

# RESPONDING TO

# GOD

## WEEK 9:

## PSALM 132

In the Old Testament, three groups of people were 'anointed', both with oil and (generally) with the Holy Spirit. The **prophets** mediated **God's word** to the people. The **priests** mediated **God's presence**, with custody of the Ark of the Covenant and administering the sacrificial system. The **king** mediated the **reign and rule of God**. After the reign of David and Solomon, the land split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The prophets warned that rebellion and sin would result in judgement by God. With invasions by the Assyrians and Babylonians, the two kingdoms were obliterated, including the palace and temple. The remaining king in the Davidic line, Zedekiah, went into exile and the people were scattered among the nations. In Ezekiel 10, we read that God's presence left the temple. The symbols of God's word, God's presence and God's rule seemed to be finished.

Psalm 132 is the second **Psalm of the Future World**. It is a Song of Ascents: a song that was sung when the people headed to Jerusalem to worship. It celebrates a time when David restored the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and God promised David that his family line would perpetually sit on the throne in Zion. It is a Psalm that is firstly set – and must firstly be read - within a particular historical context. At the same time, there are hints of a future 'anointed one' (ie 'Christ' / 'Messiah') in David's line, who would restore God's word, presence and reign to Zion.

**PRAY:** Thank God for the gifts to us, including his word and his Spirit. Ask God for to guide and lead us today.

### **READ: Psalm 132**

As we again look at a piece of Hebrew poetry, watch for parallelism, repetition and contrasts. Look for:

- Two different vows/ oaths that were made (v2-5, 11-12)
- Three different terms to describe the temple (v7-8, 13-14)
- Three groups of people who will share in the blessings (v9, 15-16)
- Two names for God (v2, 5)
- Two names for David (v10, 17)
- Four images associated with David's reign (v17-18)
- Two characteristics of the priests (v9, 16)
- Two tangible symbols of the God dwelling with his people (v7-8, 13-14 note: the second one is implied by the location)
- A contrast between David's life circumstances and the life lived under a God-honouring king (v1, 15-16)

One suggested structure of this Psalm is two parts: a prayer (v1-10) and the response to the prayer (v11-18).

David's vow to God (v1-5)

The story of the ark (v6-8)

A prayer for priest and people (v9)

A prayer for David (v10)

God's vow to David (v11-12)

God's response to the story of the ark (v13-15)

A prayer for priest and people (v16)

The response to David's prayer (v17-18)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> deClaisé-Walford, N., Jacobson, R. A., & Tanner, B. L. (2014). The Songs of the Ascents: Psalms. In E. J. Young, R. K. Harrison, & R. L. Hubbard Jr. (Eds.), *The Book of Psalms* (p. 933). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

The Psalm starts with “Remember David ...”. The story behind this Psalm is told in 2 Samuel 5-7. After David was made king, he captured Jerusalem (aka ‘Zion, the city of David’) from the Jebusites. He defeated the Philistines, recaptured the Ark of the Covenant from them and brought it back to Zion. During this procession, he danced before the Lord. He settled in his new palace. Then, one sleepless night, David asked the prophet Nathan about an idea of building a temple for God. Nathan came back the next morning with a message from God, telling David that temple-building was not in his job description. Instead, God promised David that there would always be someone from his line on the throne of Israel. The promise in 2 Sam 7:11b-16, which is referred to in Ps 132:11-12, is referred to as the ‘Davidic Covenant’. It initially referred to his son Solomon, who would build the temple.

- READ 2 Sam 7:11b-16, 1 Chron 28:2-9 and Ps 132:11-12. What were the specifics of the promises given originally to David in 2 Sam 7?
- David’s speech (years later, at Solomon’s enthronement) and the recollection of the Psalmist, both indicate that the covenant had conditions attached. How do these three passages differ?

Through the Synoptic gospels (ie Matt, Mark and Luke), Jesus is referred to as the “son of David” and the Davidic family line of Jesus is spelt out in Matt 1 (especially Matt 1:1,6).

- READ Luke 1:30-33. What did the angel tell Mary? How would Jesus fulfil the Davidic covenant?

READ 1 Sam 16:12-13. An ‘anointed one’ was empowered and authorized by God for leadership.

- In what two ways was David anointed? And in what two ways did God make David aware of his calling?

The “horn”, in Hebrew poetry, was a symbol of anointing, strength (including military power) and God’s favour.

- READ Ps 132:16-18 and Luke 1:67-72. What did Zechariah the priest believe that David’s descendant(s) would achieve, in light of Ps 132?

The words that are translated *Messiah* and *Christ* in the New Testament, literally mean the *anointed one*. In John 1:41, Andrew told his brother “We have found the Messiah (that is, the Christ/ anointed one)”. At Jesus’ trial, the High Priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the son of the blessed one?”; Jesus replied: “I am”. (Mk 14:61-62)

- Why do you think the Jewish religious leaders feared that Jesus was who he claimed to be?

The Ark of the Covenant was a rectangular box, constructed of gold-plated acacia wood. (Ex 31) It contained the stone tablets given to Moses at Mt Sinai and there were laws which specified how it had to be carried by priests. It was to be kept behind a veil in the most holy place in the tabernacle, then later in the temple. It symbolized and reminded the people of the presence of God, the power and holiness of God, his covenant with his people and his gift of the law/ his revealed words. After the temple was destroyed in 586BC, the ark disappeared.

- What do you think motivated King David, to ‘rescue’ the Ark from the Philistines and restore it to Zion? What message would David’s actions have sent to his people, about God and worship?
- From the Philistine’s perspective, the Ark represented Israel’s God, ‘in a box’. King David, though, referred to it as “the footstool of our God.” (1 Chron 28:2, cf Ps 132:7). How do you respond to the idea that God gave his people a tangible symbol of his presence and to store his ‘words’?

The titles given to Jesus include “Immanuel, God with us” (Matt 1:23) and the “Word became flesh and dwelt with us.” (Jn 1:14) Jesus, in the flesh, embodied God’s presence on earth. Jesus, ascended, has everything under his feet. (Eph 1:19-23)

- What can we learn from David’s passion, in wanting God’s glory, God’s word and God’s presence to be the priority in his city? How can we bring God’s presence, power and word into our situations this week?

**RESPOND & PRAY:** Jesus has restored God’s word, God’s presence and God’s reign and rule to us. David danced, radically celebrating the return of God’s presence to his city. Sing for joy and praise him, all you faithful ones!