

# Psalm 72:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

## Analysis

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**The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.** This verse forms part of a royal psalm celebrating the ideal Davidic king, ultimately finding fulfillment in Christ's eternal kingdom. The imagery depicts distant nations bringing tribute to Israel's king, signifying universal recognition of his divinely-granted authority and the extension of God's kingdom to earth's remotest regions.

"The kings of Tarshish" represents the distant west. Tarshish (possibly ancient Tartessos in Spain, or a Phoenician colony in the western Mediterranean) symbolized the far reaches of the known world. Ships of Tarshish were large merchant vessels capable of long voyages (1 Kings 10:22). Jonah attempted to flee to Tarshish to escape God's presence (Jonah 1:3), suggesting extreme distance. That Tarshish's kings would bring tribute indicates the Davidic king's influence extending to civilization's western boundaries.

"And of the isles" (ve'iyim, וְיִם) refers to distant coastlands and islands, particularly in the Mediterranean. Isaiah repeatedly uses this term for far-flung Gentile territories (Isaiah 41:1, 42:4, 49:1). The combination of Tarshish and the isles encompasses the entire western maritime world—regions considered remote, exotic, barely known to ancient Israel.

"The kings of Sheba and Seba" represent the distant south and east. Sheba (likely southwest Arabia, modern Yemen) was famous for gold, spices, and precious

stones. The Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-13) demonstrated this kingdom's wealth and the attraction of Solomon's God-given wisdom. Seba (probably in northeast Africa, possibly Ethiopia/Nubia) also signified distant, wealthy kingdoms. Job 1:15 and Isaiah 43:3 mention Seba as representing precious, distant lands.

"Shall bring presents...shall offer gifts" (yashivu minchah...yaqrivu eshkar, ישבו מינחה...יאקריבו אֶשׁקָר) uses language of both tribute and worship. Minchah can mean tribute payment or offering; eshkar specifically means gift or present. The voluntary nature of these offerings suggests recognition of the king's legitimate authority rather than grudging submission to military conquest. These distant kings willingly acknowledge Israel's God-appointed monarch.

Messianically, Matthew 2:1-12 records the Magi from the east bringing gifts to the infant Jesus—gold, frankincense, myrrh. Though from the east rather than all compass points, these Gentile dignitaries fulfilling Psalm 72:10-11 signaled Christ's universal kingship. Revelation 21:24-26 describes the final fulfillment: "And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." Christ's reign ultimately extends to every nation, tribe, and tongue.

## Historical Context

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Psalm 72, traditionally attributed to Solomon (though possibly written for him by David), envisions the ideal Davidic monarchy—a reign characterized by justice, righteousness, prosperity, and international recognition. While Solomon's reign partially fulfilled these ideals (receiving the Queen of Sheba's tribute, trading with distant nations, achieving unprecedented peace and prosperity), the psalm's full scope extends beyond any historical king to the Messianic King.

Ancient Near Eastern kingship ideology expected kings to extend their influence through military conquest, economic dominance, or diplomatic alliances. Tributary relationships established hierarchy among kingdoms—lesser kings acknowledged greater kings through gifts and homage. However, Israel's Davidic covenant promised something unique: God Himself would establish this dynasty forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16), and through it all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:3,

fulfilled through David's descendant).

The specific locations mentioned are significant. Tarshish represented the far west, beyond Phoenicia and the Mediterranean world. Sheba represented the Arabian south, wealthy from incense and spice trade. Seba represented Africa's interior, source of gold and exotic goods. Together, they encompass the known world's extremities—north, south, east, west—all bringing tribute to Israel's king.

Solomon's era saw unprecedented international engagement. First Kings 10:23-25 records: "So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold." This partial fulfillment foreshadowed ultimate messianic fulfillment.

Early church fathers saw the Magi's visit as fulfilling Psalm 72:10-11, demonstrating that Gentiles would recognize the true King. Medieval Christian art frequently depicted the Magi as representing different ethnicities and continents, visually expressing Christ's universal kingship. Missionary expansion sought to bring the gospel to every nation, fulfilling the vision of all peoples acknowledging Christ's reign.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does the geographical extent of tribute (west to east, Mediterranean to Arabia and Africa) demonstrate the universal scope of the Messiah's kingdom?
2. What is the significance of these kings bringing gifts voluntarily rather than being forced to pay tribute through military conquest?

3. How did the Magi's visit to the infant Jesus fulfill and yet anticipate the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy?
4. In what ways does Christ's kingdom differ from Solomon's—and how does it surpass even the ideal Davidic monarchy envisioned in Psalm 72?
5. What does it mean for contemporary believers that kings of distant nations will ultimately acknowledge Christ's authority and bring their glory into His kingdom?

## Interlinear Text

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|                |             |                  |            |             |               |          |          |       |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|------------|-------------|---------------|----------|----------|-------|
| שׁב א          | מֶלֶךְ י    | יְשִׁיבָה        | מִנְתָּחָה | וְאֵימָה    | תְּרַשְׁׁשָׁה | וְשָׁ    | מֶלֶךְ י | שׁב א |
| The kings      | of Tarshish | and of the isles | presents   | shall bring | The kings     | of Sheba |          |       |
| H4428          | H8659       | H339             | H4503      | H7725       | H4428         | H7614    |          |       |
| וְאֶשְׁפָךְ רַ | יְקִרְבָּה  | וְאֶשְׁפָךְ אָ   |            |             |               |          |          |       |
| and Seba       | gifts       | shall offer      |            |             |               |          |          |       |
| H5434          | H814        | H7126            |            |             |               |          |          |       |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 49:7** (Kingdom): Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

**Isaiah 60:6** (Parallel theme): The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

**Psalms 68:29** (Kingdom): Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

**1 Kings 10:1** (Parallel theme): And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.

**Isaiah 60:9** (Parallel theme): Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto

the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

**Psalms 45:12** (Parallel theme): And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

**Genesis 10:7** (Parallel theme): And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.

**2 Chronicles 9:21** (Kingdom): For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

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