

22:41-46), we have here confirmation that David knew of a greater descendant and wrote a psalm that spoke of him. Therefore it is reasonable to believe that other psalms may have been written about the Davidic covenant and about David's son(s). David's description of his lord's victories correspond with 2 Samuel 7, where God promises a great name, a place for his people Israel, rest from enemies, and the establishment of an eternal throne.

Psalm 1 certainly applies to all people, but in light of this investigation it is worth re-considering whether this psalm was intended first and foremost for the king. This certainly makes sense in light of the commands of Deuteronomy 17 for the king to copy, carry, and obey the law. Psalm 1 also echoes the command given to the national leader in Joshua 1. Historically the kings who delighted in God's law flourished and those who didn't failed. Jesus took these words to heart and demonstrated that he is worthy to be the king by his knowledge and observance of God's Word.

CONCLUSION

Given God's promises made in the Davidic covenant, David and other prophets anticipated the future rule of a righteous king who would bring peace to the land, blessings to all nations, and prosperity to his loyal followers. Some psalms are subject to misinterpretation when they are not read as a prophetic in light of the Davidic covenant (cf. Luke 24:44; John 5:39).

GOING FURTHER

Read Psalm 22 and consider whether this psalm was originally intended to apply to David or to his messianic heir.

Read Psalm 45 and figure out what it means.

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Read Proverbs 1-9, Ecclesiastes 1, 6, 12, Job 1-2, 38-42. As you do, think about why these books (and wisdom literature in general) are included in the Bible. How does it fit (or seem not to fit) with our study of God's work in the world and plan of redemption?

PSALMS AND THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

We will consider the notion that the book of Psalms is more than a private prayer book for Christians but served a *royal* purpose. Read a variety of psalms of your choosing and think about the authorship, the subject, and their relation to God's promises in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. How would a son of David read/sing/pray these psalms (differently than we would)? Recommended psalms include 1, 2, 8, 16, 19-22, 45, 47-48, 60, 61, 69, 72, 89, 99, 101, 110, 118, 122, 125, 132, 144, 149.

MISSING THE MEANING OF THE PSALMS

A common approach to reading the psalms is to read them personally, as if they were detached from time and written primarily to help us express ourselves in worship. Because the psalms are so easy to apply, and because historical context is often so obscure, we often find the path smooth in making the psalms our "own." But this approach runs the danger of missing the meaning of some of the psalms, resulting in incorrect application.

THE ROLE OF THE KING

Superscriptions name David as the author of 73 psalms, and the New Testament attributes 2 more to him (Pss 2, 95), making him responsible for at least half of the 150 psalms. Since David was anointed at a young age, it is safe to assume that all of these psalms were written either while he was king or while he was awaiting his coronation (while Saul was alive). Thus all of David's psalms can be classified as "royal" at least with regard to authorship.

Some of the psalms should be read as psalms pertaining to the king. Some matters true for the king would be true for the people, but not all such matters. Israel's king was the people's representative to God and he led the nation in righteousness and set an example. In this regard, some of David's psalms were intended to lead the nation in worship, confession, and wisdom. These psalms are most easily utilized by us today without much danger of misapplication. Examples include 5, 6, 11, 13.

Some psalms reflect David's role as leader, providing his instruction and exhortation of the nation. For example, Psalm 34 gives David's testimony of God's deliverance and calls upon the people to fear, trust, and taste God. Psalm 19 is a worship hymn that exalts God's creation and his word with an appropriate response of confession.

Other psalms reflect David's role as the nation's representative. When David cried out for victory in battle, he wasn't asking for some personal reward, but rather for God's blessing upon his chosen nation. Examples of this type of psalm include 9 and 108.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

Still other psalms are focused on the king himself. Their personal "application" is in how the people pray for God to fulfill his plans for the king. These are not psalms that we can appropriate for ourselves, for we are not the anointed Davidic king.

The significance of the Davidic covenant cannot be overstated. In this one promise (2 Sam 7), God revealed just how he would fulfill his plan for the world by giving them a righteous king to bring about worldwide peace and crush the Serpent who led man into sin. This promise changed David's life and affected many of his psalms. When he wrote of his certainty that God would deliver him from danger and set his son on the throne, David was revealing his faith in God's promise. Likewise, when David wrote about a future king who would crush the enemy nations and serve as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, he was not just fantasizing but he was reflecting on what God had already promised.

The point of this study is this: the psalms should be read with an eye open to their possible connection to the Davidic covenant. The value of such an approach is that we will understand these psalms correctly and avoid applying them directly to ourselves.

Furthermore, when we read the New Testament and see Jesus and the apostles quoting these psalms as fulfilled in Jesus, we will not err in claiming that the NT did not respect the context. In fact, the NT writers recognized a context that we have ignored or denied.

HOW IT MATTERS: SOME EXAMPLES

Psalm 20 is not a generic psalm to be applied to all people, but it is a prayer for the king as he is leading the nation in battle and in worship. Since this was written by David but speaks of the king in the second person, it may be best to consider this as a psalm that David wrote for his descendants who would be king.

Psalm 72 is a prayer for the king. Read apart from the Davidic covenant, the promises are often taken as hyperbole (e.g., "he will endure as long as the sun"), but a better interpretation is that this psalm was written in faith that God would fulfill his promises to the house of David. Ultimately this will be fulfilled in Jesus when he rules from sea to sea, all kings bow down to him, all nations are blessed through him, and his name endures forever.

Some interpreters stumble when the NT claims that certain verses in **Psalm 22** were fulfilled at Jesus' death (John 19:24; cf. Matt 27:39, 43, 46; John 19:28; Heb 2:12) because they believe that David wrote the psalm about his own suffering. One solution: Jesus experienced the same sufferings as the earlier king of Israel but in a greater and more truer way. A better solution is that David knew (as a prophet) that his promised heir would suffer greatly (cf. Isa 53) and he wrote this psalm for him. This psalm is certainly true for Jesus in a way that it was never true for David (e.g., "They cast lots for my clothing"). The conclusion of the psalm strongly supports the view that it was written for one greater than David: "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord."

Psalm 110 is perhaps the clearest example that David wrote psalms in light of the Davidic covenant. If one accepts Davidic authorship of this psalm (as Jesus did), David is speaking about a person who is his "lord/master." Given that David stood as mediator between God and Israel/the nations, there was no earthly person who was his superior. But if David understood God's promises to him to be speaking about a future descendant who would rule forever in righteousness, he recognized that this descendant was greater than himself. So if we accept Jesus' interpretation of the psalm (Matt