

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>The Psalms</b>		Pastor/Teacher
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### Waiting for David's Heir

Introduction - At the start of the New Testament Gospels, the Jewish people are in a very frustrating situation, like a kind of limbo. Psalm 132 sets that stage for us. The Jews have come back from the Babylonian exile and have rebuilt the Temple, both great steps in the right direction, but there's something huge missing. David's throne is vacant. Of course Herod claimed to be the king of the Jews, but devout Jews didn't see him as legitimate since he wasn't descended from David. They lived in the land of Israel at first under Persian rule, then Macedonian rule, then Roman rule, but still had no Son of David. The Messiah seemed to be taking forever.<sup>1</sup> This psalm calls on God to keep his promises to David and send his anointed one bringing righteousness and prosperity.

1. 132:1-9 - The Temple filled.

- a. 132:1 - This is a Song of Ascents, which means it was sung when going up to Jerusalem for a feast.
  - i. Even today Jews refer to going to Jerusalem as "going up" ("aliyah" in Hebrew) because the Temple is the Lord's special dwelling place.
  - ii. It is not clear who wrote the Psalm. Since it refers to David in the third person, it seems likely to have been written by an anonymous psalmist after David's death for the dedication of the Temple. This was when the Ark was moved in, as verses 8 and 9 describe.
  - iii. Psalm 132's place in the book of Psalms, however, is also significant for how we should interpret it. It is placed among many psalms which were written after the Babylonian exile, to remind Jews living after the exile of God's promises to David.<sup>2</sup>
- b. 132:1-5 - The psalmist calls on God to remember David's devotion and sincere desire to build a glorious temple suitable for the Lord.
  - i. David's desire to build the Lord a house was what led directly to God's promise to build David a "house" (dynasty) in 2 Samuel 7.

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<sup>1</sup> Think of the Christmas carol we often sing: "O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear." Even though they were back in the land of Judea, the Jews still felt that they were in exile in some sense.

<sup>2</sup> Contrast Psalm 132:10, "Do not turn away the face of your anointed one" with Psalm 89:38-39, "But now you have cast off and rejected; you are full of wrath against your anointed. You have renounced the covenant with your servant; you have defiled his crown in the dust." The placement of Psalm 132, and others like it in Books 4-5, after the darkest and most despairing psalms like Psalm 89 in Book 3 of the psalter, provides a glorious counterpoint of hope as the book of psalms comes to a close.

- ii. David did not keep that vow because God released him from it, but still his intense devotion to glorifying the Lord is part of the occasion for God's promise to maintain his kingly line forever.
- c. 132:6-9 - These four verses declare the significance of finding the Ark and bringing it to the Temple.
  - i. Discovering the Ark of the Covenant after Saul had let it be mostly forgotten in obscurity added to David and the people's desire to see it housed in a suitably wondrous temple.<sup>3</sup>
  - ii. Note especially the imagery of referring to the Ark in the Temple as God's "footstool." This subtly implies that even as God has a special relationship with his people in Jerusalem, he nevertheless is not just a local deity but rules over the whole creation.<sup>4</sup>
  - iii. Verses 8-9 depict the worship of God idealized to an almost heavenly ideal - with upright mediators (the priests), the hearts of the people rejoicing, in the appointed place of God's dwelling in fellowship with his people. The Temple was truly a taste of heaven on earth.
  - iv. The significance of the Temple as we see it here explains why the first major project of the Jews coming back from the Babylonian exile was to rebuild the Temple, as the Book of Ezra depicts.
- 2. 132:10-18 - David's Throne vacant.
  - a. Verse 10 calls on the Lord to remember his promise to build David's house. David and his heirs were the divinely anointed kings of Israel.
  - b. Notice, however, that both verses 10 and 11 emphasize *one* of David's sons will sit on the throne. There is a particular one of David's sons to whom this promise especially applies.
    - i. In the original context of God's covenant with David, this "one" was Solomon, who alone out of David's many offspring inherited the throne. In this psalm, placed so near the end of the book of Psalms, the anointed one must bring the Messiah to the singers' minds. The king whom the prophets promised would be even greater than Solomon.
  - c. Verse 12 gives a vital condition for God's blessings on David's line. His heirs must keep the Lord's covenant.<sup>5</sup>
    - i. Their failure to do this was the chief cause of the Exile.<sup>6</sup> The kings of Israel and Judah were mediators, and so when they committed idolatry, they repeatedly led the people at large into idolatry and only a small remnant remained faithful. This began with Solomon and continued all the way until Jehoiakim was carried off to Babylon.

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<sup>3</sup> Recall that under Saul the Ark had even been captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4-6), so David bringing it to a safe location represented so much of what was better about David's rule than Saul's.

<sup>4</sup> His feet, as it were, rest at Jerusalem but his majesty cannot be contained by the Temple. Compare these lines in Psalm 132 with Solomon's prayer of dedication beginning in 1 Kings 8:27.

<sup>5</sup> God said he would severely punish David's sons if they were disobedient back in 2 Samuel 7:14.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel's prayer of confession in Daniel 9, for example, repeatedly treats the sins of Israel's kings as the number one reason God exiled them. See especially 9:6 and 8.

- ii. Nevertheless, even if the vast majority of David's heirs strayed and were punished, God had still promised to preserve David's royal line.<sup>7</sup> The blessing to individual heirs of David was conditional, but the overarching promise to preserve the line was unconditional.
  - d. Therefore the Jews after the exile were still waiting to see David's line triumphant. They were living in the land of Israel and could see that God still dwelled there in the Temple, but they longed to see God's promise fulfilled with prosperity (132:15) and glorious victory (132:17-18). This tension lasted for hundreds of years under the grinding oppression of multiple empires.
3. The Gospels of the New Testament show us the fulfillment of these promises.
- a. Luke 1:69 declares with certainty that God has finally "raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David," echoing the last two verses of Psalm 132.
    - i. A "horn" is a common biblical image that represents great power, the unflinching strength of a warrior, like a ram's horn.<sup>8</sup>
    - ii. At long last, after centuries of waiting, the promised heir of David appeared in his city, Bethlehem.
  - b. Some of the Jews' expectations for the Messiah's coming were subverted, however.
    - i. Jesus was not only a better David than David, but a better temple than the Temple!<sup>9</sup> He was God dwelling among his people in the form of a man, more closely and with fewer barriers than the Temple had.
    - ii. They expected the Messiah to save them from the Roman Empire, but Jesus came to save his people first and foremost from the oppression of sin.<sup>10</sup>
    - iii. Jesus came to fulfill not only the promises to David, but also those to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3) and even Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15), undoing the curse of the Fall itself!
    - iv. Jesus will, ultimately, bring about the promised prosperity and perfect justice when he comes again. It is very important to remember this in our tumultuous political environment where everything feels unstable and up in the air.
    - v. Jesus has dealt a fatal blow to the root problem of sin and death in his first coming and will finish off sin and all its effects in his second coming!

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<sup>7</sup> See 2 Samuel 7:15-16.

<sup>8</sup> Compare with Deuteronomy 33:17, "his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth;"

<sup>9</sup> See John 2:21, where Jesus speaks of his body as a temple.

<sup>10</sup> See Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:77, for example.