

David and his God—2 Samuel 7

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IT HAD BEEN a long hard road to the rest that he now enjoyed. King David sat in a well-constructed house, his house, with the wanderings, the pursuits, the fearsome and blood-wrought battles all behind him: “the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (2 Sam. 7:1).

But if David’s life now had a sense of permanence about it, as king anointed and established, with a fortified city, a strong army (was there ever an army like it?) and solid cedar walls about him, he still was not content. His burning ambition had been to bring the ark of God, the God of Israel, to its appointed place. This too had been fulfilled, but the man who put God’s honour first was not at ease when he considered his solid cedar walls and the flimsy curtains within which the ark of the covenant of Yahweh his God now rested: “See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains” (v. 2).

Perhaps it was this aspect of his character, putting the honour of God first, seeing himself always as a servant of the Lord, that was the reason for his being called “a man after God’s own heart”. If there was to be a permanent living place for the king, there must be one for the ark and the Name of his God—not just permanent, but magnificent, something which would contribute to the glorifying of God’s Name throughout the nations (v. 26; 1 Chron. 22:5).

This warm desire of David resulted in an even warmer response from his God, and so resulted in the covenant with David, that covenant which

is at the forefront of the gospel (Mt. 1:1) and which resulted in the Son of God being called the Son of David. We look now at the words of David in response to this covenant, and especially at the manner in which he addressed his God, and the titles that he used. David knew his God, had thought often upon His Name and reflected on his titles. *And it shows!*

Before going further, let us see how the Name, appellation and titles of God are used in this chapter. They are summarised in the table below.

Nathan’s commission

Before seeing how David used the Name and titles of God, let us look at Nathan’s commission: “And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying . . .” (v. 4). According to the *Companion Bible*, after the words “that night” there is a solemn pause in all the manuscripts, pointing back to the corresponding night in Genesis 15:12-17, thus connecting the two covenants.

This is an important thought to take with us. Nathan began his message using the title “the LORD of hosts” (v. 8) to bring before David’s mind the fact that the God of the armies of heaven and earth, Who had wrought such great victories with him and through him, intended to do more: “I *have been* with thee . . . and I *will* make thee a great name” (v. 9, RV).

David’s response

David does not respond by using the term ‘LORD of hosts’ immediately when he goes in to sit

Name/Title	Use		Location	
	All	David	David	Others
The LORD (Yahweh)	8	1	v. 24	vv. 1,3,4,5,11, 11(RV),18
God (Elohim)	7	6	vv. 22,23,24,26, 27,28	v. 2
LORD God (Yahweh Elohim)	2	2	vv. 22,25	
The LORD of hosts (Yahweh Sabaoth)	3	2	vv. 26,27	v. 8
Lord GOD (Adonai Yahweh—Lord Yahweh)	6	6	vv. 18,19,19,20, 28,29	

before the Lord (v. 18). The message was to David as God's servant: "Go and tell to My servant, to David" (v. 5, AV mg.). So it is as a servant that David begins the prayer which he found courage to utter (v. 27), and it is as a servant that he begins by addressing his God as 'Lord Yahweh': "Who am I, O Lord GOD [Yahweh]? and what is my house . . . Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come . . . what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord GOD [Yahweh], knowest Thy servant".

The lords of the Philistines had lorded it over Israel, but upon the defeat of Goliath the rulership changed: "O LORD our Lord [ruler], how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:1); this psalm being, according to the subscription (attached in our Bibles to the beginning of the following psalm) set to "Muth-labben", meaning 'Death of a champion', and thus surely celebrating the death of Goliath. As it had been in the heart of David the servant to build God a house (2 Sam. 7:3), so it was in the heart of his God and Lord to meet heart with heart and intention with intention: "Also the LORD telleth thee that He will make thee an house" (v. 11); "For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them" (v. 21).

The littleness of David is met by the greatness of his God. As David moves from speaking of God's dealing with him to His dealings with His people, so he changes his mode of address: "Wherefore, thou art great, O LORD God [Yahweh Elohim]: for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God beside Thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears" (v. 22).

This name is highly significant. At the completion of Creation the Name Yahweh is added to 'God' (Elohim); the Creator, the completer and blesser of Creation, is named (Gen. 2:4). And He is named at the same time that the word 'generations' is used, pointing forward to "all the generations of the age of the ages" (Eph. 3:21, RV mg.). It is the name of completion, a name in which personality is added to creative power.¹ And this must have been in David's mind as he used this special name in speaking of the one God, the one Name, the one people, that special redemption, and that unique confirmation: "and Thou, LORD [Yahweh], art become their God" (2 Sam. 7:24).

This is the crux of the matter. The Creator, the God of power and personality, has, in fulfilment

of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, covenanted their children to Himself for ever. He had become their God.² What greater promise could there be, and what greater privilege could there be, than to have the single, sole Creator of the universe pledge Himself to the people that He has chosen? "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD [Yahweh]; and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance" (Ps. 33:12). We notice also that, as David uses this special 'completed-creation' name, so possibly Genesis 1 is in his thinking, as in the quotes in brackets in the following: "And now, O LORD God [Yahweh Elohim], the word that Thou hast spoken ['And God said'] concerning Thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do ['and it was so'] as Thou hast said" (2 Sam. 7:25).

Yahweh of hosts

David now turns to the title with which the message through Nathan had been delivered, Yahweh Sabaoth, 'the LORD of hosts': "And let Thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Thy servant David be established before Thee" (v. 26).

The return to this title is intentional, and shows how carefully David had assimilated the message. We do not know how long it was from the time that the word of God came through Nathan to David to the time that David went and sat before the Lord, but we can see how carefully he framed his prayer. Consider the following:

- "I took thee . . . to be ruler over My people, *over Israel*" (v. 8);
"The LORD of hosts is the God *over Israel . . .*" (v. 26).
- "thy throne shall be *established for ever*" (v. 16);
". . . and let the house of Thy servant David be *established before Thee*" (v. 26).

The Lord of all the earth had chosen His title 'LORD of hosts' to begin His promise to David, possibly because it was in that very name that

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1. It is interesting to note that, after its use twenty times in Genesis 2 and 3, the rare occurrences of 'LORD God' (Yahweh Elohim) are usually related to matters of redemption. See Exodus 9:30; 2 Samuel 7:22; 25; 1 Chronicles 17:16; 2 Chronicles 1:9; 6:41,42; Psalm 68:18 (as Yah Elohim); 84:11; Jonah 4:6.
 2. See, for example, "The greatest of the Promises", Harry Whittaker, published in *Bible Studies*, p. 271.

David confronted the Philistine Goliath, demonstrating that marvellous faith in the principle that nobody could reproach the living God and live to tell the tale: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom thou hast defied" (1 Sam. 17:45).

It was the Lord of hosts Who had fought with David, for David, and through David, and it was using the title of the victory-bringer that He became revealer and promiser: "For Thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to Thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house" (2 Sam. 7:27). We may pause here to consider two instances in Amos where God does not just name Himself by His usual Name, but indicates that what He is may be seen as a name in itself: "The LORD [Yahweh], The God of hosts, is His name" (4:13); "the LORD [Yahweh], Whose name is The God of hosts" (5:27).

To end his prayer David turns once more to Lord Yahweh, the title with which he had begun: "And now, O Lord GOD [Yahweh], Thou art God Himself, and Thy words are truth, and Thou hast promised this good thing unto Thy servant: now therefore begin and bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue for ever before Thee: for Thou, O Lord GOD [Yahweh], hast spoken" (2 Sam. 7:28,29, RV, Young's Literal).

Once again we note the care with which David chooses his words:

- "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee" (v. 16);
- ". . . let it please Thee to bless the house of Thy servant, that it may continue for ever before Thee" (v. 29).

And the final word for Yahweh the ruler: "for thou, O Lord GOD [Yahweh], hast spoken it: and with Thy blessing let the house of Thy servant be blessed for ever".

Fulfilment in Jesus

Immediately after the record of his prayer we read that David continued his military career, bringing into subjection the surrounding nations and conquering the territory promised to Abraham and his seed. Just as David had sat before the Lord and prayed for his people, so his greater Son, the Lord Jesus, sits with his Father in that "throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1), whence flow reconciliation and mediatorship in full abundance, until that time when "his en-

emies be made his footstool" (Heb. 10:13; cf. Ps. 110:1). David, like Abraham, rejoiced to see Jesus's day. Like us, he did not see him in the days of his flesh to witness that flawless walk and his peerless personality. But he will see him in his glory and see how that Name and those titles that he used in his prayer find fulfilment in the person and status of the Anointed of the God of Israel.

Jesus is Yahweh manifest because he bears his Father's Name (Jesus means 'Yah is salvation'). He came in his Father's Name, manifested it and glorified it in himself, just as God glorified it in him and will glorify it again: "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord [Yahweh manifest], to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

He is God (Elohim) in the sense that he is the first man glorified, the first to attain to Divine nature (Ps. 45:6,7; Heb. 1:8,9). He is termed 'God' because in Hebrew the use of 'elohim' is not restricted to God alone, but is also used for His agents, both angelic and human. They are, as it were, an extension of Him, they are God in manifestation. Consider the use made by the Lord of Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34-36. So he, in the glory of his resurrection and ascension, attains to full elohim status, truly made in God's image (Gen. 1:26).

As the one to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given (Mt. 28:18), and who is Lord of all (Acts 10:36), he is Lord Yahweh, the term 'Lord' being in virtue of his resurrection from the dead. This is the realisation that came upon Thomas as he beheld his risen Lord, and made that breathtaking statement, "My Lord and my God" (Jno. 20:28). In the magnificent dawn of his new understanding he began to perceive not only the fullness of Jesus's lordship but also what we might term his 'Godship'. Death had been conquered and the glory stood revealed before him.

And he is Yahweh Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts, as leader of the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:11-16). David, by virtue of his literal sword, achieved many victories and captured many crowns. The Lord, by virtue of the sword of his mouth, will achieve many victories and also take to himself many crowns; every knee shall bow to him. His name is called The Word of God. David received the Word, believed it and lived by it. Jesus embodied it and fulfilled it. He is the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.