

FROM SILENCE TO SONG

The Davidic Liturgical Revolution

Peter J. Leithart

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Preface

I have taught on the tabernacle of David in several venues during the past few years, and each time I have returned to it, it has grown bigger in my absence. The last time, I prefaced my lectures by saying that I was reporting on a work in progress. I have always felt that a great deal was still eluding me. Every now and then I have had the sense that, after huffing and puffing through the texts yet again, I was finally about to reach the peak, where I expected to gaze out vertiginously at a vast new undiscovered territory spreading out before me to the horizon—a fruitful land and green.

Alas. It is still getting bigger, and I still feel that the peak is a ways ahead, somewhere up there through the fog. And that means that this book is also a “report on a work in progress” rather than a definitive treatment of the subject. There are large holes in this book. Occasionally, I have set a fence around my open pits, dutifully attaching florescent orange warning signs. Other times, I have left it to the reader to discover the gaps in the argument. In other cases, I have left no warning signs because I do not even know where all the danger spots are. *Caveat lector*, lest he tumble in unawares, never to be heard from again.

Why is it such a big deal? Maybe it is not, as a skeptical (and cruel) friend once said.

Undaunted, I insist it is a big deal. It is big because the tabernacle of David was Yahweh's first dwelling in Jerusalem, which came to be called the city of the great King. It is big because David's tent was the only sanctuary *ever* established on Mount Zion, and because Zion is one of the main symbols in Scripture. It is big because David is arguably the central character of the Old Testament and certainly, with Adam, one of the two chief Old Testament types of Jesus, and because according to Chronicles his greatest achievement was the reorganization of worship in preparation for the temple. It is big because it was the moment when song began to play a large and even dominant role in worship. It is big because it is the climactic image in the prophecy of Amos, one of the earliest prophetic books. It is big because James talked about it at the first church council, quoting that prophecy from Amos. It is big because it foreshadowed the joyful heavenly assembly to which we ascend in worship, which in turn is a foretaste of the assembly at the end of all things.

If I am right, then I have written a small book on a big subject. I have offered a map of the territory before reaching the summit. Perhaps this book will turn out to be nothing more than a cry for help from a distressed climber, in which case I expect a rescue party to be dispatched immediately. But I hope for better. I hope readers, including that skeptical friend, will get some sense of the scale of the subject. And, if I have misrepresented the topography, I hope at least that I have made my path of ascent plain enough (with footprints, markers, and discarded candy wrappers) so that someone else might follow, someone with the skill and stamina actually to reach the top.

* * *

I first lectured on the tabernacle of David in 1998, at a conference sponsored by Westminster Presbyterian Church, Vancouver, Washington, and am grateful to Rev. James Bordwine and the session of Westminster for the opportunity to speak there. At the Ministerial Conference sponsored by Christ Church in Moscow,

Idaho, in the fall of 2000, I gave three lectures on the tabernacle of David and its implications for church music, and was greatly helped by the comments and questions posed by the participants and greatly encouraged by many of the responses. Finally, I lectured on the tabernacle of David at the Eleventh Annual Biblical Horizons Summer Conference in July 2001, and the interaction there helped me to formulate more precisely what I had to say on the subject.

A number of individuals have also encouraged this work and helped my research and writing in various ways. I met Chris Hoops at the 1998 conference at Westminster, and, being a former charismatic, he was intrigued to hear a Reformed theologian talking about the tabernacle of David. Chris has been enthusiastic about the work ever since, sent a book for my perusal, and alerted me to a web site on the subject. In the evening following the Christ Church Ministerial Conference, I sat in my smoke-filled library as Pastor Dennis Turri and members of Reformation Covenant Church pelted me with challenging questions and comments. Dennis later helped my research by sending me material on the tabernacle of David from a book edited by Robert Webber. Pastor Galen Sorey heard my lectures at the Biblical Horizons conference and was kind enough to find me a battered copy of Graham Truscott's *The Power of His Presence*, one of the few book-length discussions of the tabernacle of David.

Thanks also to Nate Smith, who searched out and photocopied articles from libraries in the St. Louis area, and to Jim Jordan, whose comments proved illuminating as always. I am grateful to Doug Jones for his willingness to consider the book for Canon Press.

This book is dedicated to my fifth son and namesake, James. Though at nine, he will not appreciate this book for some time to come, and perhaps never, he will nonetheless be delighted to see his name in print and to learn that I was able to work "Og, King of Bashan" into the text (though, try as I might, I found no place for Tintin). Whether he is appreciative or not, I dedicate this book to

him knowing that he is a member of that joyful assembly on Zion, and hopeful that we shall spend eternity together singing the Song of Moses and of the Lamb.

Peniel Hall
Trinity Season 2001

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The Problem of Davidic Worship

That day, the dusty road leading into Jerusalem and up into the stronghold of Zion¹ was packed. All the elders of Israel were there, and the children lining the road caught glimpses of David's mighty men, armor flashing in the sun, men whose exploits had been told at every hearth in the land. At the center of the procession was a cluster of Levites in their white linen robes, carrying the ark of the covenant, the throne of Yahweh, hidden from sight by layers of fabric. Every time they took six steps, they stopped to offer sacrifice before taking a seventh. The noise was deafening: the tumult of trumpets and horns, the splash of cymbals, the eerie aching melodies of harp and lyre, the drone of the Levitical singers. And at the head of the procession, David, the great King David, danced like a fool before his King, wearing a linen ephod.

When the procession reached Zion, the Levites took the ark into the tent that David had prepared for it, and then sacrifices

¹The word *Zion* is used only in a handful of texts in the historical books of the Old Testament, and in every occurrence it refers to the stronghold, and not to the temple mount nor to the city as a whole (see 2 Sam. 5:7; 1 Kgs. 8:1; 1 Chr. 11:5; 2 Chr. 5:2). Among recent commentators, P. Kyle McCarter (*II Samuel*, Anchor Bible [Garden City: Doubleday, 1984], 139) is the most explicit on this point: the Ophel hilltop on the eastern edge of the city "was 'the stronghold of Zion' or 'the City of David' in the strict sense . . . but as the city was extended, first north beyond the Ophel to include the temple mount (the present-day Haram esh-Sherif) and then west, the names 'Zion' and 'City of David' came to be used more broadly." Technically, the temple mount was not "Zion" but "Moriah" (2 Chr. 3:1), though a broader use is evident in the Psalms and prophets.

of peace offerings were slaughtered and every family was treated to a meal in the Lord's presence. They stood in wonder as David's new Levitical choir sang praises to Yahweh before the tent. After David blessed them, they returned home, hearts full of gladness.

No one could remember a procession or a celebration like this, and they had to reach back far into the memory of Israel for comparisons. It reminded some of stories they had read or heard about the procession following the exodus from Egypt, when Miriam took the timbrel and led the women in dance and song. Others thought of the procession that had encircled Jericho, the priests blowing trumpets before Yahweh's throne for six days until the Lord crumbled the city's walls. Yahweh, they concluded, was conquering another city, but this time in order to make it His own.

In an article on the "ark narrative" in Chronicles, Tamara Eskenazi concluded that the enthronement of Yahweh in Jerusalem was an event of "global, even cosmic significance." She goes on: "No other event in Chronicles, not even the dedication of the temple, is enshrined in such broad-reaching terms and imagery."² Few Israelites would have explained the event they witnessed as Eskenazi does, but as each family descended from the height of Zion in the light of the setting sun, many realized, however dimly, that something very big, something even bigger than they could grasp, had happened before their eyes.

And no wonder. By the time David became king, the throne of Yahweh had been in "exile" from Israel for a century. At the battle of Aphek, the Philistines captured the ark, and even though it was returned seven months later, it was sent to the home of Abinadab of Kiriath-jearim, a Gibeonite town in an area jointly settled by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (1 Sam. 4:1–7:2).³ After David conquered Jerusalem and made it his capital, he soon decided to bring the ark into the city to him. For the first time in a century, the

² "A Literary Approach to Chronicles' Ark Narrative in 1 Chronicles 13–16," in Astrid B. Beck, et. al., eds., *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David N. Freedman* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 270.

³ For details of the chronology, see my *Untitled: A Christian Commentary on the Book of Samuel* (Moscow: Canon, forthcoming).

ark was back where it belonged, in the midst of Israel, and for the first time ever it resided in Jerusalem. The “tent which David had pitched for it” (2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chr. 16:1) was the first sanctuary that Israel ever established in Jerusalem, and it was the only place of worship ever set up on Zion.

Throughout David’s reign, the ark remained in this tent, and David organized the Levites to worship there. Meanwhile, the Mosaic tabernacle (without the ark) continued to operate in Gibeon, some seven miles northwest of the capital (1 Chr. 16:39–43). Eventually, the ark was reunited with the rest of the tabernacle furniture in the temple of Solomon (1 Kgs. 8:1–11; 2 Chr. 5:2–14).

Christians have devoted much effort to understanding the typological and theological significance of the Mosaic tabernacle and the temple of Solomon, but comparatively little effort has been expended on study of the liturgical situation in the time of David or its implications for Christian worship.⁴ The scholarly literature is relatively sparse. Commentators on Samuel and Chronicles of course mention David’s tent and the worship performed there, but few articles and monographs have attempted to study it in detail.⁵

⁴ I have found only two book-length treatments of the subject, both from charismatic writers: Graham Truscott, *The Power of His Presence: The Restoration of the Tabernacle of David* (Burbank, Calif.: World Map Press, 1969) and Kevin J. Conner, *The Tabernacle of David* (Portland, Ore.: Bible Temple-Conner Publications, 1976). Brief discussions may also be found in articles by Janice E. Leonard and Richard C. Leonard in Robert E. Webber, ed., *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (Nashville, Tenn.: Star Song Publishing, 1993), vol. 1, and Philip Mauro, *The Hope of Israel* (Sterling, Va.: Grace Abounding Ministries, 1988), chap. 18. There are also several articles on the web site www.tabernacle-of-david.com. I wish to thank Pastor Dennis Turri for the material from Webber, and Chris Hoops for pointing me to this web site.

⁵ There is a large body of work on the so-called “ark narrative” of 1–2 Samuel (consisting, it is claimed, of 1 Sam. 4–6 and 2 Samuel 6), but the book of Samuel says very little about the worship conducted at the tent of David. That material is found in 1 Chronicles, mainly in chapters 13–16, and on these chapters little scholarly literature is available. See, for confirmation, the paucity of items in the bibliographies provided in Roddy Braun’s *Word Biblical Commentary* on these chapters (*1 Chronicles* [Waco: Word, 1986], 172, 180–181). Several more recent studies of the Chronicler’s presentation of the reign of David are useful: Simon J. De Vries, “Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, no. 4 (1988): 619–639; John W. Wright, “The Founding Father: The Structure of the Chronicler’s David Narrative,” *Journal*

This book explores this moment in Israel's history, this moment of divided worship, in an attempt to grasp the significance of David's tent and its liturgy.⁶

Encouraged by suggestive comments like those of Eskenazi, I have several reasons for suspecting that such an examination will repay the time and effort. First, the ark-shrine of David, and the worship that Israel performed there, marked a crucial advance in Israel's liturgical history. From what we can learn in the Pentateuch, Israel's worship in the Mosaic period was virtually silent. Verbal confession was required on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:21), and we can infer that confession often accompanied the presentation of animal offerings. Trumpets were blown over the morning and evening ascension offerings (Num. 10:9–10), but no other liturgical music is explicitly mentioned. By contrast, as we shall see (chapter 4), the worship of the Davidic tabernacle was mainly worship in song, and the Levitical choir and orchestra was later incorporated into temple

of Biblical Literature 117, no. 1 (1998): 45–59; and Eskenazi, "A Literary Approach to Chronicles' Ark Narrative in 1 Chronicles 13–16." Articles on specific topics in 1 Chronicles 13–16 have also appeared and will be noted later. The most significant examination of this material is John W. Kleinig's *The Lord's Song: The Basis, Function and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* (JSOT Supplement #156; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), on which I have heavily relied throughout this book. Kleinig's excellent study does not, however, concentrate attention specifically on the Davidic situation, but instead examines liturgical music both in David's time and at the temple. Thus, it does not raise the specific redemptive-historical questions that I address in this volume, especially in chapter 5. My thanks to James B. Jordan for informing me about Kleinig's book.

⁶The failure to recognize the uniqueness of Davidic worship has led to some significant confusions. It is often assumed, for example, that "Zion" is the name of the temple mount pure and simple, but 2 Chronicles 3:1 makes clear that Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah, a distinct peak in Jerusalem. (I have discussed this issue at more length in an unpublished paper, "Where Was Ancient Zion?") Further, the significance of the temple imagery in many of the psalms has been misconstrued. It does not seem possible that Psalm 27, for instance, could be a psalm "of David," as the title indicates, since it mentions David's desire to "dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life" and to "meditate in his temple" (v. 4). The temple was not built until Solomon's time, so it seems impossible that the attribution to David could be accurate. Most scholars simply dispense with the Davidic title, claiming it represents a later editor's addition to the psalm. This conclusion makes little sense, however, since the editor doubtless knew as well as we do that Solomon, not David, built the temple; why would he sow confusion by attributing a temple psalm to David? We can go a long way to solving this problem by recognizing that David began the process of temple construction by erecting the tent for the ark in Jerusalem. Though the temple was not yet built, there was a sanctuary on Zion during David's time, and this was the foundation of the later temple.

worship in the days of Solomon. When Christians sing hymns and psalms in worship, when we play organs or pianos, guitars or trumpets, we are heirs of the Davidic “liturgical revolution.”

Because David’s reign saw the inception of worship through song, the portions of the Bible that describe this period, especially Chronicles, provide more material on worship music than any other section of the Bible. Attention to these passages will help to address both long-standing and contemporary debates about church music. Reformed liturgists have long debated the propriety of instrumental music in worship, for example, and there are no passages of Scripture more relevant to this question than those having to do with the Davidic tabernacle. Though I make no attempt to answer all of the specific questions that have been or are being debated throughout the church, I hope that this book provides some fresh directions for groping toward answers. If I provide few answers, I hope at least to provoke additional, and perhaps fundamental, questions.

Some liturgists, including Reformed liturgists, may object that I am looking in the wrong place for guidance concerning the theology and practice of Christian worship. Instead of examining the Old Testament, which describes a form of worship that has been fulfilled and set aside in Christ, we should concentrate on New Testament passages concerning worship, especially certain chapters of 1 Corinthians. Other liturgists seek guidance for Christian worship from the example of the Jewish synagogue, considered the origin and fount of Christian worship.⁷ I address these objections at somewhat more length in the concluding chapter, but a word must be said at this point about the hermeneutical assumptions underlying the Reformed “regulative principle of worship.” In the hands of at least some writers, the regulative principle is, in practice, hermeneutically wooden and theologically Marcionite.⁸ It is wooden because

⁷ I have addressed the question of synagogue worship as a model of Christian worship in “Synagogue or Temple? Models for Christian Worship,” *Westminster Theological Journal* (forthcoming).

⁸ Marcion was the early church heretic who believed that the god of the New Testament was a different deity from the god of the Old. I am using “Marcionite” in this context to describe a

an explicit “command” is required for every act of worship, and it is Marcionite because it ignores the abundant Old Testament liturgical instruction in favor of exegeting a few passages of the New.

Refuting the Marcionite assumption must be left for another time, but the woodenness of “regulativism” is directly addressed by the passages studied in this book. As I will argue below, David’s reorganization of worship at the tabernacle in Jerusalem was based on Mosaic ceremonial law, yet it was an expansive and creative application of the law, without ceasing to be an application. David’s liturgical revolution thus provides a *canonical* illustration of how the law was applied in liturgical matters. By examining these portions of Scripture, furthermore, we can see that the church’s “sacrifice of praise” grew out of an application of Levitical law. By showing the subtlety of the law’s relation to Davidic worship, this study offers some hints about the scriptural regulation of worship in general and shows the relevance of Levitical liturgics to Christian worship (see chapter 6).

The Davidic system of worship is also important for understanding redemptive history, the hope of Israel as expressed by the prophets, and the fulfillment of this hope in the early church. Here the questions have to do with the redemptive logic of the history that we will be reviewing: Why did God set up His house in Jerusalem in this particular way? Why did He not move smoothly and directly from the Mosaic tabernacle to the Solomonic temple? Why tear the tabernacle apart first, and why separate the ark from the Mosaic tent for more than a century? Why set up an ark-shrine in Jerusalem for a generation before bringing the rest of the sanctuary to the capital city?

Amos 9:11–12, and specifically its use by James at the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:16–18), makes it clear that the tabernacle of David was typologically significant. I argue in chapter 5 that Amos prophesied the restoration of the Davidic form of worship as

system of theology (in this case, liturgical theology) that sharply separates between the Old and New. See my discussion of the effect of Marcionite hermeneutics on sacramental theology in *The Priesthood of the Plebs: The Baptismal Transformation of Antique Order* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, forthcoming).

well as the Davidic kingdom, and that James recognized that this restoration was taking place in the apostolic period. Its importance is made even more evident when we recall that the Davidic tabernacle was the only sanctuary ever established on Mount Zion. After Solomon built the temple, he transferred the ark from Zion to Moriah (2 Chr. 3:1), and in so doing transferred “Zion” and all its associations to the temple. But the original significance of “Zion” was not lost; the application of Zion language to the temple was an extension of the Davidic system to the temple system. In short, the Davidic tabernacle on Zion was somehow more fundamental to Israel’s worship, life, and future than the temple system.

Further, the prophets always use the language of Zion to describe the future restoration of Jerusalem. Never once did an Old Testament prophet announce that “Moriah” would be raised up to be chief of the mountains.⁹ Always and everywhere, the promise is that Zion will be exalted to become the praise of the earth. Along similar lines, the prophets never held out the hope for a restoration of the glory of Solomon’s reign; Solomon is mentioned only once in the prophetic books, in Jeremiah 52, a narrative passage that is identical to the last chapter of 2 Kings. Instead, the prophetic hope always was framed in terms of a restored Davidic king, or of the restoration of David himself to the throne of Israel.¹⁰ Israel’s eschatology always focused on David, not Solomon, and Zion, not Moriah. This striking emphasis will, I hope, make somewhat more sense after we examine the features of and the worship at the ark-sanctuary that was the center of Israel’s worship during that time.

At many points in this book, I acknowledge that many of my conclusions, both large and small, are tentative. But I hope at least that I have given a plausible explanation for the excitement that attended that great procession into Zion on the day when David,

⁹“Moriah” is used only in Genesis 22 and 2 Chronicles 3:1.

¹⁰It might be argued that Solomon’s sins so tarnished his reign that the prophets could not look to it as a model for the future, but David’s sins were also grievous, and Israel achieved its greatest international stature under Solomon, not David. It is also true that the prophetic hope is often a hope for a “son of David,” that is, a new Solomon; but that scion of David’s house is never called “Solomon,” but always described in terms of David.

the great King David, danced like a fool before the throne of his King, wearing a linen ephod.