

Ascend:
Worship Begins with Promises
Psalm 132

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Introduction to Text: This morning we are continuing a series called, “Ascend.” This series is an expositional study of Psalms 120-134. Each of these Psalms has the heading “Song of Ascents.” Most believe that these are songs that worshippers sang as they made their way to Jerusalem for thrice annual special times of worship. If this is so, then we learn a great deal about what was on their hearts as they approached worship and thus understand what should be upon our hearts as we prepare to worship or just give attention to the subject of worship. We are considering one each Sunday for the weeks of this summer. We are approaching the end. Today, we are studying Psalm 132. This psalm is distinct in that it is the longest of the Songs of Ascents. The Psalm is also distinct because it reaches back in Israel’s history to a time of King David’s reign.

Text: LORD, remember David
and all the hardships he endured,
²and how he swore an oath to the LORD,
making a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob:
³“I will not enter my house
or get into my bed,
⁴I will not allow my eyes to sleep
or my eyelids to slumber
⁵until I find a place for the LORD,
a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.”
⁶We heard of the ark in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.
⁷Let us go to His dwelling place;
let us worship at His footstool.
⁸Rise up, LORD, come to Your resting place,
You and Your powerful ark.
⁹May Your priests be clothed with righteousness,
and may Your godly people shout for joy.
¹⁰Because of Your servant David,
do not reject Your anointed one.
¹¹The LORD swore an oath to David,
a promise He will not abandon:
“I will set one of your descendants
on your throne.
¹²If your sons keep My covenant
and My decrees that I will teach them,
their sons will also sit on your throne forever.”

¹³ For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His home:
¹⁴ "This is My resting place forever;
I will make My home here
because I have desired it.
¹⁵ I will abundantly bless its food;
I will satisfy its needy with bread.
¹⁶ I will clothe its priests with salvation,
and its godly people will shout for joy.
¹⁷ There I will make a horn grow for David;
I have prepared a lamp for My anointed one.
¹⁸ I will clothe his enemies with shame,
but the crown he wears will be glorious."

Introduction: Why are we here this morning? Some might answer that we are here to worship. Others might answer that it's Sunday. Some might say they are here by obligation. That question of why we are here might very well have been the question of the worshippers of this text. This Psalm draws them back to why they had journeyed to Jerusalem in the first place. Yes, they were carrying out the command of God, but more than that, they were seeking God. They were seeking God's presence in their lives.

This Psalm structurally is very even. The first part is based on a promise from David. The second half of the Psalm is based on a promise from God.

We will use that same division to understand the content of this Psalm and then we will as always try to make some application to our own context.

A Review of David's Promise (1-10)

The background to this Psalm recounts David's vow to find a place for the ark of God to rest. The importance of this goes all the way back to Exodus 25:21-22.

²¹ Set the mercy seat on top of the ark and put the testimony that I will give you into the ark. ²² I will meet with you there above the mercy seat, between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony; I will speak with you from there about all that I command you regarding the Israelites.

This is no mere piece of furniture. The ark represented, in this pre-Word of God era (both written Word of God and Word of God made flesh), the presence of God.

The background is further established in 1 Samuel 4-7. In chapter 4, we read that the Israelites were at war with the Philistines. The Israelites made a decision to bring the Ark of the Covenant into the battle thinking that would secure victory. The Philistines routed the Israelites and captured the Ark of the Covenant. When Eli, the judge of Israel for over 40 years, heard that the Ark had been captured, he died. When his pregnant daughter in law heard that her father in law had died and her husband had been killed in battle, she went into labor. She named the child "Ichabod" meaning "Where is the glory" because she said, "The glory has left Israel." That's the significance of this Ark.

In chapters 5-6, we read about the plagues that set in on Philistine towns because of the Ark of the Covenant. The plagues were so bad that they returned the Ark to Israelite territory.

In 2 Samuel 6, we read that one of David's first acts as king was to return the Ark to the city of David and into the special tent David had prepared. David longed to build a Temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. This Psalm captures that emotion of his longing to do that. So, here's the basic idea captured by this song.

The Basic Idea: A Hunger for the Lord's Presence

- Priority—Here was the priority. David said I will not sleep before the Ark comes to its rightful resting place.
- Purity—David promised the Lord not only a place for His presence, but longed for a righteousness of the people to prepare for the presence of God.

A Reminder of God's Promise (11-18)

In the second half of this Psalm, we get God's promise. As always, God's promise far exceeds the request. God promises a future. In that historical context, God indicated that David would not be the one to build the Temple, but that this would be the blessing of David's son, Solomon. Though this could have been disappointing to David, he lived by that promise of something beyond his lifetime. He lived with the promise that there would be something greater.

The Basic Idea: The Hope for the Lord's Reign

- Fulfilled in Christmas—Remember this idea of God's glory filling the Ark. Then Christ is born and about the Christ, John declared: "The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His *glory*, the *glory* as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)
- Finished in the Cross—The book of Revelation reveals the significance of the cross. "The lamb who was slaughtered is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12) Why? Because of the slaughter. Because of the cross!
- Furthered by the Church—Revelation also reveals that "And You (Christ) redeemed people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation (that's the church). You made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:9-10)
- Formalized in the Second Coming of Christ—John saw it, and because he saw it, we get a glimpse. Revelation 19:11-16—

Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse. Its rider is called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war in righteousness. ¹² His eyes were like a fiery flame, and many crowns were on His head. He had a name written that no one knows except Himself. ¹³ He wore a robe stained with blood, and His name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies that were in heaven followed Him on white horses, wearing pure white linen. ¹⁵ A sharp sword came from His mouth, so that He might strike the nations with it. He will shepherd them with an iron scepter. He will also trample the winepress of the fierce anger of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh:

KING OF KINGS
AND LORD OF LORDS.

So What?

All of this is why we worship!

1. Worship starts and ends with faith.

Those worshipping as recorded in Psalm 132, singing of David's promise were worshipping by faith. We have continued to see this lesson throughout the Psalms. Many of you gathered with me today have learned this lesson in a very painful way. But, we can be glad that we can worship anyway. Worship is not about our circumstances; worship ultimately is about our faith. In all things, we put our hope in the Lord.

2. Worship soars when there is priority and purity.

Some would argue that worship soars when it is polished. No, worship soars when worship is a priority in our lives. Worship soars when there is a purity in our lives. The purest worship comes from pure hearts. Worship soars when there is a commitment to the priority of worship before worship begins and a commitment to purity of continued worship when worship ends.

3. Worship seeks to remind us of God's promises and to renew our promises.

The greatest benefit of worship is to be reminded of God's promises. I need that. Then, seeing God's promises, we renew our promises to Him.

What about you? Can you say that worship is a priority in your life? Can you say that you are concerned more with the purity of your worship than you are any style of worship? God cares more about how you live than how you sing or what you sing. Are you ready to renew your promises to Him? What commitment needs to be renewed in your life today?

True worship always demands a response?