



Do You Really Know the King?

A Study in Samuel

David and The End

2 Samuel 23:1-7

Preached by Rev. Craig T. Smith

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In Summation

So much has happened since Samuel the prophet and judge arrived in Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the king of Israel. Jesse had several sons, and it would be his youngest, David, who would be brought in from keeping the sheep to be anointed as the next king. David is described as healthy, handsome, and God was with him. We would come to find out that David was a man after God's own heart.

The Bible tells us that when David was anointed king, the Spirit of God came upon him. From that day on, the text followed David because God had chosen David and was working in him and through him. Throughout his story, we have seen David at his best and also at his worst. We have been challenged by his strength and his faith. We have also become aware of our own frailty and sinfulness as we have seen David's life and family come apart because of David's sin.

The end is near here in chapter 23. And it seems right that we conclude this series with David's own words, his final words written, fittingly in poetry. It also forms a nice bookend to the entire narrative of Samuel's history that began with Hannah's song. Do you remember that? Way back in 1 Samuel 2, Hannah – who had been unable to give birth – vows to the Lord to dedicate her child to him and God answered her prayer with Samuel. She would speak of God working by saying, "The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give power to his king; he will lift up the horn of his anointed." (1 Sam 2:10)

Samuel begins with prophecy in Hannah's prayer. She couldn't know that David would be the one that prophecy pointed to. David would receive a prophetic word from Nathan the prophet. Nathan tells David that through David's lineage, there will be a one whose kingdom will last forever and never fail. (2 Samuel 7)

David is told that his house and his kingdom and his throne will be established forever. David was thirty when he heard Nathan's prophecy. He has reigned as king for forty years. It is interesting that as he floats around seventy years old, he doesn't look backwards. He isn't living in the past. He is looking ahead toward what is to come.

David prefers not to live in the past. Those who do tend to be difficult or trying company. You know what I mean. They constantly live life in reverse, saying things like, "It was much better back then. What a terrific time we had. If only you had lived back then as well..." Even worse that remaining focused on past victories is to continually dwell on past failures and allowing regret to dominate the picture.

David is looking forward here, asking what is before him and his people. Foundations have been laid and now David anticipates something more, something greater, something eternal. He is looking ahead to God keeping his covenant promise.

Scholars point to 2 Samuel 23 as some of the most easily identifiable writing from antiquity.¹ They say more than many other passages, these seven verses point back to the tenth century BC, noting several archaic features.² You might be wondering how such ancient literature, how something written so long ago, has any significance for our lives today.

You may not be seventy. You may be seventeen. Or twenty-seven or thirty-seven. And do you come to church and listen to Scripture read, preached, or taught and you tend to find yourself asking what difference does some old king writing a poem make in my life today? What is so important about this for me today in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia?

The story of King David and the promise that God made to him is the answer to the most important question in your life. The promise that God made King David is the solution to the biggest problem you face in your life. The covenant God made with David is the only hope for you and for the world. Because the King that was promised, who would come from the house of David, that King will make it possible for all creation to become the way that God originally intended it to be. Including people.

¹ P. Kyle McCarter Jr *1 and 2 Samuel* 2 vols. AB 8, 9. (New York: Doubleday, 1980 and 1984) p. 484-486

² Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg *I and II Samuel* OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) p.400

Here in 2 Samuel 23 we find the solution to all of our desire, our longing, our leanings, our hopes and the calming of our fears: this text points to Jesus.

The Hopes and Fears of all the Years

Next week we will begin celebrating the Advent season. Our theme this year is a journey to Bethlehem. We will sing that familiar couplet from the familiar song that reminds us that the hopes and the fears of all the years are taken care of in the person of Jesus. Over these next several weeks, we will consider what looking forward to the Messiah meant to God's people. David's writing here forms the basis for much of the teaching of the Messiah that occurred between the writing of Malachi and the birth of the Savior.

These are the last words that David wrote. Perhaps his last will and testament. If you want to get a clear understanding of who David was at the end of his life, these verses will provide keen insight. This is the oracle or declaration of God through David. God's own words delivered through David's lips or David's pen. It reminds us of our understanding of the inspiration of Scripture. It is inspired by God. God speaks and as God speaks, David writes.

David begins by declaring who he is in verse one. David is telling us what he would like us to know about him. He is a son of Jesse. David is marking his humble beginnings. This also connects him back through the book of Ruth to the town of Bethlehem, soon to be known as The City of David. While this is a humble beginning, it also an extension of the covenant God made to Abraham because this line of Jesse can be traced back to Abraham. And Matthew will do that as he begins his Gospel. David's name is the most significant in the lineage towards Jesus after Abraham.

David is further reminding us that our significance, our worth and our value and our purpose in being alive, is related to God's plan. We understand this when David writes that he was "raised on high." That is true. He started as a humble shepherd and now he has been the reigning monarch in Israel. God established David. David both acknowledges that he is the humble son of Jesse but also that God moved and worked in powerful ways in David's life.

David also identifies as the anointed one by the God of Jacob. Remember that Jacob was also named Israel, the father of the twelve tribes that David has united in his reign. God made a promise to Jacob of nations and kings coming from Jacob. David was the fulfillment of that promise. David recognized that he is King David not because of anything that David did, but because of this Divine appointment in his anointing.

Each of us is important too, certainly. However our significance, our importance, is related to God's plan for our lives. God has a purpose and who we are, what we are allowed to do, we don't earn that. We don't deserve that. God has a divine plan for us, and we must be obedient to follow that plan. David acknowledges this truth.

David's Prophecy

We transition from David clarifying his identity and now we read this prophetic psalm. He is acknowledging that the Spirit of God is speaking through him.

In the Hebrew, David writes the following prophetic promise: "A ruler over humanity will arise, a just ruler, and he will be ruling in the fear of God." David is not telling us that if a person is a just ruler, everything will go well. David's jurisdiction was Judea. His kingdom was much narrower than this promised kingdom. The Hebrew word used to describe the extent of this coming King's kingdom to be is the word *adam*. This is the Hebrew word for humanity, mankind. One is coming who will rule rightly, justly, over everyone everywhere, forever.

What an amazing, beautiful promise. Listen, load five people in a car after church and then try to find a place to go eat lunch. You can only go to someplace that all five people agree on unanimously. That is hard enough. But we read here that a King is coming who will rule over humanity. This king will reign, and his dominion will be over all, the very ends of the earth. And this kingdom will not end. Incredible.

The reign of David lasted around forty years and was limited to Israel. The Roman Empire lasted a few centuries and extended across the region of the Mediterranean Sea. Jesus will reign over a Kingdom that will outlast time and extend beyond distance. This King will be the answer to the greatest need in every life, everywhere.

What This Promised Kingdom Will Be Like

David even describes what life under this new King will feel like. This new King will dawn on us like the sunrise. He is compared to the grandeur of a wonderful early morning sunrise. “Oh, what a beautiful morning. Oh what a beautiful day.”³ Further, this King will feel like the warmth of the sunshine on a cloudless day. “Oh they tell me of a home far beyond the skies. And they tell me of a home far away. Oh they tell me of a home where no storm clouds rise. Oh they tell me of an uncloudy day.”⁴ Those lyrics refer to a place, but David’s words refer more specifically to a King. Further still, David tells us that this King will be as refreshing as life-giving rain.

Then David turns to an even more meaningful concept. David’s own kingship has been considered acceptable by God because David’s dynasty has been granted a “permanent covenant.” The term David uses is a technical term used in the Old Testament.⁵ It is a legal term referring to contracts that have no terminus point⁶. This means that they exist in perpetuity. It is used to refer to the covenants God made in the Old Testament.⁷

David understands that his kingship was a blessing bestowed by God and from it will be an enduring promise of an everlasting Kingdom.

David’s kingship is connected to this promise. From his line, from his dynasty, there will come a King who will rule righteously and justly. This reign will rule over all humanity. This King will reign forever. And all of our hopes and longings and desires will be found and answered in Him. This King is Jesus. Everything we desire, everything we are searching for in this life, everything that we strive and yearn for is found in Him.

Jesus Messiah is the answer. His Kingdom is eternal, it can be experienced by anyone who believes and trusts Christ for salvation. Every person longs for a kingdom, *some kingdom*.

³ Lyrics from *Oh What a Beautiful Morning* from the musical *Oklahoma* composed by Rodgers and Hammerstein. I grew up in a neighborhood in Enid, Oklahoma called The Meadows. On the sign entering my neighborhood was the quote, “There’s a bright golden haze on The Meadows.” This song has been with me my entire life.

⁴ Lyrics from *Uncloudy Day*, also known as *Unclouded Day*. It was a gospel song written by Josiah Kelley Alwood in 1879. A popular version was recorded by the Staples Singers in 1956.

⁵ There are also semantic parallels in the ancient Near East related to legal contracts.

⁶ Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East.” *JAOS* 90 (1970): p.184-203.

⁷ Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David.

It isn't a question of whether or not you desire to be part of some version of a kingdom. The question is which version do you want? The longing of your heart guides you forward and pushes you along. You will find some version of a kingdom. David's prophetic promise is for all of those seeking today. Your restless heart is searching and pushing you forward. It won't stop until it finds some kingdom for you to love. David's promise is that a Messiah would come and provide a Kingdom for everyone, a Kingdom that transcends place and time. And in that Kingdom, your restless heart can, finally, find the rest you are desperate to find. You can find it today in King Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

What is the most memorable sunrise and sunset you've ever seen?

What weather or season refreshes you, comforts you, the most? Why?

How could life with Jesus feel like a warm sunrise? How could life with Jesus feel like a rainfall?

Do you find yourself looking ahead at what is coming in life or do you tend to focus on what has already happened? What are the benefits of looking ahead?

David writes about a promised King who would rule rightly and justly. We understand and know from our perspective after the New Testament that Jesus fulfills that prophecy. What New Testament connections to David relate to this prophecy?