

Psalm Sundays

Text
Psalm 132

Topic
Solomon commemorates his father's passion to return the Ark of the
Covenant to Jerusalem

Title
"Returner of the LORD's Ark"

1. "Tell me a little about yourself."
2. "What are your biggest weaknesses?"
3. "What are your biggest strengths?"
4. "Where do you see yourself in five years?"

If you've recently had a job interview, those might have been among the questions you were asked.

Employers sometimes ask weird questions, to see how you handle yourself:

1. "Can you tell me 10 things you could do with a pencil other than write?"
2. "If you were a kitchen appliance, which kitchen appliance would you be, and why?"
3. "Why are man-hole covers round?"

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4. "What is your gun noise?"

According to a group called The Interview Guys, more-and-more employers are asking, "What are you *passionate* about?"

It's a great question to ask ourselves as believers in Jesus Christ. Before we ask and answer it, we might want to take a look at someone in the Bible who is an example of godly passion.

That someone would be King David. You're not called "a man after God's own heart" unless the LORD is your one, first, great passion in life.

The LORD was David's passion, AND there was something in particular that he was passionate about. That "something" was returning the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and installing it in a magnificent Temple. It is expressed in verses three, four & five:

Psa 132:3 "Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, Or go up to the comfort of my bed;

Psa 132:4 I will not give sleep to my eyes Or slumber to my eyelids,

Psa 132:5 Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

The "dwelling place" of the LORD was the Ark of the Covenant. It's mentioned by name in verse eight and called God's "resting place" on the earth.

David's Ark-in-the-Temple passion was the background and context for our psalm. Reading it gives us the opportunity to discuss our own passion for Jesus.



I'll organize my comments around two questions: **#1 How Do You Express Your Passion For Jesus?**, and **#2 How Does Jesus Express His Passion For You?**

#1 - How Do You Express Your Passion For Jesus? (v1-7)

In the Arcade on Main Street in Disneyland, USA, there used to be a machine called the Love Tester. You'd squeeze a handle and it would gauge your passion from below cold to red hot.

I don't know what being passionate looks like in *your* life. There is no 'passion meter' by which to gauge. As we use the word "passion," don't think being overly-emotional or underly-emotional means anything. Be yourself.

Psa 132:1 A Song of Ascents. LORD, remember David *And* all his afflictions;

We're almost to the end of the fifteen so-called "Psalms (or Songs) of Ascent," Psalms 120-134. They were the play-list for Israelites journeying to the Temple in Jerusalem to attend the annual feasts.

It is important we 'get' what the psalmist means by David's "afflictions." Otherwise we will miss the impact.

- 👤 "Afflictions" is *not* referring to things like his many years as a fugitive, on the run from the murderous King Saul.
- 👤 "Afflictions" is *not* referring to things like the rebellion and attempted coup by his own son, Absalom.

No, David's "afflictions," in this psalm, have entirely to do with what we read about in verses two through four. They were the hardships accompanying the return of the Ark that caused him discomfort of soul.

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The "Ark" we are talking about is the ark that Indiana Jones found in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

It was the centerpiece of the Israelite's wilderness Tabernacle after they left Egypt. It was a smallish box with the Mercy Seat as its lid. It was kept hidden in the Holy of Holies... In the Holy Place... In the Tabernacle. The very presence of God on earth was there.

(BTW: Psalm 132:8 is the only mention of the Ark in the Psalms).

It isn't necessary to our study, but any mention of the Ark arouses curiosity as to where it is today. It is believed that the prophet Jeremiah took and hid the Ark prior to the Babylonian captivity. Then it fell out of history.

- 👤 Some say it is hidden in a chamber under the ruins of the Temple.
- 👤 Others say it is in a small church in Ethiopia.
- 👤 We know that it is in storage in Hanger 51 in Nevada. Why would Steven Spielberg lie?

The Ark was at Shiloh for nearly 400 years. It was captured by the Philistines, who put it in their temple to Dagon. The statue of Dagon collapsed and God sent a plague upon them. The Philistines kept trying to rid themselves of the Ark. It finally made its way to the house of Abinadab.

David sent for it. What happened was unexpected:

2Sa 6:5 Then David and all the house of Israel played *music* before the LORD on all kinds of *instruments of fir wood*, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrams, and on cymbals.

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2Sa 6:6 And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled.

2Sa 6:7 Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his error*; and he died there by the ark of God.

I'd say that if your passion for the LORD got someone killed, it would fall under the category of a hardship that afflicted your soul.

David *would* get the Ark to Jerusalem, only to be afflicted once again. David had what can almost be called a compulsion to build the Ark a magnificent Temple. He shared it with the prophet Nathan and got immediate two thumbs-up from him. God sent Nathan back to tell David that he would *not* be the one to build the Temple.

The one thing David was most passionate about, and the Lord said, "No."

Psa 132:2 How he swore to the LORD, *And* vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:

Psa 132:3 "Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, Or go up to the comfort of my bed;

Psa 132:4 I will not give sleep to my eyes Or slumber to my eyelids,

Psa 132:5 Until I find a place for the LORD, A dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

This is a poetically powerful way of saying, "I won't rest until it is done." It conveys that your whole mind, heart, soul, and strength will be engaged in it. Whenever you're not doing other necessary things, you'll be working on this. All your waking hours, into many late nights, will be dedicated to it.

But wait: Didn't God tell David that he would **not** build the Temple to house the Ark? He did indeed; **but that only fueled David's passion.** If he couldn't build it, he could plan for, and provide for, it to be built after him.

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One commentator said:

Wearied with a stormy life, he might well have left it to others to care for the work which the prophet had told him that he was not to be permitted to begin. But not so does a [passionate] man reason. Rather, he will consecrate to God his leisure and his old age, and will rejoice to originate work which he cannot hope to see completed.

Talking to his son, Solomon David would say:

1 Ch 28:9 As for you, my son Solomon...

1Ch 28:10 Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it."

1Ch 28:11 Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat;

1Ch 28:12 and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things...

It goes on to describe the gold, the silver, all the resources that he had accumulated for the project.

Psa 132:6 Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; We found it in the fields of the woods.

"It" was the somewhat-lost Ark.

Psa 132:7 Let us go into His tabernacle; Let us worship at His footstool.

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In Isaiah 66:1 we read, "Thus says the LORD: "Heaven *is* My throne, And earth *is* My footstool. Where *is* the house that you will build Me? And where *is* the place of My rest?"

The LORD cannot be contained in an earthly Tabernacle or Temple. Nevertheless, He condescended to be present in glory in the Ark, and to meet with Israel there.

If you were a Jew, could you *only* worship God in the Tabernacle?

When David got the inspiration to write, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), or "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:3-4); He was probably not in the Tabernacle. Do you think he was worshipping God?

You could worship anywhere, anytime... But gathering together at the place God's presence was promised in a special way was essential.

You know what I'm going to say next. How much more essential is the gathering of the church. If one more person tells me, "The church is not a building," to argue that our meeting together is non-essential, I'll snap. When we meet, WE ARE THE BUILDING.

Solomon built the Temple. He wrote this psalm commemorating his dad's passion.

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You didn't have to ask David what he was passionate about. He would tell you; or you'd see it for yourself if you were around him.

Your passion for Jesus may be a life-long pursuit. More likely, it will express itself in different pursuits as the seasons of your life change.

Something you **must** factor: You will suffer "afflictions" as you pursue your passion for the Lord:

- 👤 Like David, there may be serious setbacks akin to the death of Uzzah.
- 👤 Like David, you may never see the realization of your passion. Solomon did build it, but David had no assurance he would. Solomon turned out to be a prodigal, which I'm certain would have broken his heart.

Afflictions can make you want to question your choices, or to quit. But in another important way, *they prove your passion*. Things may not work out exactly as you'd hoped. Don't lose heart. The Lord sees your heart. He sees the passion regardless the result.

I mentioned the Love Tester. Think of any afflictions as God squeezing your heart, to gauge your passion. You're not very passionate if you give up easily; or if you don't see the results you hoped for. You *can* remain red hot.

#2 - How Does Jesus Express His Passion For You? (v8-18)

Herein is love:

- 👤 Jesus is the Second Person of the tri-une God Who set aside the prerogatives of His Deity to become the God-man, God-in-human-flesh.
- 👤 He did that because God so loved the world He was not willing that any perish, but that all would be saved.

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- 👤 Jesus died on the Cross, taking upon Himself the sins of the world.
- 👤 By the power of the Cross, Jesus draws all men to Himself.
- 👤 He is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe.
- 👤 He likens His relationship with believers to a marriage in which He is the Groom and we are the bride.
- 👤 While we are engaged, He is away preparing our mansions in a great heavenly city, New Jerusalem.
- 👤 While we await His promised return to take us home, He has given us God the Holy Spirit as an engagement ring - promising us He will never, not ever, leave us or forsake us, and that He will most assuredly finish the work He started in us.

As we encounter the rest of Psalm 132, we can see some of the ways the LORD expressed His passion for Israel... And for us.

Psa 132:8 Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength.

We read in Exodus 25:22, *"There I will meet with you... on the Ark of the testimony, I will speak with you."*

Psa 132:9 Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, And let Your saints shout for joy.

This is a snapshot of Israel worshipping. A little bit of Heaven as they raised voices to the LORD.

We could spend all morning talking about being "clothed with righteousness." Nutshell version: If salvation were like clothing, without the Lord, we all are clothed in filthy rags. When you believe God, He exchanges those garments

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for a robe of righteousness that represents that you are in Christ and can stand in His presence.

The church is not Israel. But like Israel, God's presence is manifested in a special way when His church meets together. We - collectively - are His Temple on the earth. As we used to sing,

*He is here, He is here,
He is moving among us
He is here as we've gathered in His Name*

Psa 132:10 For Your servant David's sake, Do not turn away the face of Your Anointed.

Psa 132:11 The LORD has sworn *in truth* to David; He will not turn from it: "I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.

This is poetic language to express that God promised David that his future descendant would be the "Anointed," *i.e.*, the Christ.

Psa 132:12 If your sons will keep My covenant And My testimony which I shall teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore."

If the kings of Israel had obeyed the LORD, they could have enjoyed their kingdom on earth until the Savior came to establish His kingdom. The promise that the future kingdom will come remains regardless Israel's rebellions. They made true, free will choices.

Psa 132:13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:

Psa 132:14 "This *is* My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.

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It's gonna happen. There will be a Second Coming of Jesus to rule over the whole earth, in righteousness. Jerusalem will be His capital.

You might be noticing that in verses fourteen through eighteen, the LORD answers Solomon's prayers, one-by-one, from verses eight, nine, and ten.

Psa 132:15 I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread.

"Abundantly bless" can be translated, "blessing I will bless." It is a strong affirmation, meaning that he would certainly do it; that every needed blessing would be imparted.

Jesus has abundantly blessed His church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. He gives the church gifted men, and all saints individual gifts.

The "poor with bread" is a phrase that can signify provisions for a journey. It's another way of saying He abundantly blesses. Pilgrim, everything necessary for living a godly life, in pursuit of Jesus, is available to you.

Psa 132:16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation, And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

"Salvation" can be *righteousness*. Exactly what Solomon prayed for in verse nine, God will do.

Psa 132:17 There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.

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The burning "lamp" is a figure from the furnishings of the Tabernacle. Here it signifies the continuation of David's dynasty. The "Anointed One," first David, then his descendants, and eventually Jesus, will be triumphant. The "horn" was a symbol for powerful rulers.

Psa 132:18 His enemies I will clothe with shame, But upon Himself His crown shall flourish."

It continues the clothing analogy. Nonbelievers can be described as dressed in shame for their unforgiving sin. They cannot enter it in their filthy rags.

I submit this word etymology for the sake of accuracy:

The English word *passion* referred to Jesus' suffering long before it evolved other meanings. The Latin *passio* means "suffering." Its first recorded use is in early Latin translations of the Bible that appeared in the 2nd century AD and that describe the death of Jesus. After that it began to develop broader meanings. The first new senses in English referred to martyrdom and physical suffering or affliction, and by the 13th century, *passion* was being used to refer to any strong emotion.

- 👤 We can say that Jesus' "passion," His suffering, was *for* you.
- 👤 We can say that **you** are the *passion* of Jesus.

When you stand in the Lord's presence, after the resurrection and rapture of the church, it won't be an interview. Jesus won't ask you about pencils, or kitchen appliances, or man-hole covers. He won't want to have you demonstrate your gun noise.

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It will be a review; an evaluation. I think a lot of it will have to do with passion with which you served - not the results you achieved.

Don't let the hardships that afflict your soul discourage you.

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