

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!  
Serve the Lord with gladness!  
Come into his presence with singing!  
Know that the Lord, he is God!  
It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Psalms 100:1-3 (ESV)



## The Christian life is a journey.

*TrailNotes* speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the “landscape” we are passing through in this trail-laced, wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. *TrailNotes* is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we’re learning and doing. This is a monthly publication of Grace Fellowship Church, Mansfield, Ohio.

## ElderTalk: “No Kings? Know the King!” - Part III David vs. the Kings

MATT GODSIL

We return to our examination of the title of “King” in Scripture. God’s perspective on kingship might be the best way to process current events in leadership among the nations and in church leadership, as it is grounded in His truth. Let us reflect on God’s Word in light of our present time and place in the world. In this article, we will be comparing David — shepherd boy turned king—with the kings of Judah and Israel after Solomon’s reign. Our sources are the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. I chose David as a pivotal human figure in the Old Testament because of the many messianic prophecies during Jesus’ time that often pointed back to him.

A good place to start is to summarize the design God has for kingship in the kingdom of heaven

as it advances across time and the face of the earth. The king is chosen by God, not self-made. He must be a big brother to the people, not a tyrant.

He must not accumulate power symbols of this world, like horses, wives, and gold. He must be a student of the Word. He is to be humble, obedient, faithful to the covenant, self-restrained, Torah-shaped, and God dependent. This is the standard against which every king is judged, including David.



### “David Playing the Harp Ahead of the Ark”

Jan de Bray - 1670 - Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, Germany.

Jan de Bray is one of the most important Dutch portrait and history painters of the second half of the “Golden Age.” Around 1670 he was the leading history painter in Haarlem. This work was made at the peak of his skill. It depicts with lifesize figures how King David brings the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Zion.

David is not perfect—but he is normative, as Scripture repeatedly measures later kings by him. David was chosen by God, not man. David ruled as a “brother” to Israel, uniting Judah and Israel, penitent when confronted, and received correction from God-sent prophets, like Nathan and Gad.

Where David failed God’s design is where he had accumulated multiple wives, had concubines, and married for political reasons. He abused power in his involvement

with Bathsheba and the death of Uriah. His kingship became predatory, the opposite of covenantal

(Continued on page 2)

## ElderTalk: “No Kings? Know the King!” David vs. the King *(Continued from page 1)*

brotherhood. David counted his military strength, trusting in numbers rather than God.

But where David stands out is that David repented. He never institutionalized idolatry, never abandoned Yahweh, and never justified sin. This is why Scripture calls him “a man after God’s own heart.”

We now turn to observe the kings who followed Solomon when the kingdom was divided into the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Most of these characters failed miserably at meeting the standards set by God in Deuteronomy 17, but there were exceptions.

There were kings of Judah who did fulfill God’s design partially. Hezekiah, Josiah, and Jehoshaphat were faithful in multiple regards of trusting God. They were known for destroying high places of idolatry, rediscovering the law, and seeking prophetic guidance.

However, these same kings failed by being prideful, acting presumptuously in battle, and making political alliances with evil rulers. Though considered generally as “good” kings comparatively, all fell short of the job description God had given.

The kings of Israel were systemic failures in light of Deuteronomy 17. They instituted rival worship, rejected Jerusalem, used religion to control politically, instituted idolatry, rejected the Torah, and persecuted the prophets. Most importantly, they refused to repent.

David is not the perfect king. But he is the prototype. He shows what aligned kingship with God looks like. He employs repentance within a covenant relationship. He is humbled before the Lord. David points forward to the ultimate fulfillment of God’s concept of kingship. The later kings fall away. David points to the complete and ultimate fulfillment of kingship that we have in the person of Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus that we can place our complete trust and allegiance, as the King of kings.

Next in the series, David vs. Solomon, coming in the April 2026 edition of *TrailNotes*.

## Hymns and Icons

JOHN KURTZ

Today in the twenty-first century with all of its technology and higher education, we sometimes forget that for centuries very few people could read or write, and communication was almost entirely by word of mouth. There were no such things as Bible commentaries, much less even Bibles for people to read. Therefore, in the early Christian church, the Word, as recorded in the Old Testament and the various Gospel records and apostolic letters, had to be shared by other means. Preaching, of course, was paramount, but there were at least two other ways in which the stories of creation, the Old Testament prophets, the history of God’s people, and, of course, the life of Jesus, His apostles and the early church were communicated. One was through the singing of “hymns and spiritual songs.” The words were easily memorized, both through repetition and melody association. We still use what we sing in the same way today.

The other medium used was art. Largely because of the Mosaic admonition against graven images, the artwork, known as iconography, was highly stylized and symbolic, but it got the message across. As one book on the subject so aptly states in its subtitle, the icon served as a “window on the Kingdom” for the early Christians. So it continues even today in both the Orthodox and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholic churches. Just as we do not worship our Bibles or the Cross, icons are not to be worshiped. However, the subject(s) of those icons are to be honored (venerated).

Here is an example of a famous icon painted in the early fifteenth century by a Russian monk, Andrei Rublev, which represents the Trinity. In it



there are seen three angelic Beings, representing the three persons of the Trinity. Each one has certain features and colors appropriate to the Father (at left), the Holy Spirit (at right) and the Son (in the center). The Father figure is wearing  
*(Continued on page 4)*

# Holy, Holy, Holy!

A hymn by Reginald Heber (1783-1826)



“In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.’” (Isaiah 6:1-3)

Although the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was not clearly understood before the day of Pentecost, we believe that it is revealed in the Old Testament as well as in the New. In this record of the prophet Isaiah’s vision of God, the Trinity is suggested in the triple repetition of the angels, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” These words have become one of the historic songs of believers in worship. It is called the Trisagion or the Tersanctus, the “three holies.”

Reginald Heber was an uncommon man. Born into a family of wealth and culture, he gave his life to the service of God both at home in England and far away in India. Though he possessed unusual literary gifts and was a friend of Britain’s leading men of letters, his greatest ambition was to improve the hymn singing in his own church.

When Heber accepted the post of Bishop of Calcutta in 1823, it was the realization of a longtime, deep-seated interest in foreign missions. As a bishop, Heber served a diocese that included much of the south Pacific. For three years he traveled tirelessly from place to place, using his remarkable gifts to advance the work of the Church in that distant area. On April 3, 1826, Heber preached on the evils of the caste system before a large audience at Trichinopoly. Afterward, he went to cool off in the swimming pool at the home where he was staying. Some time later, he was found drowned, the result of a stroke. At the age of forty-three, his brilliant life was ended, and he was buried in the Anglican church at Trichinopoly. In 1875 the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) honored his memory by placing a tablet there.

Reginald Heber lived and worked at a time in history when his contemporaries of English literature were becoming aware of the beauty of words and of poetic structure. The romantic movement of that day added a new dimension of elegance and lyric grace to Christian worship. This characteristic is never more evident than in Heber’s hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy,” which Lord Tennyson said was the greatest in the English language.

The powerful phrases of the hymn declare the attributes of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Heber shows his mastery of poetic design in composing each stanza to re-emphasize the doctrine of the Trinity by using a “trinity of words” to say something about God. Stanza one mentions three of the attributes of God; He is “holy, merciful and mighty.”

The second stanza reminds us that God is worshiped in heaven by the saints who have already died, and by the angels—“the cherubim and seraphim.” It closes with a “trinity of phrases,” which says that God is eternal—“He was, He is, and He evermore shall be.”

God is also perfect. Our understanding of Him is incomplete; He is partially hidden by the “darkness” of our sin and our ignorance. Yet we can see enough of His glory to know that He is perfect—“perfect in power, in love, and purity.”

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Holy, Holy, Holy! *(Continued from page 3)*

That is the “trinity” of the third stanza.

The final verse borrows another idea from John’s vision as recorded in Revelation 4:11—that God has created all things in the universe for “his own pleasure.” Therefore, all creation—“the earth, the sky, and sea”—praises Him. This is Heber’s final poetic trinity.

The tune commonly associated with these words was written by John B. Dykes, one of Britain’s leading organists and composers, who was also an Anglican rector. When published in 1861, Dykes gave it the significant name “Nicaea.” It was at the council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. that the church clearly enunciated its belief in the Trinity.

*(Slightly adapted from Crusader Hymn and Hymn Stories, compiled and edited by Cliff Barrows and Donald Hustad, Hope Publishing Co., 1967.)*

## Hymns and Icons *(Continued from page 2)*

a shimmering robe, reflecting the Heavenly Glory and He is seated beneath a castle with an open door to welcome the believer. The Holy Spirit figure is dressed in green and blue, symbolic of the earth because He is everywhere present and fills the believer on earth. There is a mountain behind Him, signifying the spiritual ascent of the Christian. The central Son figure is clothed in bright red, representing His Divine nature, and blue, His human nature. There is a band of gold over His shoulder, indicative of the fact that “the government shall be upon his shoulder,” as prophesied by Isaiah. Note that of the three figures shown, only that of the Father has an unbowed head, indicating His authority over the Son and the Holy Spirit—however all three figures are of equal size, depicting their equal importance in the triune Godhead. There is also no sign of fear or awe; the bowed heads of the Holy Spirit figure and that representing the Son are in that position out of pure love and respect for the Father.

This is just a brief look at one of thousands of icons painted or done in mosaic or fresco over the centuries. To us as Evangelical, post-Reformation, Christians they may seem odd and almost other-worldly. That is just what they are supposed to be!

## January 2025

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- 1 Happy New Year!**
- 3 Memorial service for Pat Weaver at GFC, 2 PM.**  
**Games Reach Family Game Night at GFC, 6:30-8:30 PM.**
- 4 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching – Being Humble – Luke 1:38, 44-45.**
- 7 Connect groups for all ages resume, 6:30-8 PM, in your usual locations.**
- 11 Elder Jadaé Fox preaching – Being Temperate – Genesis 39; 2 Samuel 11.**  

- 18 Robert Key preaching – Being Courageous – Deuteronomy 31:7-8.**
- 25 Pastor Eric Byrom preaching – Being Just – Luke 3:1-20.**   
**Walk for Life, Central Park, 2:30 PM.**  
**Community Meeting, 6:30-8:00 PM.**

## Grace Fellowship Church

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Eric Byrom – Presiding Elder/ Pastor  
(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)

A glimpse, “through a glass darkly,” of things in heaven and some things on earth, pictures which tell a story, “the old, old story of Jesus and His love.”