

The Covenant of Kingship
2 Samuel 7:8-16, 2 Chronicles 7:17-22

Brothers and sisters, King David is a biblical figure of biblical proportions... is he not? He looms large over the pages of the Old Testament, right up there with Abraham and Moses, Elijah and Elisha – definitely one of the top five figures in the history of the people of Israel.

And his resume is impressive; even if you're not a religious person or a church goer there's a good chance that you know something about the story of David and Goliath, where David armed only with a sling and a few small stones, faces down an armored giant of a man and kills him.

And from this early victory David goes on to become Israel's greatest warrior, defeating their arch enemies the Philistines in battle, capturing the city of Jerusalem, uniting all of the tribes of Israel under his leadership, and establishing and securing the Kingdom's borders.

And yet David was much more than a just warrior, he was also a poet and a musician - skilled in playing the harp, known to lead the people of God in worship, and responsible for writing the majority of the Psalms – including the most famous all psalms – the 23rd psalm.

And even when we look at King David's faults and failings, we see his openness to being confronted and rebuked, and a willingness to own up to his own sin and repent of it.

So, it's easy to see why King David is such a well-known, well-loved, biblical character and why He is considered to be a hero of the faith.

And oh, I almost forgot. In the midst of all the heroic achievements of his life – God makes an everlasting covenant with David and his sons regarding the continuation of his dynasty ruling on the throne of Israel, in an everlasting kingdom – a minor detail...

At least we could be excused for thinking it was a minor detail, considering how little attention it gets compared to the rest of David's accomplishments.

I mean there have been movies made about David's affair with Bathsheba, someone wrote a novel series called The Wives of King David, even inspirational author Malcom Gladwell has based on of his "insights-for-success-motivational" books on David – its called.... David and Goliath!

But... when was the last time you saw a movie, or read a novel, or heard about a book that focused on God's Covenant of Kingship with David... I don't think the story even makes it into most Children's Bibles???

And it's a shame really; because it just illustrates that for all our desire to be "biblical" we are often overlooking the key concept which makes things "biblical" – the Covenant.

For example, just because Gladwell's book draws from the story of David and Goliath, does this make it "biblical?"

No – the story of David and all that occurs in his Kingship are only "biblical" when we see it as part of the progression of Covenant Administrations through which God is working towards the restoration of the Covenant of Creation.

So for all of Gladwell's insights about advantage and disadvantage from the story of David and Goliath, it's not really the point. Rather its about the partial fulfillment of the promise God made in the Covenant of Commencement.

David, one of the offspring of the woman, strikes a death blow to the head of Goliath, the champion of a people who are considered to be the offspring of the serpent – and enemies of the people of God. That's what makes David and Goliath a biblical story... that's the message behind it, Covenant.

And our preparations for Easter this year are focusing on understanding what a Covenant is, how a Covenant works and how the successive administrations of the Covenant are all gathered up into each other and brought forward... so we can see how we get to Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

So, as we read the passage of scripture from 2 Samuel 7 this morning, I'm hoping that your "covenant radar" has been fine-tuned enough by now to pick up covenant signals that are echoed in what God was declaring to King David.

Did you catch vs. 6? *"I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt"* echoing the Covenant of Promise with Abraham to bring his descendants back to the land of promise...

Or did you catch verses 9; *"I will make your name great"* and 11; *"the Lord himself will establish a house for you"* both again echoing the Covenant of Promise with Abraham concerning the abundance of his descendants and that Kings would come from his line...

Perhaps you noticed vs. 10; *"I will provide a place for my people Israel"* again the Covenant of Promise regarding the land given to Abraham.

And again an echo of the promise to multiply Abraham's offspring in verse 12; *"I will raise up your offspring to succeed*

you" and with the specific usage of that word offspring here, it has even stronger echoes of the promise given to Eve in the Covenant of Commencement. *"I will put enmity between your offspring and the woman's, and he will crush your head..."* (Gen 3:15)

And verse 10 echoes the fulfillment of that same promise when God says *"Wicked people will not oppress them anymore..."*

And finally, the fulfillment of God's ultimate goal and purpose to restore the Covenant of Creation is echoed in his words in verse 11 when He says *"I will also give you rest from all your enemies..."* as this reminds us of God's Sabbath rest after His creating work was complete.

So – we can see how this covenant administration with David continues to connect and build on the prior covenants, just as they all have so far...

And, just as each prior administration has a distinct and unique focus – this one is characterized by its emphasis on kingship and rule and kingdom, and so we call it the Covenant of Kingship. So why does God bring in yet another covenantal administration?

We might think that the previous administration of Law, which Israel had received for the purpose of allowing them to show their gratitude and correctly function as a Kingdom of Priests – would have been enough.

It's simple enough, God's told you what to do – it's all there for you to read or have read to you, carved into stone tablets... read it, listen to it, and then go do it!

You would think this would have been enough...

But friends, notice that most of the covenant echoes we have heard in God's words to David are connected to the Promise to Abraham – there's very few echoes from the Covenant of the Law.

That's because Israel's obedience to the Law and their capacity to fulfill their role as a nation of Priests seemed to depend having leaders who would lead them to do so.

We've noted before how the story of the scripture is the story of how things move from one covenant administration to the next, and if we were to summarize the story of Israel under the Covenant of Law, up to the time of David with one word... it would be "fickle."

And the fickleness of this covenant period is described perfectly in Judges 2:7-22, listen to what was going on.

"The people served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel...." (vs. 7) But after these leaders died...

"another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals." (vs.10-11)

So – true to the covenant arrangement *“the Lord gave them into the hands of raiders who plundered them... Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them from these raiders... Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies, as long as the judge lived.”* (vs. 14, 16, 18)

So as I said, Israel’s faithfulness seemed to depend on having someone able to lead them because the scriptures continue on saying *“when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshiping them.”* (vs. 19)

The book of Judges describes how Israel repeated this pattern of unfaithfulness - **and** shows how it also affected the quality and character of the judges God used to lead the people.

The first judges were good leaders, but by the time we come to Samson - God is scraping the bottom of the barrel.

In spite of Samson being raised as a Nazarite, His life and character are so far from covenant faithfulness that he doesn’t even lead the people; he just takes revenge on the Philistines and loses his life in process.

After Samson there are no more judges, and things really start to fall apart... and the remaining five chapters in the book of Judges describe how things deteriorate into chaos and bloodshed in Israel because there is no leadership. And so the book of Judges ends with this revealing statement *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.”*

So, we can see why God brought in the next Covenant administration. His people needed a leader – a good leader, a faithful covenant ruler, who could lead them in being faithful as a covenant people... and so God gives this task to King David and his line.

They are to rule and lead the people to be faithful in keeping the Covenant of Law, and this is what gives the Covenant of Kingship its distinctiveness.

If David and his descendants are faithful in this covenant task, then the people will experience the covenant blessings of living in the law of the God, and receiving what God promised to their father Abraham, and they will continue to have rest from their enemies.

If the King does wrong, God will discipline him, chastise him, correct him – but God will not destroy him or break this covenant, because as God said *“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”* (2 Sam 7:16)

And friends in this promise to David, in the Covenant of Kingship, we see God’s determination to bring through his purpose that lies behind each of these administrations – the goal of restoring the Covenant of Creation.

So whatever happens from this point on – God has now covenanted... He has bonded himself... to achieving this restoration thru King David’s heirs as they lead the nation of Israel.

So, now we can see why this Covenant is the single most important detail of David’s life and why we should not overlook it, especially as we are looking at how **all** the covenants work together, and lead up to Jesus Christ.

All too often Jesus and salvation are defined against the Covenant of Law all on its own – and this error is compounded in the fact that we contrast Jesus with an incorrect understanding of the Covenant of Law.

But even if we understand the Covenant of Law correctly, and we include the Covenant of Creation and all the prior covenant administrations... we mustn’t forget that it is the Covenant of Kingship which is the preceding administration prior to the arrival of Jesus Christ.

Now this is important friends because there is always a reason why God moves from one covenant administration to the next – we’ve seen that as we’ve gone through them...

And if you know the story of the Kings of Israel you'll know David's line failed rather miserably to live up to their calling to lead the people in covenant faithfulness.

So, in spite of God's warnings and punishments – eventually the nation of Israel was exiled from the Promised Land and the temple was destroyed – just as God had warned King Solomon.

So if we are following the story of scripture, from the perspective of how things move from one covenant administration to the next, then the “why” for the birth of Jesus Christ, and the reason for the manner in which he was born, is that God himself was fathering an heir for King David.

This heir would sit on the throne of Israel, but He would not fail as David's other successors had... and this brings us back to the reason the Covenant of Kingship was needed in the first place.

The people of God needed a leader who could help them live faithfully according to the covenant of Law; and thus receive the blessings of the promise given to Abraham, and also ensure that those blessings would benefit all nations.

And that's what Jesus started doing when He began his ministry, which incidentally begins with his baptism where God says to Him “You are my Son...” which is what God said He would call the heirs of David.

So this confirms that Christ was the heir God would place on the throne of David to fulfill the task of leading His people to be faithful covenant partners and keep the Law of Moses.

So again we are reminded of Christ's words in Matthew 5:17 *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

Then Jesus proceeds to give the Sermon on the Mount, where He teaches and instructs the people of Israel with regards to faithful Covenant obedience of the Law.

And when He was finished teaching Matthew writes *“the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”* (Matt 7:28-29)

Of course He had authority friends, He was the anointed Covenantal King fulfilling His God-given responsibility to lead the people to be faithful to their God! He is the Christ of the Covenants...

Now the question for us friends... is what we mean when we call Jesus “King?” And what are we really saying when we call Jesus our King?

Are we just using some language that is found in the bible and we hear other people saying, and it’s in our worship songs and it sounds good, so we say “Jesus is King” it sounds “biblical...”

Maybe we have some sort of understanding that Jesus is more important than anyone else in this world – so we can call him “King” in that sense.

Or perhaps we’re thinking along the lines that we’ve asked Jesus to come into our heart – so he’s the “King of our hearts” and he’s supposed to make the decisions about what we do with our lives and he’s supposed to be in charge...

And brothers and sisters these are all good reasons to describe Jesus as King, but the truth is that Christ is an actual “King” because of the Covenant of Kingship.

So from this point on – when we say Jesus is King, our understanding is biblical – it is covenantal...

Calling Jesus King means that Jesus is the one who has come to fulfill the role of the King of Israel – and lead us to live in obedience to God’s law, so that we can be faithful covenant partners with God, and thus be included in the Promise to Abraham and receive all the blessings which come from that, and in turn bless others around us.

Christ takes the blessings that David’s leadership initially secured for Israel and expands them into much larger

Covenant Restoration blessings of life everlasting in a new heavens and a new earth where we will see God face to face.

Now it's also important to distinguish that when we call Jesus our King – it does not mean that we are giving Jesus the power and authority in our lives, that we are installing him as King...

That is given to Him by God Almighty not us. One of the unintended side-effects of democracy is that we believe the right to rule and govern comes from ourselves. *“A gov't from the people, for the people and by the people...”*

And if we apply this notion to the Kingship of Christ then we end up thinking that we have made Jesus King of our life...

The problem comes when our King leads us to be obedient to God's Law in areas that challenge us, or make life difficult for us, or just go against our sinful nature –we'll be tempted to think that we have the right to unmake Christ as our King.

Just like those who welcomed Jesus as king on Palm Sunday - to fulfil their political expectations, and when He didn't, only a few days later they shouted for His crucifixion instead.

So when we call Jesus our King friends, from this point on we must understand that it is defined by the covenant as well that we might not make the same kind of mistake.

This means that we are confessing we need someone to lead us in order to be faithful covenant partners with God... We not only need someone to teach us how to live according to God's Law, and how to understand its norm and how to live out its form. *(so we are not simply falling back on the Mosaic Law forms)*

We need a King who will obey on our behalf and offer his own life as payment so that we might be forgiven and changed to be able to live like this. That's how Jesus fulfills the calling of the King of Israel - believe this and trust in this!

So to say that Christ is our King means that we will yield to Him as God's choice, not ours, and we give Him our allegiance and loyalty and obedience because of what He has done.

Because the truth is friends, without Christ's life and sacrifice and His Leadership, our lives will also fall into disobedience – from outright rebellion to quiet self-righteousness.

And friends, if we are willing to admit this, if we know that we need this, then hear the good news that the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 4:8-13

“Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

So friends the good news is that Christ the King has provided those of us who need His leadership with gifts - gifts that will give us His leadership.

Through the sending of the Holy Spirit, Christ gives us the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers – leaders who will continue Christ's work as the Covenantal King and will lead us in obedience... and help us understand what it means to obey God's Law now that the Mosaic Law has been fulfilled in Christ.

As Paul puts it *“to equip us for works of service”* and help us reach the end goal of unity, maturity, and the fullness of Christ.

So friends to call Christ our King is also about acknowledging those whom the King has called to lead His people until His return. Seeing them as actual gifts from Jesus and accepting their leadership, as His leadership - to help you live as faithful obedient covenant partners with God through Jesus.

This is why Hebrews 13:17 says *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.”*

But friends, we would not be very good leaders in this respect if we did not point out to you that since the Holy Spirit connects you to Jesus Christ – you also share in His Kingship and the task of leading people to obey God.

After all – God’s intention for Israel was to be a Kingdom of Priests, to bless all nations...

So Paul says in 2 Cor 5:20 *“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”*

To say Christ is our King is to confess that we are His ambassadors with a job to do... invite people into the Kingdom of our King...

So – let me ask you once again friends... what do we mean when we say Christ is King? And what are we confessing when we say Christ is our King?

Friends, may our answer be reflected in our specific acts of obedience as we follow the one whom God has sent as our Eternal King - wherever it is that He leads us.

Amen.