

Psalm 30
Psalm 30
Hebrews 9

“A Song at the Dedication of the Temple”

June 11, 2023

A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.

The title is a little ambiguous.

Let me read it in a more literal fashion:

“A psalm – a song at the dedication of the house – of David.”

This could be translated like the ESV does – A Psalm of David,

A song at the dedication of the temple.

Or like the King James does – A Psalm – a song at the dedication of the house of David.

Is this a song for the dedication of the temple? Or for the dedication of the royal palace?

I suppose in the 10th century BC it might have made a difference –

but as we have seen over the last few weeks,

the whole point of Psalms 20-29 has been the LORD’s anointed –

the king, the son of David –

is the one who will ascend the hill of the LORD

and bring God’s people into his holy dwelling place!

There is a certain progression of thought in Book One of the Psalter,
drawing together the themes of this collection of songs.

The Law, the King, and the Temple.

Torah, Messiah, and Sanctuary.

Psalms 1-2 stand at the beginning of the Psalter –

Psalm 1 begins,

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...

but who meditates on the Law of God day and night.”

Psalm 2 focuses on the LORD’s Anointed – the Son of God –

who sits on Zion, God’s holy hill.

Then, through book one, there are three "creation" songs:

Psalm 8 – LORD, our Lord, in all the earth how excellent your name;

Psalm 19 – the heavens declare the glory of God;

and Psalm 29 – the voice of the LORD is over the waters.

While all three creation psalms include aspects of all three realms –
the heavens, the earth, and the seas –

Psalm 8 focuses on the earth – and also on the *son of man*.
Psalm 19 focuses on the heavens – and also on God's perfect Law.
Psalm 29 focuses on the waters – and also on God's holy temple.

What are all these themes doing?

In the creation, God gave Adam and Eve a place to meet with him – the Garden in Eden.
Adam was the son of God – the prophet, priest, and king.
The Garden was the Sanctuary – the dwelling place of God with man.
And God gave to Adam and Eve a law – a command –
a way of life that showed Adam and Eve how to dwell with God forever.

But Adam and Eve did not listen to God's law.
They walked in the counsel of the serpent –
and they were cast out of the Garden.

As we've sung through Book One of the Psalms,
we have also heard three "question" songs (Psalms 8, 15, and 24)
Psalm 8 asks, "What is man, that you are mindful of him?"
Psalm 15 asks, "Who shall dwell with God?"
and Psalm 24 asks, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?" –
Each question pointing more and more to the need for an Anointed King
who will also be the LORD of hosts himself.

Last time, in Psalm 29, we heard David call the heavenly beings (the sons of the gods)
to worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.
Now, in Psalm 30, David does precisely what he called upon them to do!

So let us worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness by singing Psalm 30.

Sing TPH 30

If Psalm 30 is a song for the dedication of the temple –
then Psalm 30 is very much connected to Hebrews 9
Read Hebrews 9

Think of all the Psalms of refuge in book One!
You, O LORD, are a shield about me (Psalm 3:3)
You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety (Psalm 4:8)
Let all who take refuge in you rejoice (Psalm 5:11)

(I could keep going for a long time!!)

But the point of all those Psalms of refuge is fulfilled in Christ:

“so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,
will appear a second time, not to deal with sin
but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.”

And again, we need to remember that the first person singular in a Psalm of David
is to be sung in the voice of David –
Israel was called to sing these songs in and with David –
Just like we are called to sing them in and with Christ!

In verses 1-3, David gives praise to God for hearing his cry for help –
and healing him.

1. The LORD’s Triumph Over Death (v1-3)

*30 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.*

*² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.*

*³ O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.*

Indeed, in verse 3, David even says that God has “brought up my soul from Sheol.”
Sheol is the place of the dead.
David is not saying that he had literally died –
but he is saying that he was as good as dead.

We saw the same thing in Psalm 28 with the language of “going down to the pit.”
It does not necessarily refer to actual death,
but can include a variety of situations.
Depression, disease, despair – all sorts of situations can be included in “the pit.”

Many have noted the oddity of the title – in light of the subject matter of the Psalm.
The Psalm appears to be a prayer of thanksgiving for *healing* from sickness.
It sounds like the song of a man who had a near-fatal illness,
but the LORD delivered him,
and so he thanks God for healing him from his disease.

Indeed, many modern commentators have said that the title must have been added later.

I want you to think about what that says:
according to many modern commentators,
the original song was by a man who praises God for healing him;
but later, someone added this irrelevant title
that really has nothing to do with the song.

In other words, the idea behind this theory
is that the *original* text was a very modern sort of text.
The author was a person like us who doesn't make fanciful connections
between the healing of the king and the dedication of the temple.
Then some later crackpot came along and messed everything up –
but *we* can get back to the original core meaning
that confirms our modern views about sickness!

Now I'm not going to try to tell you what the "original meaning" was.
I have no way of figuring out what the experience of the Psalmist was –
other than this *text* that we all are reading.
And this text is given to us by God as *Psalm 30* –
"A Psalm of David. A Song at the Dedication of the Temple."

In other words, *God* wants you to think about the connection
between the healing of David and the dedication of the temple.
Or, more precisely, "the dedication of the *house*."

The house in question is the *house of God* –
so the temple is precisely the house in view –
but how does scripture view the *house*?

We have seen frequently throughout the scriptures that there are interesting connections
between temple-language and body-language.

1 Kings uses the same sort of language to talk about the construction of the temple
that Genesis used to talk about the creation (or construction) of Eve.
The reason *why* the NT frequently connects the idea of the church as the *temple*
and the church as the Bride of Christ – and the Mother of believers –
is because the OT laid the foundation for it.

Those who went before us saw this much better.
In the fifth century, Theodoret of Cyr
said that the language of the dedication of the house in Psalm 30
"refers to the restoration of human nature that Christ the Lord accomplished
by accepting death on our behalf,
destroying death and giving us hope of resurrection." (221)

Remember, David knew that he would die before the temple was built!
So when David speaks of his *healing*
in a song written for the dedication of the temple –
that means that David saw that the purpose of the temple was resurrection!

After all, John says that the Word became flesh and *tabernacled* among us.

Your body is a temple of the living God.

Why? How?

In the OT, the temple was made of stone.

But God's purpose was not to live in a house of stone!

God's purpose was to dwell with *humanity*.

The problem was that because of sin, humanity was unfit for divine residence.

And so God started by showing us pictures in the OT –

and then he sent his own Son to take our flesh and blood upon himself.

2. The Mountain and the Pit – the Triumph of Grace (v4-12)

A. Sing Praise and Give Thanks (v4)

⁴ *Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.*

Last time we heard David call the heavenly beings
to worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

Now, in verse 4, he calls the *saints* (the holy ones) to sing praises to the LORD.

Notice the distinction here.

The wicked are not called to praise the LORD.

Just the saints.

You see this often in the Psalms.

All Israelites were – in one sense – the “people of God,”

yet the Psalmist sees a division between the saints and the evildoers.

(As Jesus will put it, between the sheep and the goats).

And David calls the saints to give thanks to God's holy name.

Why?

B. Weeping and Joy: Grace Is More Powerful Than Anger (v5)

⁵ *For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.*

*Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.*

We give thanks to God because his *grace* endures forever.

His anger is but for a moment.

Hebrews will tell us that our experience of God's anger is a part of his discipline for us.

His anger is always in the service of his love!

Anger is not a permanent attribute of God.

In the New Creation, God is not going to be angry!

Anger is the temporary expression of his love –

whereby he corrects the thing that is wrong!

God does not want you to remain in your sin and misery.
Therefore he will use sorrow and affliction in your life
in order to correct your misguided loves.

If you want a picture of this,
consider the story of Rahab – the Canaanite.
God had condemned the Canaanites to utter destruction.
It was time for the final judgment to happen to the Canaanites
(a picture of the final judgment that will come at the last day).
God told the Israelites to kill every man, woman, and child –
Why?
Because Israel was called to be the angel of death
in bringing judgment against Canaan.
Then we meet Rahab.
She *believed* God –
and because she had put her faith into practice
and protected the spies who came to Jericho –
therefore God had mercy on her and her household.

God's curse was upon the Canaanites.
They were to be wiped off the face of the earth.
And yet, this one Canaanite survives –
and not only that, she wound up in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus.

His anger is for a moment – but his favor to all generations!

You see this over and over again throughout the scriptures!
Whenever God curses a nation,
he regularly brings out a remnant and joins them to his people.
You see it at the Flood – with Noah.
You see it at Sodom and Gomorrah – with Lot and his daughters –
who wind up bearing the Moabites and *Ruth* –
She also ends up in the line of Christ.
You see it in the curse of Ahab who was told that all his children would be destroyed,
and yet, because his daughter was married to the Davidic King in Jerusalem,
there was *one* child who survived – one descendent of Ahab, named Joash,
who wound up (yes!) in the line of Christ.

“His anger is for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.”

Of course, the fact that we *know* that all things work together for good (in the end)
does not mean that we are always happy and cheerful about the mess we are in!

In the middle of the night – in the darkness and gloom – we weep.

But Augustine put it,
“We weep only until that morning of resurrection gladness,
 looking to the joy that blossomed in advance
 in the early-morning resurrection of the Lord” (224)

In verse 6 we reflect on our former situation:

C. From Prosperity to Ruin – When God Hides His Face (v6-7)

⁶ *As for me, I said in my prosperity,
 “I shall never be moved.”*

It’s generally not a good idea to say that!

Back in Psalm 10 (verse 6), the wicked said in his heart,
 “I shall not be moved.”

Now, context is everything.

 In Psalm 62, the Psalmist will say that God “only is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress, I shall not be shaken.” (62:6)

 If your context is God – your rock and your salvation –
 then it is accurate to say that you shall not be shaken.

 But if your context is (like in Psalm 10) that God won’t notice your evil deeds –
 then you’ve got problems!

 And here in Psalm 30, the Psalmist gives us a clue as to his spiritual condition:
 “I said in my prosperity” – my security – my quiet and prosperous condition.
 You have heard it said that “pride goes before a fall”?!

My dear friends

 do not think for a moment that your peace and tranquility will endure forever!
 It is possible that you may have years (even decades) of prosperity,
 but there will come a day when it will all come crashing down.

Verse 7, then reminds us *why* we have prosperity:

⁷ *By your favor, O LORD,
 you made my mountain stand strong;*

 In verse 7, the favor of the LORD makes my mountain stand strong.

 By verse 9, we will be down in the pit!

 So you might call these middle sections,
 “from the mountain to the pit.”

 If the pit describes a life that is on the brink of death,

then the “mountain” describes a life that is as close to heaven as you can get!

(Remember Psalm 24, “who can ascend the hill of the LORD?” –
The dedication of the temple was when the glory of the LORD came upon Mt. Zion!)

And I want you to see that the good things of life do come from the LORD!
“By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong.”

Every good and perfect gift comes from the LORD.

But it is equally true that disaster and ruin come from the LORD:

*you hid your face;
I was dismayed.*

The image is clear:
when God’s face shines upon us – then life is good!
but when God hides his face, then we are dismayed.

In this case, the Psalmist is not wondering “why?” –
Instead, he has a different line of argument.
In verses 8-10, his plea is that God will not benefit from his death!

Listen carefully to how the Psalmist says this:

C’. My Plea from the Pit – LORD Have Mercy (v8-10)

⁸ *To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:*
⁹ *“What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?”*
¹⁰ *Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”*

This is a really interesting claim!
My plea with God is that *he* will lose out if I die.

If I return to dust – what benefit does God get?
The reason why God should rescue me from the pit
is for God’s *own* sake.

I suspect many of you are somewhat shocked by this!
Who am I that I should lecture God on what is in his own self-interest?!

But who is the singer of this Psalm?
This is David – the voice of the Davidic King –
and finally the voice of David’s greater son, Jesus!
The only reason why I dare to sing this song
is because Jesus sang it first.

This is what we heard in Hebrews 9.

Christ has purified the heavenly temple with his own blood.
The OT sanctuary was purified with animal blood –
but the heavenly things – the heavenly holy of holies –
had to be purified with a better sacrifice.

And, as Hebrews 10:14 goes on to say,
“by a single offering, he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

Ambrose of Milan said this really well back in the 4th century:

“Can Christ then condemn you,
when he redeemed you from death and offered himself on your behalf,
and when he knows that your life is what was gained by his death?
Will he not say, ‘What profit is there in my blood,’
if I condemn the one whom I myself have saved?” (225)

Note that Ambrose understands that *Jesus* is the one who sings Psalm 30!

What was the point of the death of Christ – if he does not save to the uttermost
those who trust in him?!

Jesus says,

If I am returned to dust –
(God had said to Adam, “Dust you are, and to dust you shall return!”)
If Jesus returns to dust – then what happens?
If the Son of David returns to dust –
that means that God’s covenant promises have failed!

Now, I don’t know how much David understood of all that he was saying here.

But David understood that if the Anointed King returns to dust,
then all of God’s promises fail:

“Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?”

It’s why David will say in the next Psalm (Psalm 31:5),

“Into your hand I commit my spirit” –
a statement that Jesus will take onto his own lips on the cross!

It’s the same sort of statement here in verse 10:

“Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!

O LORD, be my helper!”

We keep seeing this word “helper.”

Remember, it *never* means “assistant” –

it means, “the one who can do for me what I cannot possibly do for myself.”

O LORD, I am helpless.

I cannot save myself.

I need you to save me – to deliver me – to heal me.

And this is what God *has done!*

B’. From Mourning to Dancing – What Are You Wearing? (v11)

¹¹ *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;*

you have loosed my sackcloth

and clothed me with gladness,

Sackcloth was a rough cloth that was worn as a sign of mourning and lamentation.

But – as we heard at the beginning of the Psalm – God has healed me!!

And so God has turned my mourning – my weeping – into dancing and joy!

When God brings healing – when he does *good* for his people –

then we *should* rejoice!

Basil the Great (in 4th century Cappadocia – in eastern Turkey) said,

“The joy of God is not found in just any soul

but, if someone has mourned much and deeply his own sin

with loud lamentation and continual weepings,

as if he were bewailing his own death,

the mourning of such a one is turned into joy.” (225)

God brings us through great affliction

in order to reveal to us a greater joy!

A’. Therefore I Sing Praises and Give Thanks (v12)

¹² *that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.*

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

God’s anger is only for a moment – but his favor is for a lifetime –

his grace endures forever!

Therefore, we sing praise to God.

David is the one who introduced singing and music into the regular worship of God.

At the dedication of the temple, they sang David’s songs.

And even as David taught Israel to sing praise to the LORD,
even so, our Lord Jesus has taught the church to sing.
This is why we emphasize *singing* so much.

You don't have to be a great singer!
But if you have been joined to Jesus,
then you should sing your praises to him – and not be silent!

Athanasius summarized it well when he said:

“In dedicating your house – that is, your soul, which welcomes the Lord,
and the bodily house in which you dwell corporeally –
rejoice and sing Psalm 30.”

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?
Therefore, Psalm 30 – with its concern for the healing of body and soul –
is a song for the dedication of *ourselves*
to the pursuit of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord!