternal salvation.

Historical Context

The king's role as mediator between God and people was central to ancient Israel's theology and politics. Unlike surrounding nations where kings claimed divinity, Israel's kings were subordinate to YHWH, serving as human representatives of divine rule. The king was to embody covenant faithfulness, leading the nation in worship and obedience. When the king was righteous, the nation prospered; when wicked, disaster followed (2 Chronicles 7:14).

This psalm's liturgical structure suggests antiphonal performance. The congregation would have sung verses 1-8, with priests or Levitical choirs responding. The final verse might have been sung by the king himself as he departed for battle, or by the entire assembly in unified petition. This communal dimension reinforced social cohesion—Israel understood themselves as a covenant people whose security depended on collective faithfulness.

After the exile, when Israel had no king, Psalm 20 took on new meaning. Post-exilic Jews read royal psalms messianically, anticipating a future king who would restore David's throne. In synagogue worship, these psalms became prayers for the coming Messiah. The early church recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of these royal psalms, seeing in His life, death, and resurrection the ultimate answer to prayers like Psalm 20. The psalm thus moves from historical liturgy to prophetic anticipation to christological fulfillment.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Jesus as the mediatorial King deepen your confidence in prayer?

2. In what ways do you need God's salvation today—spiritually, emotionally, or circumstantially?
3. How can you participate in the 'triangular relationship' of God, spiritual leaders, and the community of faith?
4. What role does communal, corporate prayer play in your spiritual life versus individual petition?
5. How does the certainty of Christ's finished work of salvation change the urgency of your prayers?

Interlinear Text

יְהוָה	הוֹשֵׁה יִשְׂרָאֵל	הָמֶלֶךְ	יִשְׁמָעַנִּי	בְּיוֹם	קִרְאָנוּ:
LORD	Save	let the king	hear	us when	we call
H3068	H3467	H4428	H6030	H3117	H7121

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 5:2 (Kingdom): Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

Psalms 44:4 (Kingdom): Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

Psalms 74:12 (Salvation): For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

Matthew 21:15 (Parallel theme): And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,