

**Proper 29 RCL
Cycle B
Revised**

2 Samuel 23:1-7

Despite the claim in 2 Samuel 23:1 that the verses 23:2b-7 are David's final words, they are, in fact, anything but David's last words in the Deuteronomistic narrative. The last chapter of the book has David speaking at length about the census and its aftermath, In 1 Kings 1 David speaks about Adonijah's rebellion and then in 1 Kings 2:1-9 David gives last instructions to Solomon before David's death (1 Kings 2:10). We should conclude that the reference to "last words" in 2 Samuel 23:1 is part of an old heading for our passage. The Hebrew of 2 Samuel 23:1-7 is problematic, not only because of variants among ancient manuscripts, but also because of unexpected, perhaps archaic words and phrases found there, such as "oracle of David," unusual since the word *ne'um* ("oracle") normally has God, not a human, as its possessor. (But see Numbers 24:15.); We have here a royal psalm that has as its main theme the success of a king whose rule derives from "the fear of God (23:3)." As always in the Bible, "fear of God" and phrases like it refer specifically to the keeping of God's commandments. Perhaps Deuteronomistic Historian uses this ancient poem to remind the reader that David was sometimes not a righteous ruler and from time to time felt the judgment of the "worthless" (23:6, in the NRSV "godless").

Psalm 132 1-13 (14-19)

This *royal psalm* contains two poems, 132:1-10 and 132:11-18, that have to do with the close relationship between God and the king. (See above on 2 Samuel 7:4, 8-16.) The psalm refers to David's desire to establish a permanent home (temple) for the Ark of the Covenant, the portable throne on which the Lord was thought to sit invisibly. The ark and, presumably, the divinity who sat enthroned upon it, was lost to the Philistines in the battle of Aphek (1 Samuel 4:11) but was shortly returned to Israel after the Lord brought various punishments upon the Philistines (1 Samuel 5-6). The Philistines brought the ark to *Beth-shemesh* but it was removed shortly thereafter to *Kiriath-jearim* (1 Samuel 6:21-7:2) where David discovered the ark and caused it to be taken to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). Note: The *BCP* has 19 verses instead of 18 in the Hebrew Bible and the English versions. That is because the editors of the *BCP* Psalter divided verse 11 into two verses.

OR

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

The Book of Daniel contains stories and visions that circulated among the religious supporters of the Jewish rebellion against Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the years 167-164 BCE. In the Hebrew Bible, the book is in two languages: Hebrew (1:1-2:4a and 8:1-12:13) and Aramaic (2:4b-7:28). The Greek translation of Daniel (the Septuagint or LXX) contains additional material: the stories of Susanna (Daniel 13, LXX) and Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14, LXX) as well as the Song of the Three Young Men (reproduced partially in our Canticles 12 and 13) and the Song of Azariah, all of which occur between Daniel 3:23 and 3:24 of the Aramaic text. A recently discovered Aramaic document from Qumran called the Prayer of Nabonidus contains a story much like Daniel 4:28-37 and attests to the popularity of Daniel legends during this period. The figure of Daniel may have derived from Canaanite stories about the hero Dan'el, and some interpreters have interpreted our passage in the light of the appearance of the Canaanite god Ba'al in the court of the high god El. In context, however, the vision appears to promise that the ongoing Jewish revolt will be successful and that it will lead to an everlasting kingdom. The "one like a human being" (Aramaic *kevar enash ateh*, "one like a son of man") may represent the leader of the revolt, Judas Maccabeus, or may be a heavenly figure that represents the new Hebrew state.

Psalm 93

Some interpreters have suggested that the *hymns* of the Psalter that contain the phrase "The LORD is King" (Hebrew: *yhwh malax*) were used as part of a New Year's ritual in which the Lord was ceremonially enthroned as king over the world. See also Psalms 95:3, 96:10, *etc.* The "waters" of verses 4 and 5 are the waters of chaos, out of which the Israelites believed God had created the world. As such, they often represent God's opponent in the creative process. God's eternity (verse 3), might

(verse 5), and decrees (verse 6) are infinitely more powerful than the chaos.

Revelation 1:1-8

An otherwise unknown man named John wrote this book while in exile on the island of Patmos for his Christian confession (1:9) during the last years of the reign of Domitian (81-96 CE). At the time Asia Minor (modern Turkey) was undergoing serious local persecutions of Christians, which may have been masterminded by Domitian himself. The book is an *apocalypse*, *i. e.* it represents the author's view of the end of time as a vision from the heavenly world. Although the book contains many disturbing images of the end of the present age, its overall purpose is to comfort and build up the faithful Christians of Asia Minor as well as to encourage them to be faithful to the end even if such faithfulness leads to martyrdom. The book contains many early Christian hymns of which 1:7 is an example. The reference to Christ coming on the clouds in that hymn is an allusion to Daniel 7:13.

John 18:33-37

The trial of Jesus offers the author of the Fourth Gospel the opportunity to rehearse with the reader several important ideas of the Gospel. When Pilate asks, "What is truth?" (18:38), the reader is put in mind of Jesus's words to his disciples in 14:6 that Jesus is the truth, an assertion based on the Gospel's identification of Jesus as the divine word become flesh (1:14). Similarly, Jesus's claim that his kingdom is "not of this world" reflects the idea us that Jesus has come into our world from the Father (1:9-10; 17:14-16) and will shortly return to the Father. His promise, however, is that eventually he will come again to take us to himself (14:1-7). The "kingdom" is with and in Christ, not in an empire or in a temple.

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