

A Crown for David
Psalm 132
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A Song of Ascents.

¹ Remember, O LORD, in David's favor,
all the hardships he endured,
² how he swore to the LORD
and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
³ "I will not enter my house
or get into my bed,
⁴ I will not give sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,
⁵ until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

⁶ Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.
⁷ "Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool!"

⁸ Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
⁹ Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,
and let your saints shout for joy.
¹⁰ For the sake of your servant David,
do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

¹¹ The LORD swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:
"One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.
¹² If your sons keep my covenant
and my testimonies that I shall teach them,
their sons also forever
shall sit on your throne."

- ¹³ For the LORD has chosen Zion;
 he has desired it for his dwelling place:
- ¹⁴ “This is my resting place forever;
 here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
- ¹⁵ I will abundantly bless her provisions;
 I will satisfy her poor with bread.
- ¹⁶ Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
 and her saints will shout for joy.
- ¹⁷ There I will make a horn to sprout for David;
 I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
- ¹⁸ His enemies I will clothe with shame,
 but on him his crown will shine.”

Introduction: The Longest & Most Puzzling Song of Ascent

In the summer of 1997, I went to China and taught English. I stood out in China and frequently drew the attention of strangers. Among the Songs of Ascents, Psalm 132 stands out for its length and complexity. Most of the Songs of Ascents are short, averaging 5-6 verses. The three psalms surrounding Psalm 132, the one before it and the two after it, are just three verses each. And here is Psalm 132, at 18 verses, twice as long as the next longest Song of Ascents, Psalm 122, which has 9 verses.

Not only is Psalm 132 by far the longest of these Songs of Ascents, but it is also the most complex. It contains allusions to the Davidic covenant, the ark of the covenant, the Temple, the priesthood, and the kingship of Israel. It has a relatively obscure name for God – the Mighty One of Jacob – and a couple of relatively obscure geographical references – Ephrathah and the fields of Jaar.

So, what is going on in this unusual psalm? Well, I do think its length and its position as the first of the closing triad of psalms mark it as significant and worthy of close examination. And once we do the work to understand the psalm, it yields wonderful Gospel fruit, as it points us to Christ and the beautiful joy of the Gospel. It is indeed a Song of Ascents – a song that moves upward, much as Psalm 130 does – going from David’s hardships to a shining crown, and from David’s desperate vow to the LORD to the LORD’s wonderful vow to David.

I. Temple & Ark (vv. 1-8)

The first part of Psalm 132 recalls the time when David found the ark and wanted to bring it into Jerusalem and give it a permanent home in a Temple:

- ¹ Remember, O LORD, in David's favor,
 all the hardships he endured,
- ² how he swore to the LORD
 and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob,
- ³ “I will not enter my house
 or get into my bed,

*⁴ I will not give sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids,
⁵ until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”*

*⁶ Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.*

*⁷ “Let us go to his dwelling place;
let us worship at his footstool!”*

*⁸ Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.*

Based on these opening verses, and especially verse 8, it seems this psalm was originally written and sung at the dedication of the Temple, when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the completed Temple. These first 8 verses look back at David’s strong desire to build a Temple for the LORD and the discovery of the Ark of the Covenant at Kiriath Jearim.

In verses 1-5, we see the heart of David and part of the reason why he was called a man after God’s own heart, because he had a strong and passionate desire to build a Temple for the LORD, a permanent dwelling place for God in the midst of His people. Then, we have a recalling of the re-discovery of the ark of the covenant in verses 6-7.

The Ark of the Covenant was the physical representation of the presence of God in the midst of His people. It was built during the Exodus and originally contained the Ten Commandments, written on tablets of stone by the finger of God, a jar of manna which was miraculously kept by God, and the staff of Aaron, which had turned into a snake and then later had miraculously budded. Thus, in the Ark of the Covenant were miraculous demonstrations of the righteousness of God, the provision of God, and the power of God. So, the Ark was vitally significant, as it showed the people that the LORD was in their midst and that He was perfectly righteous, almighty in power, and able to provide for all their needs.

When Eli was priest and judge over Israel, his wicked sons took the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines, almost as a magic talisman. They were not honoring the LORD, but they thought the mere presence of the ark itself would guarantee victory. It didn’t. Israel was defeated, the sons of Eli were killed, and the ark was captured by the Philistines. When Eli heard the news of his sons’ death, he immediately asked about the ark, and when he heard that the ark had been captured, he fell off his stool and died instantly, probably suffering a massive heart attack.

When the Philistines had the ark, God toppled their idol of Dagon in his temple, which is where the Philistines had originally placed it. Then, the LORD struck the Philistines with painful tumors. So, the Philistines wanted to get rid of it, and they sent it back into Israel on a cart drawn by cows. The ark ended up in Kiriath Jearim, neglected.

The ark was captured 54 years before David was born, and was missing and out of use for about 100 years before David found it in Kiriath Jearim. But verses 6-7 seem to indicate that David was looking for the ark since he heard stories about it in Bethlehem (Ephrathah), and then when he learned that it was in Kiriath Jearim (the

fields of Jaar), he immediately gathered his men to go and worship the LORD there. We know David later brought the ark into Jerusalem, first improperly and tragically, and then properly and wonderfully.

David purposed to build a Temple to be a permanent house for the LORD. At the center of the Temple would be the ark, which had been kept in the Tabernacle since the Exodus until its capture and disappearance. David was distressed that he lived in a cedar-paneled palace in Jerusalem, while the ark of the LORD was kept in a tent – a very nice and ornate tent, but still a tent – for over 400 years, since the Exodus. In fact, 1 Kings 6:1 tells us it was 480 years from the Exodus until the building of the Temple under Solomon.

David was forbidden by God from building the Temple because he was a man of war, who had shed much blood. Instead, David's son, Solomon, whose name means "peace" would build the Temple. But David worked very hard in the last years of his life to gather all the materials and resources necessary to build the Temple, so Solomon would have all he needed to complete the job.

But God did not just tell David, "No, you can't build a house for Me." God did something far more wonderful! In 2 Samuel 7, we read that God told David, "You want to build a house for me, but you cannot, Instead, I will build a house for you." This is the promise of the Davidic covenant, which is recalled in verses 11-12 of Psalm 132.

So, the first part of Psalm 132 looks back on David as the Ark is entering the Temple.

2. King & Priests (vv. 9-12)

In verse 9, the focus shifts from the ark and its resting place in the Temple to the priests and the Davidic king:

⁹ Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,

and let your saints shout for joy.

¹⁰ For the sake of your servant David,

do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

¹¹ The LORD swore to David a sure oath

from which he will not turn back:

"One of the sons of your body

I will set on your throne.

¹² If your sons keep my covenant

and my testimonies that I shall teach them,

their sons also forever

shall sit on your throne."

"Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your saints shout for joy" – I believe the connection between these two lines in verse 9 is one of cause and effect: If God would clothe His priests with righteousness, so they could minister faithfully before the LORD, then the saints, the holy people of God would then be able to shout for joy.

Verse 10 is powerful and begins to bring out the Messianic and Christ-centered aspects of this psalm: "Anointed One" is Messiah in Hebrew, or Christ in Greek. God made a sure oath to David, one He is committed to keeping, but it's also a conditional oath: God has promised to always have a Son of David on the throne, but the

sons of David must keep the covenant. Sadly, very few of them did, and even those who did often later went astray and ended poorly.

So, the desire is for an anointed one, a Messiah, who would be a faithful Son of David, one who keeps God's covenant and upholds His holy law.

Now, here's where we need to stop and note something very interesting about Psalm 132: It was probably written for the dedication of the Temple of Solomon, but it was added to the Songs of Ascents and placed here in Book 5 of the Book of Psalms after the return from the Babylonian exile. The Songs of Ascents were sung during pilgrimage to the Temple after the exile, during the Second Temple period. In other words, the Temple the pilgrims were ascending to for worship was not the Solomonic Temple, but the one rebuilt after the return from exile.

Even more significant, after the return from exile, the people no longer had the Ark of the Covenant and they no longer had a Davidic king. In fact, they would never again have the Ark or a Son of David as king. The closest they ever came was when Zerubbabel was the governor of Judea under the Persian Empire. He was a son of David, but he was only a governor and not a king. So, year after year, the people of God sang this song on pilgrimage to the Temple, a song celebrating the ark and the Davidic dynasty, and they have no ark and they have no Davidic king.

Until, the words of Psalm 132 and the promises of the Davidic covenant were fulfilled in Jesus, who was born into the house and lineage of David. That's why He was born in Bethlehem, the City of David. That's why the New Testament begins with "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*" (Matthew 1:1) By being the perfectly obedient and righteous Son of David, Jesus fulfilled the Davidic covenant in Himself.

And because of the work of salvation that Jesus the Messiah, Son of God and Son of David did in His death and resurrection, He makes all believers into priests and He clothes all His priests with righteousness, His own perfect righteousness. So, verses 9-10 are perfectly fulfilled: The priests of God are clothed with righteousness, which should make all God's people shout for joy, and the LORD never turns away from the anointed one, who sits enthroned at His right hand making intercession for His people.

3. Righteousness, Salvation & Joy (vv. 13-16)

As Psalm 132 continues, verses 13-18 continue to unpack and develop the wonderful promises of God fulfilled in Christ Jesus:

¹³ *For the LORD has chosen Zion;*

he has desired it for his dwelling place:

¹⁴ *"This is my resting place forever;*

here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

¹⁵ *I will abundantly bless her provisions;*

I will satisfy her poor with bread.

¹⁶ *Her priests I will clothe with salvation,*

and her saints will shout for joy.

¹⁷ *There I will make a horn to sprout for David;*

I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.

*18 His enemies I will clothe with shame,
but on him his crown will shine.”*

In Christ, the Zion where God dwells is the church, where God comes in the person of the Holy Spirit to fill the hearts of all believers and to meet with us when we are gathered together in His name. God is making gathering us together and building us into a new and living Temple, an eternal dwelling place, which reaches its glorious conclusion in Revelation 21-22 in the New Jerusalem and the New Heavens and New Earth.

This is the good news proclaimed in Ephesians 2:19-22:

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

To be reconciled to God through faith in Christ Jesus is to be brought into and be made a part of the dwelling place for God. The church is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, and each of us who belong to Christ is a vital, living stone in that Temple.

As Peter puts it in I Peter 2:4-5:

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

We are the spiritual house and the holy priesthood, so we are Zion and the Temple and the priests. We are also the poor in spirit who are being satisfied with the Bread of Life. Furthermore, God’s promise in verse 15 “*I will abundantly bless her provisions*” is fulfilled in Christ so that Paul can confidently say in Philippians 4:19-20: “*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*”

Verse 16 is almost an exact word-for-word answer to the prayer of verse 9 –

*Her priests I will clothe with salvation,
and her saints will shout for joy.*

But where verse 9 said, “*Let your priests be clothed with righteousness,*” verse 16 answers, “*Her priests I will clothe with salvation.*” To be clothed with righteousness is to be clothed with salvation, because righteousness is what

we need to have in order to be saved, and since we don't have any righteousness of our own, we need God to clothe us, and He does. He clothes us with salvation. The Hebrew word for salvation is "Yesha," the same as Jesus' Hebrew name. In other words, "*Her priests I will clothe with Jesus.*"

I just have one question for you this morning: If you have been clothed with righteousness and salvation because you have been clothed with Jesus, are you shouting for joy? Are you amazed and celebrating the wonderful truth that God has given you His presence, His provision, His powerful protection, His perfect righteousness, and His salvation in the gift of His Son, Jesus? If that doesn't make you shout for joy, I don't know what will!

4. Jesus: David's Horn & the Anointed (vv. 17-18)

The focus moves from the dwelling place of God and the people of God back to the anointed one of God in the closing verses, 17-18:

*17 There I will make a horn to sprout for David;
I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.
18 His enemies I will clothe with shame,
but on him his crown will shine."*

A horn and a lamp. These two objects might not excite us too much, because we don't understand the significance of them. A horn symbolizes power, as in the natural world, the horned animals with the biggest horns rule. So, horns symbolize power, especially power to rule. A lamp provides light, and light symbolized truth and righteousness. So, a powerful ruler will sprout up for David, and He will rule with truth and righteousness. This is another promise fulfilled in Jesus.

The enemies of Jesus, those who oppose His reign, will be clothed with shame, but on Jesus, the crown will shine. Notice the strong and definitive answers God has been giving in this second half of Psalm 132. Psalm 132 is really a prayer, verses 1-10, and then the answer to that prayer, verses 11-18. God's answer is definitive and strong: I will . . . I will. God answers confidently, promising what He will do, and He has since fulfilled every promise definitively in Jesus Christ.

So, the only question that remains is what will you do in response to what God had promised and done? Will you stand as an enemy of Christ, defiant and resistant to His rule? Or will you receive and rest on Him alone for salvation, as he is offered to you in the Gospel? If you are determined to be His enemy, you will be clothed with shame on that glorious day when He appears with His holy angels and is clearly revealed to all the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. But if you will receive and rest on Him alone, He will clothe you in righteousness and salvation, and you may shout for joy now and even more so in eternity, for all He has done for you.