

Joseph Blenkinsopp. *David Remembered: Kingship and National Identity in Ancient Israel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 219 pages. \$26.

Conveniently, Joseph Blenkinsopp clearly states his intended aim for *David Remembered* in the very first line of his book: to trace one strand in the social and political life of the people of Israel from the sixth century B.C.E. to the early second century of the common era (1). That “one strand” is the legacy of David and the Davidic dynasty. Blenkinsopp uses biblical texts, early Jewish texts, and extra-biblical A.N.E. sources to reconstruct the various ways that David’s legacy was remembered centuries after the Davidic line was extinct, what attempts were made to restore the Davidic monarchy, how various prophets viewed new leaders in light of David’s legacy, and how that memory shaped a people’s response to foreign rule (i.e. Assyria, Babylon, Rome, Persia, etc.).

Blenkinsopp begins his historical survey by retelling and recasting the narrative of Israel and Judah’s dissolution, arguing that the biblical texts present Josiah as the last of the Davidic line. He then moves on to the various ways that the Hebrew people attempted to restore the native monarchy or to interpret their political situation theologically when such attempts failed (chapters 2–6). Factions who advocated for the restoration of a Benjamin-Saul monarchy, the Shaphan family’s attempts to restore the Davidic monarchy during Jeremiah’s prophetic career, Deutero-Isaiah’s theological support for Cyrus as the new anointed ruler, and Haggai and Zechariah’s approval of Zerubbabel are all carefully examined. After looking at Davidic themes in later prophecy (chapters 7–8), including apocalyptic prophecy, Blenkinsopp turns to David’s legacy in the spiritual and physical resistance to Rome (chapter 9). In this final chapter, Blenkinsopp provides a brief treatment of the Davidic legacy in Jesus’ ministry arguing that, “the gospel record about Jesus is the only explicit attestation of royal, Davidic messianism through the entire period of Roman rule” (176). Although the gospels do present Jesus’ ministry in connection with the Davidic monarchy, Blenkinsopp presents a chastened argument for how significant this association was for the gospel writers.

David Remembered is a compelling read that illuminates how David’s legacy is remembered and utilized in the centuries after his death; further, it corrects common assumptions that attitudes surrounding his kingship and its future restoration were monolithic and mainstream. Blenkinsopp is remarkably thorough and also quite careful with his assertions. Whenever he goes beyond the bounds of what can be explicitly gleaned from his sources, he is quick to remind the reader that his assertion is simply that. Still, he rarely goes beyond logical and responsible claims.

In my opinion, there are two places where *David Remembered* falls short despite its overwhelming positive merits. First, the introduction sets up an intriguing implication for the historical survey found within the book—Blenkinsopp claims that if we understand how one monarchy was remembered and reappropriated, then we may better understand “the world that we live in, how we arrived at where we are, and what our future prospects may be” (3). He even parallels David’s remembrance in Israel to King Arthur’s remembrance in Great Britain, highlighting how the legacies of both legendary kings have survived to present day and continue to affect a nation’s identity. This line of argument is rich and fascinating, yet Blenkinsopp does not return to it or provide anything beyond this introductory query. The second disappointment is that Blenkinsopp rarely mentions Psalms and he never gives them any sort of systematic treatment. The psalms attributed to David or the psalms that invoke David’s character provide

remembrances of the king long after his death. One would expect for their theology to either be examined or for their exclusion to be addressed.

David Remembered is remarkably readable and lucid despite its hefty task. It does not require an understanding of the Hebrew language, but it does assume more than a basic familiarity with the history of Israel. This book is best suited for students in Hebrew Bible and/or History, who have moved beyond their introductory education in their fields, through advanced scholars. For the homilician, this book does deepen one's knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. Obtaining any greater depth of knowledge in the Hebrew Bible certainly results in more responsible and nuanced preaching. The final chapter would probably hold the most interest for the Christian homilician; however, one might be disappointed to find that typological and figural readings of the David/Jesus connection are not more prominent in ancient literature.

Shelley Hasty Woodruff, Th.D. Student, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC