

Finding Jesus revealed in the Psalms: "My King and my God"

By Tony Hangartner

Theology is commonly defined as "The study of God". His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI has a slightly different, perhaps a more experienced definition: "faith seeking understanding" (1). This definition originally comes from St. Anselm (1033-1109), a Bishop and Benedictine monk, who is widely regarded as the top theologian (and philosopher) of the 11th century. This phrase "faith seeking understanding" (fides quaerens intellectum) is actually St. Anselm's motto. It can also be understood as: "an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God." The purpose of this paper is to seek a deeper knowledge and understanding of Jesus as he has been revealed in the Psalms.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#236) also provides instruction for us on how to understand Jesus:

The Fathers of the Church distinguish between theology (theologia) and economy (oikonomia). "Theology" refers to the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and "economy" to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the oikonomia the theologia is revealed to us; but conversely, the theologia illuminates the whole oikonomia. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works.

How do we use this highly technical definition of theology to understand who Jesus is? We read the Gospel to see both the "works" of Jesus and the theology of who he is. A "big picture" view of the Gospel shows us that Jesus did three works on a frequent, repeating basis: healing (3), teaching (4), and praying (5). The major one time works were the institution of the sacraments. In the creation of the sacraments Jesus was leading his church, while building it. So the effort to understand Jesus starts with a summary of his works as: leader, healer, teacher and someone who prayed. There is more however in the Gospel that will help us understand who Jesus is, for He is also known by His titles.

The Titles of Jesus

Next we can use Pope Benedict's /St. Anselm's definition: "faith seeking understanding". So we start with our faith, and the question that Jesus himself asked his apostles (and that he has asked us): "But who do you say that I am?" (Matt. 16:15) Our reply must be the same as Saint Peter's: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16). The answer of Saint Peter provides for us an understanding that Jesus is known by his titles, and in this verse, two titles: "Christ" and "Son of God". It is in the reading of the Gospel with an attention to detail that we find Jesus was called by many different titles: (Word of God (John 1:1), Son of Man (Matt. 9:6, and others), Emmanuel (Matt. 1:23), Son of David (10 times in Matt. , 3 times in Mark, 4 times in Luke), Savior (Luke 1:47, 2:11, John 4:42), Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1:36), King of the Jews, King of Israel (John 12:13) .

These titles tell us so much about Jesus, and this list could fill a whole page. Remember also that these are just some of the titles from the four books of the Gospel; other books of the New Testament have more titles for Jesus. One specific title that has captured my attention for a long time now, is "King".

The revealing of Jesus as King occurs in a few places in the Gospel. We start with the Matthew 1:6 "and Jesse the father of David the King." Matthew lists the genealogy of "Jesus Christ, the son of David" for a specific reason, to show the royal lineage of Jesus. Pontius Pilate asks Jesus before The Crucifixion "Are you the King of the Jews? (Luke 23:3).

"The New Testament lies hidden in the Old
and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New."(2)

Jesus is not only revealed in the Gospel, but also in the Old Testament. The words of Jesus himself tell us where to look for him: "Then he said to them, "these are the word which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, **that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.**" (Mark 24:44). So to find out more about Jesus, we listen to Him, and look in the Psalms for Him. Note: The Jewish understanding of God, both 3000 years ago (and today) is that of God as a single person. When we as Christians see a reference to God as King, it is easy and natural to associate that reference to only one person of the Trinity: Jesus. There are other references to Jesus in the Psalms by other methods than the use of the title King, but King is the easiest to recognize.

Reading through the 150 Psalms, I found that God (The Lord) is referred to as "King" in 25 verses of 17 Psalms. (See the references at the end of the paper for the chapter and verse list.) The Psalms also have many references to "earthly" kings. It was an intellectual exercise to separate the two different meanings of the same word. So the next question to answer is: What is a King"? Rather than give a definition from the dictionary or encyclopedia, I give my own:

The King is the one that we pledge our loyalty to, and the one who we serve.

Loyalty and service go together, for our loyalty must be only to the one we serve, and that someone is Jesus. A significant part of our service to Jesus is helping other people know Him.

I have selected 16 verses from 11 Psalms and formatted them to fit an 8.5" by 11" paper that can be printed and framed (it can be trimmed to fit a standard 8" by 10" frame). The order of the verses has been kept in the same order as the Psalms appear in the Bible. They seemed to fit and flow perfectly without change to the order. **These 16 verses, when seen together, illuminate Jesus as King in a profound way.** This prayer is not something I or any other human could have written. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that has revealed the nature of Jesus in these Psalms.

The Psalm/prayer is meant to be read, studied, prayed, and even meditated on.

My King and my God

Hearken to the sound of my cry, my King and my God,
for to thee do I pray. (Ps 5:2)

The LORD is king forever and ever; (Ps 10:16)

Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty
in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! (Ps 24:8-10)

Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! (Ps 47:6-7)

Yet God my King is from of old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth. (Ps 74:12)

Even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at thy altars,
O LORD of hosts, my King and my God. (Ps 84:3)

For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. (Ps 95:3)

With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise
before the King, the LORD! (Ps 98:6)

The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all. (Ps 103:19)

I will extol thee, my God and King,
and bless thy name forever and ever. (Ps 145:1)

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and tell of thy power,
to make known to the sons of men thy mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of thy kingdom.
Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and thy dominion endures throughout all generations. (Ps 145:11-13)

References:

- 1) The Nature and Mission of Theology: Essays to Orient Theology in Today's Debates
- 2) St. Augustine, Quaest. in Hept. 2, 73: PL 34, 623; cf. DV 16.
- 3) Healing: heals a Centurion's servant - Luke 7:1;
 heals a woman bleeding for 12 years - Luke 8:44;
 raises Jairus' daughter - Luke 8:54; raises son of the Widow from Nain Luke - 7:11;
 raises Lazarus from the dead John 11:17
- 4) Teaching: see Luke 21:37, and John 18:20
- 5) Praying: Matthew 11:25-26, Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12, Luke 9:18, Luke 9:28

All Bible quotes are from the Revised Standard Version.

List of Psalms referring to God as King:

Ps.5:2
Ps.10:16
Ps.24:7, 8, 9, 10
Ps.29:10
Ps.44:4
Ps.47:2, 6, 7
Ps.48:2
Ps.68:24
Ps.74:12
Ps.84:3
Ps.89:27
Ps.95:3
Ps.98:6
Ps.99:4
Ps.103:19
Ps.145:1, 11, 12, 13
Ps.149:2