

# The Life of David

## *Long Live the King*

Study 9 | 2 Samuel 6:12-23

“The Celebration of the King”

### News and Needs

#### *Upcoming Events:*

**June 13th-** PSPC Picnic in Park, after the morning worship service

**June 18th,** 7 pm- Ministry Leaders' Meeting at Hautamaki's

**June 19th,** 3-5 pm- Bowl to the Death; see site for details

### **1. What is the purpose of gathered worship? What do you normally expect to get out of worship? What do you expect to offer or contribute? In what sense is 'celebration' central to a church service?**

Community group leaders: We often encourage you to make room for application questions and to make sure the study is more than just an intellectual inquiry. This week we've arranged the questions so that you'll begin with a broad introductory discussion that is related to the text. We'd encourage you not to skip this set of questions. It is also probably best if you raise these questions *before* you've even read the passage. You might say something like, "Our passage tonight has a lot to say about the meaning and practice of corporate worship so why don't we start with a discussion about our experiences and beliefs about Sunday worship and then see how the passage might speak into that?" Then discuss, and then read the passage. Of course, you're welcome to read the passage first, but we think it would be most illuminating of our group members' thoughts if they are not first 'prejudiced' by the answers from the text.

The questions have a few basic elements drawn from the text. The first question above assumes that this passage in 2 Samuel 6 is a specially called corporate worship service for the people of Israel--we'll make that argument in one moment below. Trusting our assumption is justified, we then ask what this passage teaches us about the purpose of worship. As every worship service involves giving and receiving, we ask what people expect to give to God (and others, perhaps) in a worship service and what they expect to receive from God (and others) in a service. Lastly, based again on the passage, we ask what 'celebration' has to do with an ordinary Sunday service with God's people at church. Park Slope Presbyterian Church has the motto "Celebrating Christ, Serving Brooklyn." So you've heard this before. How do we think of celebration with respect to a given worship service?

Now to a brief argument that this is a worship service analogous to and fulfilled in a modern Christian worship service. (More of the details will be filled out in the questions below.) First we need to know that most of the Hebrew used in this passage is identical to the very unique liturgical terms employed in Exodus and Leviticus, not to mention other contexts in which official Tabernacle/Temple/New Temple worship is in view. The ark is the place of God's holy presence around which the entire Old Testament Levitical worship system was designed and proscribed (cf. Exodus 28:29). It is brought to the Tabernacle/Tent (cf. Exodus 26). From Genesis to Revelation we see that God's presence is located on a mountain to which people have to 'go up', passing through flame and sword by sacrifice (reversing the curse of Genesis 3), and so here David 'brings up' the ark to its high place. It is brought up through significant and regular sacrifice of the correct costly and pure animals. David is leading worship, so in addition to having become King at last, we see that he was accepted by God as a priest--just as we saw in 1 Samuel 21 when he ate the Holy Bread. He is wearing the priestly ephod. There is music and dancing, rejoicing and celebration of God's presence in victory. This is a holy, celebratory event. And the New Testament passages that allude to Christian worship continue the themes and terms of the Old Testament passages, drawing explicit connections (cf. 1 Peter 2:1-12; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 4:11-16; etc).

**2. What is being celebrated in the worship service found in this passage? Who is celebrating? How are they celebrating? What reactions does this provoke in others?**

It is hard to nail down only one thing that David and Israel are celebrating in this account. The most immediate event in view is that God is at long last making good on his promise to David that he would be king over Israel. After much turmoil and slow, turbulent ascent, David is finally the King, under God, in Jerusalem, and over one united nation. God's promise has come to fulfillment. God has also recently given David some unique, if incomplete, measure of success over the enemies of Israel. But most of all, it is on this day that God's very real special presence is ascending to dwell in the midst of his people. Jerusalem will now become the heavenly city of Zion, in addition to being the political center of Israel. God is the great King of this people, and David will sit (almost literally) at God's right hand. This is what Israel is celebrating. That's why all of the people celebrate. The whole nation is involved, either directly or through tribal representation. And they are led in that worship by David's cohort and the priests and Levites. Over them all, there is David. God's chosen Priest-King, leading and directing them in worship: modeling it for them, and helping them to do it, too. They celebrate with carefulness, costly sacrifice, much music and dancing, with great vigor and joy. Those who witness mostly follow along and are enabled to participate in this worship with their whole being. But then the account intentionally includes the reaction of Michal. We can think of many reasons to psychologize her response. But the text is not so interested in Michal's motives nor in making the reader sympathetic to her. Rather, she stands as a warning that it is possible to witness all of this joy and beauty and refuse to join in the celebration. It is possible for Michal, reader, and modern day worship observer to find fault with those who worship instead: to make fun, to despise, to be embarrassed, to engage in envy, to mock and stay distant.

**3. In what respects does David teach us more about Jesus in this passage? About how *he* worships God? About what reactions are possible for people to a worship service? How does this passage challenge us to celebrate more faithfully? What might that look like?**

Most of the answers in the study guide above ought to prepare you to answer these questions somewhat easily. Jesus is, of course, the great Priest-King of God--we've seen the passages listed above. Furthermore, the New Testament makes it clear that Jesus is the chief worshipper of God. It is in him and through him and under his guidance that we are enabled to offer worship (cf. Hebrews 2:10-18; 13:7-16). He leads us just as David did. He is celebrating God's promise coming true to him that he would one day become King. And even though all of his enemies have not yet been put under his and our feet, God has given him slow, sometimes turbulent, but real success in history (cf. 2 Samuel 3 verse 1). He has brought us into God's presence and when we assemble we offer ourselves as living sacrifices after having ascended mystically into the heavens. And week by week Jesus leads congregations in this experience, this celebration. If David, then, is a type of Christ, what do we learn from his example here about how Jesus worships God the Father? Furthermore and in the same vein, can you think of examples from Jesus' life or from the epistles that speak of *how* Jesus worships God? How do you see people responding to our worship service either like the Israelites or like Michal? How do you sometimes respond in a worship service more like Michal than like David? What do we learn from David and Jesus about how we can worship and celebrate more faithfully? Be specific.