

PREFACE

In order to understand the Psalms correctly, we have to keep two things in mind: first, who is talking here? Second, what is he after?

- **First**, David (and those he trained) is talking. He's not just everyman. He is the King of Israel, the one chosen by God to lead his people Israel to the throne of God. Other people didn't have the authority nor the ability to do such a thing. That makes David – and what he says – unique among the people of God. The process that he went through in order to create Israel's worship service is described in detail in 1 Chronicles 22-29; and we are constantly reminded of David's unique authority in regards to proper worship by other Scriptures:

According to the ruling of David his father, he [*Solomon*] appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry before the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions at each gate, for so David the man of God had commanded. (2 Chronicles 8:14)

And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the LORD under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. (2 Chronicles 23:18; see also 29:2,25; 35:4,15)

And Hezekiah the king and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. (2 Chronicles 29:30)

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel. (Ezra 3:10)

And the chiefs of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brothers who stood opposite them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch. (Nehemiah 12:24; see also 12:36,45)

So for the next thousand years Israel kept going back to David's worship instructions for all their service in the Temple. Nobody (except for Moses) had the formative influence on what went on in the Temple that David had. We have to appreciate the fact that David was the *only* person in Israel who was in the position to bring all the elements of God's Kingdom together on earth; if anyone strayed away from David's Plan,

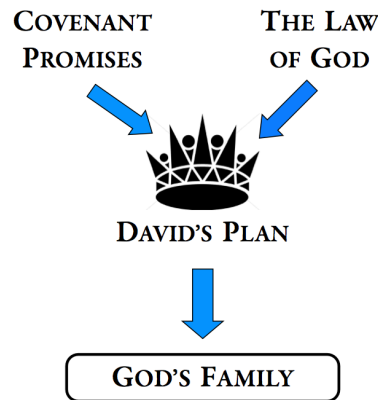
they were committing treason and introducing lawlessness and chaos into what God intended to be a perfect system – and was therefore punished.

- **Second**, David had several things to accomplish. For one thing, he was the King; and that meant he had to enforce, not his own law, but God's Law throughout the nation. And since many of the laws in the Torah had to do with Temple worship, that meant David had to make sure the worship conformed with God's Law in all ways.

We don't have any record of the worship that the Israelites practiced before his time aside from the sacrifices themselves. Evidently there was much more to be done to bring the system up to God's expectations, and that's what David supplied. It was all one system – the Temple worship, the life of the Nation, the building of God's Kingdom. The time was ripe to "fulfill all righteousness." So David's liturgy brought out the fullness of God's blessings, and the life of Israel in God's presence. In this way and no other would God's Law be fulfilled.

Another responsibility that David had was to make sure all the people of God experienced the Covenant blessings first given to their forefather Abraham. They were, after all, a nation; and no single person in a nation has the authority nor the power to distribute the national treasures – except for the King. He alone must act on this, in justice and righteousness. If a person felt that he was not receiving his rightful inheritance in some way, he had to go to the King and make his case. But more than that: David must be proactive in distributing the blessings. We see this in action when, under Solomon's rule, the entire nation was rich and prosperous: "And the king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah." (2 Chronicles 1:15) It was the King's *job* to make sure everyone prospered in peace and righteousness (much as the husband willingly provides for his wife), without waiting for people to ask, or complain in the middle of want. He didn't rule for his own sake.

These two fundamental truths – the Covenant of Abraham and the Law – are the means by which God rules over, and blesses, his people Israel. But there has to be some executor of the estate to make sure they happen, and he has to have a workable Plan to make them happen. Thus David's 5-point Plan.



This was not a simple task! All those who came before him failed. So, how *will* he accomplish these things for Israel in a way that will bring glory to God?

- *Set up Jerusalem as his capital city:* here are all the resources that the Nation will need; here is the throne of the King; here is the access to God's House. Basically this move put the Kingdom of God on the map.
- *Destroy their enemies:* now they will be free of hindrances from, and the temptations of, their pagan neighbors, and they can pursue their life with God and prosper.
- *Make Israel God-centered:* the King and the Nation turns its back on the fallen world of sinners and reprobates and devotes their entire lives to living with a holy God. They become a holy people, totally devoted to his service.
- *Set up a government:* everyone obeys the King without question as he leads them in the way they should go. It's not a democracy – the opinions and feelings of sinners don't count for anything in God's Kingdom. It's a hierarchy in which everyone, including the King, obeys the Law of God, which results in life and holiness.
- *Build the Temple:* here the Father lives with his Son, and the two share the riches of Heaven together.

If these five things don't happen, Israel will fail. But when David put this Plan into action, they got to their feet and started walking with God again, just as their forefathers had before them. Life in general is so confusing, with so many worldly issues, that too many things get in the way of focusing on God and his Kingdom – thus the importance of the King's job.

The concept that only David could do all of this for Israel is captured in the idea of *the key of David*.

And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And I will place on his shoulder *the key of the house of David*. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. (Isaiah 22:21-22)

The words of the holy one, the true one, who has *the key of David*, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. (Revelation 3:7)

Ever since the fall of man, the doors to God's world have been shut, with the result that we are living in a hostile Creation facing failure and death all the way. But here is David with the key to God's world: if we follow him into the Temple, and worship as he does, we will find God, reestablish our connection with him, and experience eternal life. That's how crucial David is to us.

Therefore, in order to get the people's total cooperation in his (God's!) program for Israel, David had to *train* them in how to approach God, and what to center on during their worship. These are the things they all need from their God; this is how to approach their God if they want their prayers answered. The Psalms weren't meant for the desires of an individual, but for the well-being of the entire Nation. They had to pull together in this worship, and follow the lead of their King before the throne of grace.

So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing. And when those who bore the ark of the LORD had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn. (2 Samuel 6:12-15)

What does all this have to do with Christians? Just this: the Son of David is following the same 5-Point Plan in his Church. He is also the heir of Abraham and duty-bound to make sure all the children of God receive their part of the Inheritance. And it's up to him to make all of us righteous, as the Law demands:

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that *the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us*, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)

And to achieve these two goals, Christ must enforce David's Kingdom Plan. What Christ is doing with the Church is not new, because God's pronouncement was that David's throne would continue forever. "He shall build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his Kingdom *forever*." (2 Samuel 7:13) And that means that we Christians must learn David's Plan as he unfolds it in the Psalms, and cooperate with Christ as he implements it in his Church, or we will ourselves be treated as rebels and guilty of treason against the King.

There's something deeper in the Psalms that David is leading us into that we mustn't miss: *he is teaching us how to be the Son of God*. Remember that access into the Temple was limited to the Levites, who represented the firstborn sons of Israel. That in itself was an image of the Firstborn Son coming into the Father's House to share his life. But even access into the Holy of Holies was forbidden to the Levites themselves with one exception – the High Priest, on the Day of Atonement. He went all the way in to the presence of God himself. The legal constraints reflect the

holiness of God and the sinfulness of man: we simply cannot see the presence of God in our present state and live to tell about it. It requires a transformation of our nature.

But that's precisely what David did spiritually. Without entering the physical Temple, he repeatedly went into the presence of God spiritually, by means of the Spirit lifting him up to the Temple in Heaven, and lived with his God. Even the angels didn't get as close to God as David did! And what he experienced there was the mercy and love and compassion of the Father for his Son, and the full inheritance of the Father poured out upon his Son.

And if he is the Son, he will be interacting with God on the divine level. In other words he won't be praying about trivia like so many people do in their "prayer life." In God's House, the issues are about God's Kingdom, and his righteousness, and his glory, and his power. It's about justice and righteousness on earth. It's about getting rid of the enemy – anybody who opposes the Kingdom and his Mission on earth. The point of prayer is not whether we will get what we want; instead it's about the success of the King as he implements his Plan among us. It's time to put our kindergarten issues aside and deal with the "weightier matters" of the Kingdom.

Now if we can master the Psalms on this level – if we use them as instructions from the King to guide our worship, to form our thoughts and feelings about the King himself, to train our hands for the upcoming struggles to implement this Plan – only then can we say that we truly understand the Psalms.

This is the kind of Son that God wants- a Son who does his Father's will.

Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. (John 5:19-20)