

## WEEK 53

# THE GOD OF ISRAEL CANNOT BE CAPTURED -----

Dennis Watson

This week we encounter a problem that faces God’s people— substituting form for substance. This can be called superstitious idolatry. The Israelites believed they had experienced defeat because of the absence of the ark. Then they believed they would be victorious because they had it. Well, it didn’t work for them. God is the One who provides, not a good luck charm, not even the religious kind.

### Day 1

#### **First Read 1 Samuel 4**

Too often God’s people fail to seek His will and direction in prayer before they proceed. Israel went into a battle with the Philistines. However, they did not seek God’s direction before going to battle. Then, after experiencing a major defeat, 4,000 killed, they asked, “Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines?” They really didn’t ask God nor did they seek to understand if they had made a wrong decision. Instead, they decided on their own that they needed to have the Ark of the Covenant, believing it would save them from their enemies. There is no “it” that saves. God is the One who saves and delivers. They had turned the ark into a good luck charm. So they retrieved the ark and brought it to where they were and had a great celebration because they assumed it would give them victory. For a moment, when the Philistines heard the clamor of the celebration they were fearful. However, they got themselves together, attacked the Israelites and killed thirty thousand soldiers! This time including Eli’s sons, Hophni and Phinehas. With the ark in their ossession, they were no better off; they were worse!

A man ran to tell Eli what had happened. He told him four things:

- 1) Israel has fled
- 2) Many have been slaughtered
- 3) His two sons are dead
- 4) The ark has been captured by the enemy

At the news, Eli also fell over dead! The judgment of God was on the house of Eli because of the corruption of his two sons. The judgment of God was on the Israelites because they were not seeking Him, they were really practicing superstitious idolatry.

Young Samuel received this message early on and shared it with Eli as prophecy from God of coming judgment.

But the sadness was not yet finished. The wife of Phinehas, one of Eli's sons, went into labor and delivered a son. She named him Ichabod, which means "The Lord has departed." Then, she too, died.

What a sad day! This was fulfillment of the prophecy given to Eli through Samuel in chapter three.

We need to avoid any kind of superstitious idolatry. Only the Lord can protect and save us. We need no good luck charms. Not even the Bible is to be something we use in a superstitious manner. Ask the Lord to enable you to look only to Him. He, alone, can deliver.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 5**

The enemy of the Israelites, the Philistines, thought they had done a really good thing. They had captured the ark. Like the Israelites, they thought it would somehow bring them good fortune. They set it beside a statue of the false god, Dagon. The next day the statue had fallen over. They set it up again but the next day it had fallen again, now with its head and hands broken off. The hand of the Lord was against them because they had taken the ark. The people of the town of Ashdod, where the ark had been taken, got tumors and many of them died. They figured out it was because they had the ark. So they sent the ark to another town called Gad. The hand of God was against Gad also so they sent it to Ekron. The ark had become a "hot potato" that no one wanted.

The Philistines were idol worshippers! The Israelites were just as wrong to treat the ark as a good luck charm. The Philistines simply added it to their many idols. God judged them for it. Their false god statue was totally helpless, as all false gods are. The people made the statue and then had to help it up. God was punishing the Philistines in keeping with His promise to Abraham. God told Abraham that He would make him into a great nation, and He would bless anyone who blessed Israel and curse anyone who cursed Israel.

Our God is the only true God. All false gods are idols made by men. Thank God for His greatness and power. Look to Him not as a rabbit's foot or a genie in a lamp. Look to Him as your Heavenly Father.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 6:1-16**

The Philistines believed that God was punishing them because they had the ark. It started out in the town of Ashdod, then moved to Gad. The last town it came to was Ekron. The only thing they wanted to do was get rid of it. The big question was, “What shall we do and how shall we send it away?” They wanted to send it back to the Israelites. They decided that when they sent it away they should not send it away by itself. So they made five golden tumors and five golden mice and put them in a separate chest beside the ark in hope that this would bring about healing for them. Then the question was how to send it away. They devised a test. They would put the ark on a cart to be pulled by two milk cows which had calves. If the cows came back with the ark they would conclude that the bad things that happened were just coincidental and it was not the hand of God. If the cows kept moving to the Israelite land then they knew that God’s hand had been against them.

The cows did not return to their calves but went to Beth Shemesh. Obviously, God showed Himself to the Philistines by leading the cows back to the people of Israel. The people of Beth Shemesh celebrated when the ark arrived. They understood that with God clearly leading the cart to them, He was returning to Israel.

Thank God for returning to Israel and showing His mercy and grace.

## **Day 4**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 7:1-11**

Finally, the ark came to Kirjath Jearim where it remained at the home of Abinadab. The people of Israel were coming to realize that it only represented the presence of God and it was not a good-luck charm. About 20 years had passed before the people of Israel turned away from the false gods. They were broken and sorry for their idolatry. They were ready to return to the Lord. Samuel told them that they must put away their false gods and idols if they were truly turning back to the Lord. He also told them to confess their sin and turn fully to the Lord. Chapter seven really marks the beginning of Samuel’s prophetic ministry to the people. The people turned to the Lord and Samuel offered a sacrifice and prayed for the people. This is what they had left out previously! They had not sought the Lord. Previously, they thought they had something that represented

the Lord in form, but they did not seek Him. Church attendance, Bible reading and prayer, along with other “good” things are no substitute for a real and ongoing relationship with God. Samuel interceded for the people and offered a sacrifice of a lamb for them. The lamb that Samuel sacrificed pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God. God gave the people of Israel a victory—the first in a long time. Samuel put up a stone in that place and called it Ebenezer. That means “The Lord has helped us.” It was a reminder of God’s help and deliverance. It would be a reminder of the past and an encouragement for the future. The people experienced true revival.

Just before you come into the front doors of our worship center at Harp’s Crossing Fayetteville you see a pile of stones with a fountain. This is our Ebenezer. It reminds us of God’s provision in building the worship center without debt. It reminds us of the past and will encourage us in the future that He is our help and provider.

Return to the Lord if you have turned from Him. Give thanks that He is faithful to hear us and send revival.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Isaiah 52:10 and Luke 2:25-32**

We learned this week that the people made a huge mistake in looking for a thing, the ark, to save them. They were being superstitious. We must be careful not to confuse form with substance. The Israelites failed to see that the ark only represented the presence and power of God. It was not the actual power and presence of God. This week we saw that the enemy of God, the Philistines, were fearful of God because they had seen how He had saved Israel from the Egyptians (1 Samuel 6:6). In Isaiah 52:10 we read that God would reveal His salvation through Jesus to all people. This was prophecy—history written in advance. In Luke 2 a man by the name of Simeon holds the baby Jesus and declares, “*My eyes have seen Your Salvation.*” Connect the dots. God is in the salvation business. The Egyptians had seen God save the Israelites out of bondage. The Philistines had seen God save the Israelites from the Egyptians and had heard of His saving them. At Jesus’ birth an old man says that by seeing Jesus he had seen God’s salvation.

I sometimes hear people say, regarding their walk with God when they are going through tough times, “It doesn’t work.” What is the “it” they are referring to? To be a Christian is to have a relationship with God. No relationship is about “it” working.

If you have received Jesus, God's Son, who died for your sins and was raised again you too, have seen His salvation firsthand! God never wanted His people to look to a thing, like an ark, or to a man, like a king or prophet. His ultimate goal is for His people to look to Him. How is your relationship with God?

## Week 54 Israel Demands a King----- Chris Watson

Sometimes we want what we want, we want it now, and we will listen to no one! This is right where we find Israel this week. Even after God, through His servant, telling the people that they really didn't need a king, they still insisted and so they got what they asked for. As we will see this week and in the weeks to follow, it wasn't exactly the best decision they ever made.

### Day 1

#### **First Read 1 Samuel 8**

Israel wanted a king! When Samuel gave them the answer they were not looking for, they insisted anyway. Not only did Samuel not want them to have a king, neither did God. A king would reign over Israel but now was not the time. Deuteronomy 17:14-15 tells us that God would appoint such a king and it would come from the line of David. Of course, Jesus would be Israel's king in time but this was speaking of David.

"This request was, of course, out of order. It was true that prophecy had long before intimated that Israel would one day have a king (Genesis 17:6,16; 35:11; 49:10), and God had made provision in the law for the appointment of a king (Deuteronomy 17:14,15). Because of the law of the tenth generation (Deuteronomy 23:2) that time had not yet arrived in God's plan for a king for Israel; therefore, the plea by the elders was presumptuous. It could not wait on God's time. However, as is true of all evil, this presumptuous cry by the elders to Samuel for a king came with some arguments to try to justify their request even though their request was out of order. The elders presented to Samuel a fourfold argument for why Samuel should accede to their plea for a king."<sup>1</sup> We see from Ruth 4:18-22 that the 10th generation would be David, David was to be the king but the people jumped the gun. "Finally God in judgment granted Israel a king and gave Samuel the unpleasant task of making Israel a king. Samuel had to lead Israel in making the difficult transition from one form of government to another. The results of this change of government, in which Israel got their way instead of following God's way, brought much grief and many problems not only to Samuel but also to all Israel."<sup>2</sup> In two weeks we will see that God chooses a king in His time and in the manner in which He chooses.

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<sup>1</sup>Keith Fordham, "Change of Government" adapted from John G. Butler

<sup>2</sup>Keith Fordham, "Change of Government" adapted from John G. Butler

Instead of the people trusting God and listening to the words that Samuel spoke concerning what would happen if they were to have a king, they didn't care and insisted. They wanted what they wanted. Some might ask why God would allow this if it wasn't His plan. It was His permissive will. In other words He would permit it and allow the people free will to make their own choices. We see, though, that they would face some very tough times for doing things their way and wanting what all the others nations had, a physical king. In demanding a king they, in essence, were rejecting God.

Today, let us not take plans into our own hands and insist that we want or need something without seeking God's direction and plan. It may not be God's plan or, as in this case, it just might not be His timing. Whatever the case, seek Him and His ways! Remember, if you are seeking God with all you have you won't have to wring your hands asking, "Am I in God's will?" For if you are seeking God and Him alone you are in God's will.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 9**

1 Samuel 8 ends with the Lord telling Samuel to give the people a king. In this chapter we see the process taking place. We see the Lord's providence at work here. God's providence simply means that He is in control and that He directs all things. The God who created all things directs everything like a director leads an orchestra.

We see that God orchestrated the seemingly lost donkeys of Saul's father so that Saul and Samuel would meet up and, in the end, Samuel would anoint Saul. The Lord used something like lost donkeys to bring this process together.

God can and will use anything; we have seen this already in the first few books of the Old Testament. God's providence is alive and well. He can use seemingly large and small things to get our attention, pull His plan together, or just remind us that He is in control.

How have you seen God's providence at work in your life? Maybe the family you have, the place you live, the church you are a part of, the job you have, etc. Don't just think on all these things today but share at least one of them, telling someone how you have seen the hand of God at work in your life. Perhaps you were aware God's providence was at work or maybe you didn't even notice it until later. Thank God for His divine plan and that He is always in control.

Be thankful that He can and will use even our foolish decisions as a part of His plan, though obedience is what He desires!

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **First Read 1 Samuel 10:1-8**

Even though Israel wanted a king for the wrong reason and they were rejecting God, God could still work this for His good. Remember that Israel is God's chosen people. Remember from Genesis 12 that God, beginning with Abram, was going to make them into a great nation. In the first few verses of Genesis 12 God tells Abram that he is the one that will begin the process of making Israel into a great nation!

God often uses us in spite of our selves. This is true in the account of the anointing of Saul. Although it was not the right time and the people wanted a king for a wrong reason, God would use their foolish choice, in spite of the Israelites. God would use Saul as the new king to defeat the Philistines and save His people. In spite of their wrong choice God was in control.

We can make some "not so great" choices and decisions, but God can still use them. That is not to say that we are or can make willful, disobedient choices and still walk step in step with God. That is contradictory to God and His Word. However, God can use even our "not so great" choices for His purposes. Israel was God's chosen people and, although they often experienced consequences for their sin by going in front of God or not doing things in the right time, God was still in control and was still navigating things.

Samuel anointed Saul as a sign of his kingship. Acts 4:26 speaks of God's Anointed One who is Jesus. The ultimate king is Jesus and He is God's anointed. He is God's man. He is the way, the truth, and the life. While Israel was looking for a human king to give them what they wanted, Samuel knew that God was their king and was to be their focus.

Today might we look to Jesus as our king, our ruler, our guide, and our comfort. We are not to trust in men, presidents, kings, or rulers but in the Name of the Lord, Our God! May we follow Him out of love and obedience as we walk step in step with Him. Might our trust be in Jesus today.

## **Day 4**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 10:17-27**

In today's account we see God's providence at work again. He knew that Saul was to be king and in verses 17-22 we see God's providence from all the tribes, to the tribe of Benjamin, to the clan of Matri, to Saul. The people were casting lots to choose the king but God was ultimately in control of this process. We don't cast lots today to make our choices. Rather, as believers, we seek counsel from God and His Word.

In verse 27 we read that some troublemakers began to question the choice and many were asking how Saul could save them. They didn't even didn't bring the king gifts, as was customary. Do you find this interesting? The people had just asked for a king. We read in Chapter 8 that they had been warned what would happen if a king was given to them. Yet, not much later we have some of those same folks questioning how Saul was going to save them and already causing trouble.

We often reach and grab for things that we desire and want. Many times we know we shouldn't want or desire these things, but we do. Instead of seeking counsel from God and His Word, we go after what we want. Then soon after getting what we desire or want we often realize it wasn't really what we wanted, after all. The grass wasn't greener on the other side and we desire to go back or change course. May we always seek God first. Seeking God and His ways is not only right but it can save us from a lot of pain, regret, heartache, and undoing. Sometimes we think we desire or want something when we really don't or it is obviously contrary to the Word of God. Today let us seek God and His Word. We don't have to cast lots to make a right decision or to follow God. To know Him we need to read His Word, and communicate with Him through prayer. May our focus be on God and our choices be in line with His Word.

## Day 5

### **First Read Daniel 9:24-26**

This prophecy contains a lot but in the end it's all about Jesus. You might remember some time back we went through a Sunday night study that dealt specifically with end time prophecy, specifically this prophecy. We see first that there will be a day when sin will come to an end. Can you imagine that? We can only imagine it because we have never experienced it. All we know is sin. We know that there will be a day of no more sin, no heartaches, no sickness, no wrecks, no need for hospitals, policemen, or security because all sin will be removed. So the prophecy first speaks of a day where there will be no sin.

It also speaks of a day where righteousness will last forever. Not only will there be no sin but there will be a day where only excellent things abound, the things of God. God's goodness will be all around and it will reign and prevail.

This prophecy also speaks of the Anointed One who will come in that day and rebuild Jerusalem, God's city, where His people will live. This is God's Anointed One which is Jesus. He is the only one that can do away with sin and bring forth righteousness. So even Daniel, years before Jesus, was prophesying about Him.

Jesus is everything! He is our hope. He is the reason we breathe, not to mention the reason that we can. He is our hope for victory and freedom from sin and our hope for a relationship with God. He is our only hope to heaven and our hope day by day. Thank Jesus for being our hope!

## **WEEK 55 SAUL DISOBEYS THE LORD**---Dennis Watson

Chuck Missler says that Saul was God's "911" man. He was an interim king before the king that God intended, which was David. God gave the people what they wanted but warned them of the consequences. God's permissive will in this case was a stop-gap measure. Saul did not obey God. Well, like most of us, he would partly obey. Partial obedience is disobedience. This week we will see Saul forfeit his kingdom due to disobedience. Always remember that God is in control.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read 1 Samuel 15:1-3**

It is a dangerous thing to leave your spiritual enemies lying around! Sin is the believer's enemy. Sin robs the believer of the life that God intends for the believer to have. In fact, Paul uses words to describe sin that make sin sound like an enemy who takes control (see Romans 6:12). The Amalekites were enemies of God's people and He wanted them eliminated. Not partially eliminated, but totally! God told Saul to lead his army against the Amalekites and completely wipe them out. That sounds very mean and cruel, but God is serious about sin. His ultimate plan is a new heaven and earth where right, truth, and holiness prevail. The Amalekites were idol worshippers who had attacked Israel when they were fleeing Egypt. God is not mean: He is loving, gracious, and kind, but He hates sin! That is why He sent Jesus to rescue people from sin and its consequences.

God's judgment on sin is a good thing. Think of a person with cancer. A doctor who is a good doctor will attack the cancer. He is not mean, but he sees something in a person's body that has to go. That may include surgery, which is radical, painful, and takes time for recovery. The treatment may also include some kind of therapy like chemo or radiation, both of which are very tough to endure. However, when all goes well the cancer is eliminated or 'judged.' God's judgment on sin is just like that. Sin is a cancer and God has taken extreme steps to get rid of it. In Jesus' death on the cross God took extreme steps to judge sin and take away its power and consequences. God's ultimate plan is the total elimination of sin and its consequences. He will make a new heaven and new earth in which there will be no sin.

Thank God for His judgment on sin! Judgment is painful but it is a good thing. He is not mean. He is righteous and holy and He plans for all of creation to be the same.

## Day 2

### **First Read 1 Samuel 15:4-12**

As I write these words, Israel and the Middle East are very much in the news. Israel is being shot at by her neighbors the Palestinians (led by Hamas.) Those attacks are unprovoked but, as has been the case throughout Israel's history, nations are jealous and hate Israel. Very interestingly, in keeping with today's passage regarding Israel, Israel warns the Kenites of the attack and instruct them to get out of the way. Today, I am talking about 2014, when attacked without provocation Israel warns their attackers of the incoming missiles, before Israeli forces retaliate.

Saul obeyed God's instructions and attacked the Amalekites. However, he only partially obeyed. Partial obedience is disobedience. Saul partially obeyed and defeated the Amalekites, but did not totally wipe them out. God had made it clear they were to take no prisoners and they were not to take any of their stuff, they were to burn it. However they took King Agag as prisoner and they took the best of the animals. Not only did Saul disobey in this way, he took credit for the victory and built a monument for himself. Instead of giving glory to God he took glory for himself.

*I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. Isaiah 42:8 (NKJV)*

At times I am prone to this kind of living—partial obedience. It is obeying in some areas and feeling like that obedience earned me some points to take liberty of disobedience in others. It seem like this was Saul's thinking but it would be costly. It always is. And remember, all we do in obedience to Him is for His glory, not ours.

As you pray, ask God for the grace to be fully obedient!

## Day 3 **CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 15:13–23**

Saul had been only partially obedient to God's instructions through Samuel. He defeated the Amalekites but in disobedience took the King and some of the best animals and kept them and then built a monument to himself. When Samuel and Saul met, Saul immediately said with great pride, "*Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD.*" Oh really? Samuel's

response was very convicting (it would be humorous if it were not so serious). *Samuel replied, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" He said, "Why is it that I hear the sound of sheep and oxen?"* Saul's answer seems ridiculous in light of his blatant disobedience. He tells Samuel that they kept the best of the animals to sacrifice to "your God." Your God? Was He not Saul's God, too? Saul was in a mess! Samuel rebuked him for his disobedience and Saul rationalized by telling Samuel that he did obey and only took the king and the people took the animals. He even said he was obedient!

Samuel told Saul that God wants obedience and not sacrifice; especially the sacrifice that comes from others. For his rebellion and disobedience the kingdom would be taken away from Saul.

Once again this hits a little too close to home. I often rationalize my own sin. What about you? When my obedience to God is only partial I usually have a pretty good excuse. Sin always has a good excuse. Obedience comes out of a love and desire to fully express love to the one being obeyed. It is not about the rules but love, honor and respect for the one being obeyed. That is why Samuel told Saul that obedience is better than sacrifice.

As a king Saul was just a man, and a sinful man at that. God ultimately sent Jesus to be the King of kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus was perfectly obedient and God's King.

It seems appropriate to close today with this:

*Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." **Matthew 22:37** (NKJV)*

## Day 4

### **First Read 1 Samuel 15:24-35**

One great biblical truth is that *"nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus"* **Romans 8:38-39**. This is known as the security of the believer. I am thankful that I am secure in Jesus. However, we can wander away from God by our own choices and experience some very tough consequences. Saul did confess but his confession included blame. He blamed the people over whom he was king. He said he did it because he feared the people. Fearing people can bring a snare (Proverbs 29:25). This fear of people can take control of a person's life. How often do we do things to please or impress other people? The second half of Proverbs 29:25 says

that trusting the Lord will keep a person safe. What a struggle for the Jesus follower. Obey God or other people? We really see this played out in Saul's life. He feared the people and did what he thought they wanted and lost his kingship. Had he trusted the Lord things would have been quite different.

Saul wanted to be liked by the people. Rather than leading, he followed what they wanted. This is a huge dilemma for most of us as Jesus followers. Saul was in tune to what other people wanted and he aligned his life with that. I am sure you see the application in this for our lives as believers. Are you tuned to obeying God or other people? This is a tough question. Think about it all day today and take note of when you are making decisions based on following God or other people.

Ask God for the grace to be surrendered to Him and not to other people.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Isaiah 28:14–16 and 1 Peter 2:5–9**

Today we look at an Old Testament prophecy that finds its fulfillment in Jesus. This one is very clear. Isaiah spoke of a cornerstone that will be a foundation stone. In the New Testament the writers acknowledged that Jesus is that cornerstone and foundation stone.

A cornerstone is a symbol of the aligning truth of life. In construction a cornerstone is the first stone laid. When it is laid correctly all of the other stones are lined up with it and the wall is straight and strong. Then the whole foundation is built correctly.

It is easy to follow lies. We just align ourselves with people who will tell us what we want to hear. The promise is that their way will be good for us. Israel's leaders had turned to Egypt for help and deliverance instead of following God consistently. This was not the first time they had aligned themselves with a pagan foreign nation. It is so easy to get out of alignment. Israel was out of alignment because she had turned to another foundation and had sought to build on that foundation rather than the true foundation.

Isaiah gave a message to correct the leaders of Israel. He rebuked them for following foreign nations and making lies their refuge rather than God. The appeal was for them to turn away from foreign alliances and turn to God.

This week we have seen the inconsistency of King Saul. His obedience to God was only partial, which is really disobedience. Isaiah gave us a prophecy that one day God would send the true foundation of life. Peter confirmed that foundation is Jesus. Jesus alone is the true cornerstone and foundation stone. Build your life on Him and Him alone!

## **Week 56 God Chooses a New King**-----Chris Watson

It's always better to do things God's way. Israel decided to do things their own way when they desired a new king before it was time. This week, though, we will see God choose a king over Israel. While it would take time for him to come to his reign, God's plan would be made known.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read 1 Samuel 16:1-3**

Samuel is given what seems to be a pretty tough job. With Saul technically still king, though the Lord has rejected him, God told Samuel to go and anoint the next King of Israel, as God showed him. Wow! This was a tough job. He had instructions from the Lord, but he was technically going against the king, seeking to overthrow him, in a sense. Samuel was scared for his life, and rightfully so. I wonder if Samuel was always looking to see if Saul was around, while he was on this journey and during this process.

Remember that God is choosing a new king because of Saul's disobedience to follow the Lord's command. Of course, the reasons the Israelites wanted a king in the first place were wrong and not in God's plan. We see in this account that disobedience is costly.

Samuel made the choice to trust God on his journey. God told him (verse 3) what he was to do. Samuel didn't depend on his own understanding or give into his fears or weaknesses, he trusted God. As believers we are to do the same and we can. We have God's Word and know God's desire and plan. We just need to carry it out. It is often uncertain, uncomfortable, lonely, and not what everyone else is doing. However, we can choose to trust men and the things of men or we can trust God. As we have seen up to this point in the Old Testament God has been faithful and will continue to be. God gave Samuel an indication, or at least a direction, of where the next king was coming from as He asked him to bring Jesse to join in on the sacrifice. Remember, we saw the genealogy of Perez in the book of Ruth and it included Jesse. We saw that Boaz and Ruth were Jesse's grandparents. Samuel may not have connected the dots yet but he knew that Jesse was to be part of the sacrifice with him.

May we trust God in all we do, wherever we find ourselves. Whether we find ourselves afraid, weary, lonely, happy, sad, joyful, scared or tired, let us be like Samuel and put our trust in God! Not lagging behind or going ahead but walking step in step with the Creator of the world, the Lamb of God.

## Day 2

### **First Read 1 Samuel 16:4-10**

Samuel was once again following God's lead looking for the next king. He first thought it was Eliab, the oldest son as he must have looked like a king. However, it wasn't Eliab nor was it any of the six other sons with Jesse. Before Samuel asked him if there were any other sons, the Lord told Samuel not to consider appearance or height. For the Lord does not look at the things men look at, the outward appearance, but rather God looks at the heart (verse 7).

Kings were expected to be good looking and large in stature as that's what the people expected. But God told Samuel not to look for these things, because the heart is what matters and God would choose someone whose heart was right. This is true with Jesus. In Bible times, the Jews expected a Messiah that would create fanfare, be macho looking, be demanding etc. However, Jesus came riding in on a donkey, not exactly what they expected from a king: this was just one of the many reasons they missed the Messiah.

God looks at all hearts. The outside of a person can be handsome, beautiful, in shape, almost perfect looking and yet inside can be just the opposite. A person's appearance on the outside can be "not so good" by the world's standards, and they can have a heart of gold. Of course this isn't saying that it has to be one or the other, but God looks only at the heart.

What is your heart like? Is it in tune with God? Is it seeking Him and His plans? Or, is it angry, bitter, unforgiving, mean spirited, hateful, conniving, or divisive? Are you worried more about your physical appearance compared to your spiritual appearance? Today, may our heart be in tune with the things of God. May our hearts be beautiful because we have and know God. As David said, "*create in me a clean heart oh God and renew a right spirit within me*" (**Psalm 51:10**). May our spiritual condition be one that we always keep in check and ask God to continue to work on us. What does your heart look like? If it needs to be redirected towards God, ask Him to help you and begin every day tuning your heart to His.

## Day 3 **CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 16:11-13**

Jesse had seven of his eight sons pass before Samuel but not one of them was to be the king! Why wasn't his son David there? The

Bible says he was tending the sheep. Maybe Jesse thought he was too small or insignificant to be a king. Maybe someone needed to watch the sheep while the other brothers were taken before Samuel and since he was the youngest it was his responsibility. There could have been many reasons he wasn't there, but when the rest of the sons had passed by and the Lord had not chosen them, they sent for David.

As we see in this passage David was God's choice to be king and it wasn't a coincidence. This was continuing the process leading up to Jesus. If you look over in Matthew 1, we see the genealogy of Jesus. In verse 6 we see Jesse and David and then in verse 16 we see Jesus. David was in the line of Jesus. God was orchestrating all of this so that in God's time Jesus would be born, live a perfect life, and die for our sins. Revelation 5:5 speaks of both of them in the line of Judah, both David and Jesus!

Not only do we see this connection as vital but we can also see similarities between David and Jesus. David was chosen by God to lead Israel; God would send Jesus to lead His people and save the world. David was a shepherd and Jesus is called the good shepherd. Again, these are not coincidences but details of God's intricate plan.

Take some time today to thank God for Jesus. Take some time to thank Him for His elaborate plan in which He would bring forth the Savior of the world. While many, including His chosen people, would rebel and do their own thing and go their own way, God would remain faithful and His love would carry forth and win. Thanks be to God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! God's plan would prevail through Jesus, even though sinful people sought to mess things up.

## **Day 4**

### **First Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23**

David was anointed, but, as we see today, he didn't immediately fill the shoes of the kingship. In today's passage we see the process of the Spirit of the Lord departing from Saul and an evil spirit tormenting him. We learned yesterday that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.

God's Spirit (Holy Spirit) is real. Of course, we know this and it is what we need. It is literally God and Jesus with us. In Acts, the beginning of the Church, we see the Holy Spirit coming down and do what only God could do. Having the Spirit of the Lord among us is

what it's all about. Today, as in Old Testament times, a lot of "good things" are done in and outside of the Church. But without the Spirit of the Lord being in these "good things," we are just spinning our wheels. A lot of things can "happen" and a lot of things can be "going on" but God must be our focus and the Holy Spirit must be moving in and through us. We must be active in prayer and seeking God for what He can do, rather than doing things in our own strength and desires.

When the Spirit of the Lord left Saul it was obvious, so obvious that Saul sought some counsel and asked David to play for him when the evil one tormented him. This again was part of God's plan of setting things up for what would be. David, who had been anointed by Saul as the next king, was now playing for the one that was still technically king. I wonder what that must have been like. As we will see in the weeks to come, David waited on God and His timing, trusting His plan. We must trust the overall plan of God. We can learn from David in this. David wrote many of the psalms, like Psalms 62 and Psalm 23, when he was either on the mountain top or in the valley. May we learn from God's plan, His Word, and those who have gone before us. Regardless of our situation, we can put our hope in God.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Psalm 95:1-3**

Psalm 95 is a great psalm, especially the first 3 verses. In fact, take time to read them over again. This psalm tells us to sing to the Lord as He is the Rock of our Salvation and we are to praise Him with music. As we see in this passage this is just one reason music is part of our weekly Sunday worship and should be part of our everyday worship. God tells us to sing and praise His name with music.

Worship should be our lifestyle. We often think of music when we think of worship. Music is one way to worship but we also worship in how we live our lives to and for Jesus. However, worship through music is very important. David tells us to worship through music and song. Scripture also tells us to make a joyful noise. When you sing to and about God it does something for your soul. You are singing truth back to God. I am sometimes saddened when I look around at the various worship opportunities and see people not singing. Why do I feel sad? Because God tells us to sing! He doesn't tell us to sing if we have the best voice. He doesn't tell us to sing when we want to, or sing when we feel like it, but to make a joyful noise. We are singing to and worshiping the God of the universe. Verse 3 of this passage tells us that the God we serve is the King of

all Kings. May we live, sing, and play to Jesus with everything we are.

In your quiet times sing to Jesus. Listen and sing words of truth back to Him. The next time you are in corporate worship, sing with all you have. Maybe you have never really been one to sing during Sunday worship. Maybe you drift off into space or watch other people. I challenge you to try singing to the God of the universe. It will do a work in you; God will do a work in you as you sing truth back to Him. So wherever you are, make a joyful noise.

## WEEK 57 DAVID AND GOLIATH----- Dennis Watson

David was secretly anointed king by Samuel, but it was more than fifteen years before the death of Saul and David's public acknowledgement as king. During that fifteen year period there were many biblical historical events, one of which was the victory of David over the Philistine giant, Goliath. Looking back to the account of Ruth and Boaz, it is possible to see the hand of God moving events and people into place to make David the king of Israel. This is so important because David's line would be the royal line into which Jesus, the King of Kings, would be born and the Kingdom eternally established. This week's account shows the incredible power of God at work through a very young David.

### Day 1

#### FIRST READ 1 SAMUEL 17:1-10

The nation of Israel was in an ongoing war with the Philistines. At this point the two armies were at a standstill. It appeared that nothing was going on except the daily taunting by the Philistine giant, Goliath. The plan was that the two armies would designate a man from each army to represent them in a one-on-one battle. Goliath would represent the Philistines. Goliath was over nine and a half feet tall. His body armor weighed approximately 125 pounds which, in itself, was probably about the weight of David. The head of his spear weighed fifteen pounds. David had already entered the service of King Saul to play music for him to calm him down. He would go back and forth from shepherding to serving the king.

On this occasion David had been sent by his father to take some food to his brothers who were in Saul's army. God's timing is always perfect. The whole Israelite army, including King Saul, was terrified of Goliath and his morning and evening taunts.

The Israelite army was defeated by default. They were overcome with fear and believed they had no one to represent them before the giant, Goliath.

It seems that today there are many giants taunting believers and we have already been defeated by default. Just remember, that as believers we are God representatives (ambassadors). **1 John 5:4** says, *"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith."*

Thank God today that He is our victory.

## Day 2

### FIRST READ 1 SAMUEL 17:11-27

In the new covenant God's Spirit comes to live in the believer and He will never leave. That is a blessing! However, in the Old Testament the Spirit of God would rest upon a person, but not always abide. We read that the Spirit was taken from Saul because of his disobedience (1 Samuel 16:14). The people of Israel wanted a king so they would be like other nations. They wanted a king to go out and fight for them. However, now that the Spirit had departed from Saul, he was just as frightened of Goliath as the rest of his army. They needed one who would lead the way in victory.

When Saul and his army saw Goliath they saw an undefeatable foe. However, when David saw Goliath he saw an enemy of God. David came to the camp of the Israelite army and talked with them about what was going on. While he was talking with them Goliath issued one of his daily taunts to the Israelites. He watched as the army of Israel ran away in fear and hid from Goliath. The men told David that the man who defeats Goliath would be given riches along with the king's daughter and would be exempt from taxes. David's next question had to do with the identity of the giant:

*Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"* **1 Samuel 17:26 (NKJV)**

It seems that David's main concern was the defying of God's army! Did anyone else have that concern? It seems not! They were more fearful for themselves, rather than giving any thought to what this giant was really doing! David took no thought for his own safety, but only for the name of God and His army.

Where was David's fear? It was not at all present. He had a heart for God! He trusted God with a simple believing faith. He believed that if he stood with God, God would give the victory.

Fix your eyes on the living God and ask God to ignite in you a burning faith in Him.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **FIRST READ 1 SAMUEL 17:28-37**

David went to the battle lines to deliver food to his brothers. David questioned his brothers, then the other soldiers about the situation. He was not being insolent as they accused, he was concerned that the name of God was being blasphemed. David's words were reported to the King and he sent for David. David said he would go and fight Goliath. Saul, like his brothers and the other soldiers, tried to discourage him. David refused to be discouraged because he knew God had given him victory over wild animals and He would also give him victory over Goliath!

David did not need the motivation of riches or tax exemption. His motivation came from his heart! For believers, Jesus is the unseen factor who makes all the difference in their approach to life and circumstances. Warren Wiersbe writes, "When we walk by sight, we calculate everything from the human perspective, and this always leads to discouragement; but when we walk by faith, God comes into the equation, and that changes the results."<sup>3</sup> David walked by faith. He was different because the living God was in him and he was listening to Him and not to others or looking at the circumstances.

On another occasion, when David was being threatened, the writer of 1 Samuel says of David, "*But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.*" I am not sure about you but that sounds like a needed and ongoing activity for me. "David strengthened himself in the Lord." I am not sure all that means but one thing I do know is that David must have continuously reminded himself of the power and faithfulness of the Lord His God.

David was the man God sent to deliver Israel from their enemy, represented by Goliath. God sent Jesus to save all people from the enemy, sin and Satan. The emphasis here is God's provision of the deliverer. Ultimately, all of the deliverers pointed to the ultimate deliverer. The ultimate deliverer was not just a man, He was God in the flesh. His name is Immanuel—"God with us."

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<sup>3</sup> Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series) - Old Testament- The Bible Exposition Commentary-History

## Day 4

### **FIRST READ 1 SAMUEL 17:38-58**

Paul writes in Ephesians *“Put on the full armor of God.”* Saul was at first concerned that David was going to fight Goliath and even discouraged him. Then Saul wanted to give David his armor. David put on Saul’s armor but said, *“I cannot walk with these because I have not tested them.”* This was not what he was used to. Instead he chose to use what he used when he was protecting the sheep in his care—his slingshot and five smooth stones. Why five stones when all he really needed was one? If you look at 2 Samuel 21:22 you will discover that Goliath had four sons! David was prepared to take out the whole family, if need be.

David knew several things. First of all, he knew that God was with him and that the victory would not only be for God but it would also be because of God’s power. He was confident because of God’s power, not his own. Second, he knew that he had to do battle according to his giftedness and not with armor and sword. Goliath mocked David saying “you have come to me with sticks.” Not sticks but the weapon he was accustomed to using—his slingshot and five stones. Thirdly, notice that David was clear in giving credit where it belonged—to God. Verses 45-47 are so powerful and David confidently tells Goliath that he would whip him not by his own power but with God’s power and for God’s glory and name. I love the phrase in verse 47, *“For the battle is the Lord’s!”* David was young but he was not foolish. He was confident and had a real faith in God. He knew that his ability came from God. He lived from that ability.

We have been looking at many people who we may call great. In reality there are no great people, only a great God! David was great by association with the One who is great. The victory, he knew, came from the God he loved and served. So what about you? Don’t seek greatness, seek the Great One and trust Him!

## Day 5

### **FIRST READ PSALM 95:3-8**

In the book of Psalms we find some very significant connections. As you read in Psalms pay close attention to wording that is applied to Jesus in the New Testament. Be sure to keep in mind the things Jesus said and did and what the other New Testament writers wrote about Jesus.

Many of the psalms were written by King David at times in his life that were either very positive or very stressful. In those psalms he expressed some thoughts that look forward to the redeemer. Psalm 95:5 talks about the One who created all the heavens and the earth. Colossians 1:16 says that Jesus is the One who made all things. In fact, it says that all things were made by Him and for Him. David says that since He is the creator we should worship Him and acknowledge that He is the maker of all things. Look around and see all that He has done and worship Him in the beauty of His creation.

David used another phrase that causes us to worship Him, "*We are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.*" This is an expression of God being our Shepherd. Jesus says in John 10:11 that He is the Good Shepherd and goes on in John 10:16, to say that His sheep hear His voice. When you put the two passages together (Psalm 95:7-8 and John 10:16) we are to hear His voice and maintain an attitude and life of submission to what He says. We are to hear His voice and not harden our hearts.

Is there a place in your heart that is hardened to the Words of Jesus? If so, ask Him to make your heart pliable and obedient to Him.

## **Week 58 The Ark of God**-----Chris Watson

This week we will skip pretty far ahead in our devotions. In fact, between last week and this week's devotions Saul became jealous of David and went after him attempting to kill him. In the end though, David leaned over Saul and could have killed him, but spared his life. Not once, but twice! During this time, Saul even inquired of a witch and sought to consult a spirit as he was not following the ways of God. In the end, Saul took his own life. We pick up this week after David is anointed King over Judah.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read 2 Samuel 6:1-10**

David wanted to bring the ark back to Jerusalem. Remember, the ark had been separated from the tabernacle and other places of worship for around 100 years. They were bringing it into Jerusalem on a new cart (verse 3). Was this how the ark was supposed to be moved? No. From Exodus 25:14 and 1 Chronicles 15:15 we know that the ark was to be carried with poles. So, to begin with, they were transporting the ark incorrectly. Either they didn't know, didn't take the time to find out, or just didn't care.

We are reminded from the Word of God (Numbers 4:15) that if any one touched the ark or the holy things they would die. Remember, the ark was a visual reminder of the very presence of God. God is holy, sinless, and righteous. When Uzzah touched the ark, he was immediately killed. It was the very presence of God and they were not following God's plans on how it was to be carried.

It seems a pretty harsh thing to do to Uzzah. He was only trying to make sure the ark was safe after the oxen stumbled. However, according to how the ark was to be carried, it should have not been pulled behind oxen in the first place. Because Uzzah was a sinner in the very presence of God, he was killed instantly.

There are two important truths we can learn here. When God speaks and gives us specific instructions from His Word, or instructions to us as an individual that is consistent with His Word, we are to follow those instructions. We are not to obey later if we have time, or ignore them altogether. We are to be obedient immediately. We also learn a little about the holiness of God and our own unholiness. The fact that a life was taken because he touched the ark demonstrates God's holiness. Not only does it show us God's holiness, it shows us another reason we need the blood of Jesus. Without the blood of Jesus we have no hope of God! Thanks be to

God for His holiness and that He sent Jesus to die for us so we could have a relationship with Him.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read 2 Samuel 6:11-15**

Notice that in yesterday's devotion the ark was on a new cart, but today the ark is being carried like it was supposed to be. Apparently, David and others got their focus right and carried the ark the way they had been instructed. At this time the ark was at Obed-Edom's house and that household was being blessed.

This time when they began moving the ark, those carrying it took only six steps before David made a sacrifice and began to dance before the Lord. I believe David realized the importance of the ark. He was also thankful and grateful, as he was following the Lord's plan and nothing negative had happened. He wanted to give thanks! David realized that the desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem, back among God's people, was becoming a reality. David was so overcome with the presence of God and His holiness and mercy that he began to dance. That's right! The king was dancing before the Lord, and he wasn't just dancing. Verse 14 tells us he was dancing with all of his might. That means he was dancing with everything he had in him, everything he was worth! He was thankful that the ark of the Lord was with them, grateful that no one was dead this time and thankful that God was blessing him and giving him direction. He was expressing what was in his heart. He was worshipping.

Do you worship like this? Do you worship with all that you have? That's how I want to sing praises and worship Jesus, with all that I am, not caring what people may say or think. We serve and worship an audience of one, Jesus Christ. I challenge you this week to worship Jesus with all that you have and, as was said of David, with all of your might!

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Leviticus 16:1-9**

As we look at today and yesterday's passages we see that God made His instructions very specific and that the sacrifices that were made pointed forward to Jesus. The ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

Notice all of the details and instructions that David and Aaron were to follow as the sacrifice was made. The focus of the sacrifice was to cover the sins. We see the “covering” all the way back to Genesis 3 when God made coverings for Adam and Eve when they realized they were naked after they sinned. Since that time God has provided covering for our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, He gave us the ultimate covering, the only covering that could wash away our sins. In fact, nothing can wash away our sins except the blood of Jesus.

Can you imagine if you were the one to make the sacrifice in Old Testament times? Besides the killing of an animal for your sins and the visual that would be in your mind, you would have blood on your hands, literally. The blood or stains of blood would be a reminder of the blood that was given for your sins. Jesus’ death is a reminder of the price it cost Jesus for our sin. Today, by the grace of God, we don’t have physical blood on our hands, but we are and need to be reminded by the blood of the Lamb that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Now when we come to God through Jesus with heavy hearts, struggles, or to confess our sins, we don’t have to sacrifice anything. Rather, through Jesus’ blood, we can speak directly to God. Hallelujah! Isn’t this incredible? We can know, speak with, and hear from the God of the universe by the blood of Jesus. I don’t understand it all. My mind can’t fully comprehend, but thanks be to God for His love and His grace. Thank God for the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

## **Day 4**

### **First Read 2 Samuel 6:16-23**

Michal, daughter of Saul, was also David’s wife (1 Samuel 25:44). So this is not just any woman saying that David is being ridiculous when dancing before the Lord, but his own wife. David was humbled and excited to have the ark, the very presence of God, back in Jerusalem.

David was dancing before the Lord. He was ecstatic to have the ark there in Jerusalem and he was truly worshiping his God. He didn’t care who was around or what was going on, as his focus was on his God. Yet, his own wife didn’t care that the ark was with them. She didn’t care, at least at this time, about the things of God. Rather, she was embarrassed about his celebration and couldn’t believe the way the “king” was acting. However, David went on to tell her that he would celebrate and he would become even more “undignified” than he had already been. Matt Redman had a song out years back that went,

I will dance I will sing to be mad for my King  
nothing lord is hindering the passion in my soul  
I will dance I will sing to be mad for my King  
nothing lord is hindering the passion in my soul

and I'll become even more undignified than this  
some would say its foolishness but  
I'll become even more undignified than this  
some would say its foolishness.

In other words, I will dance and sing and worship my King and I don't care what others think. So if our hearts are right, if we are right before God, if we are following Him and His ways, we can and will worship and not care what others may say or think. This doesn't mean that we seek to draw attention to ourselves for attention's sake, but that our focus and attention is on God as we worship. We won't care what's happening or what may be going on around us.

## Day 5

### **First Read Psalm 132:1-14**

In this psalm we see Jesus. His name is not mentioned per se, but He is right there. In verse 11-12 it says, *"The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne <sup>12</sup> If your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever."* The end of verse 12 is talking about Jesus. Jesus would sit on the throne forever and ever. As we know from several texts in the Bible, including Matthew 1, Jesus and David are in the same family line. So when God says that *"their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever,"* He is including David, but referring to Jesus.

This psalm is also about David making plans to bring the ark to the city with great rejoicing. As we see from this weeks devotions, David did bring the ark in and carried out that desire. We remember that the ark was the presence of God, so in this way God lived among His people. This whole passage is intertwined with Jesus.

Once we begin to put the pieces together and begin to better understand God's Word and the history of events connecting everything together, we see the intricate details and prophetic nature of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is about God. The Old Testament points forward to Jesus and the New Testament teaches us to live in a love relationship with Him and to follow Him. If you have ever read a mystery novel, you often read it wondering who might have

done what and you often don't find out until the end. In the Bible though, everything points to Jesus. Old and New Testament alike, it's all about Jesus, all about Him. I hope and pray the more and more you read and study the Old Testament the more you will see this and the more you will get excited about God and His Word. Take some time today to thank God for His Word, the very words of God, and to thank Him for His intricate details and how He continues to show us how Jesus is weaved throughout the Old Testament. Thanks be to God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

## WEEK 59 DAVID THE PSALMIST----- Dennis Watson

King Saul became outraged and hated David. This was due to his jealousy of David. Saul's son, Jonathan, and David became very close friends. On several occasions Saul tried to kill David but Jonathan warned David of the coming attack. Through it all, David continued to honor King Saul and would not "lift his hand against the Lord's anointed." On at least two occasions David was in a position to take Saul's life, but refused to do so.

David was referred to by God as, "a man after my own heart." However, David was a man, which means he was also sinful. Thank God that He uses weak and sinful vessels. David became involved in adultery with Bathsheba, which led to the murder of her husband, Uriah. The result of this sin was heartbreak for the family of David. God used David but the consequences of this sin plagued him throughout his life. Although God does forgive sin, it sometimes brings with it some very devastating consequences.

David was a shepherd, king, and warrior. He was also a songwriter. I believe that songwriters, to some extent, are also philosophers. A song writer looks at things, thinks about them, and then expresses feelings and ideas about them in songs or poems. So add philosopher to David's resume. He is the best known songwriter in all of history. As you read the psalms that David wrote it becomes easy to pick up on his mood. Occasionally there are words that tell us exactly what is going on. Psalm 23 is by far the best known of David's psalms. This week we will look at the beloved 23rd Psalm.

### Day 1

#### **FIRST READ PSALM 23:1-3**

On our most recent beach vacation our two granddaughters were both about 18 months old. At times I would follow them at a safe distance as they toddled on the beach. They did not know I was keeping watch over them. They were oblivious to my watching eyes. I thought about that and realized that is what God does. He watches over us and, for the most part, we are oblivious. Yet He still keeps His watch. David wrote this psalm as one who had been an experienced shepherd. He kept watch over the sheep. He protected them and fed them and took them to the water's edge to drink. He brought this picture to bear in his own life saying, "*The Lord is my shepherd.*"

David knew the heart and the task of a shepherd. He also knew that

much of his life he lived in constant danger. As a shepherd he lived in danger of wild animals. Later, Saul wanted and tried on numerous occasions to kill him. He faced the giant, Goliath. He faced murderous plots from his own children. As king there were always people who wanted to bring him down. He faced struggles, most of which were far more severe than our own. He found comfort knowing that God was His shepherd.

In these first three verses David finds strength and comfort in his Shepherd's nourishment, restoration, and guidance. Our Good Shepherd nourishes, restores us, and guides us. David found comfort and encouragement. Please know that although most of the time you may be oblivious, our Shepherd is always keeping watch.

Try to stay aware that God is always keeping watch over you as One who provides and protects. Allow that truth to bring comfort and strength.

## Day 2

### **FIRST READ PSALM 23:4**

Once again it appears that David is speaking from experience; the experience of a shepherd. But he is also speaking from the experience of one who was being pursued by his enemy for the purpose of killing him. David lived for a long time with Saul chasing him down to kill him, only out of jealousy. On at least two occasions David had Saul right there in front of him and Saul did not know it. Yet David did not kill Saul. The pursuit of Saul to kill David was relentless, yet God spared and protected David. David knew that God had spared his life. He knew God had a purpose for him. He was to be king. As he experienced these things he did not fear, though he was in death's valley. On at least three occasions in the Psalms we read, "*What can man do to me*" (56:4, 11; 118:6). David came to know and trust that God was his shepherd and could deliver him from his enemies.

He speaks of two of the shepherd's tools—the rod and the staff. The rod was a weapon of defense. He used it to fight off would-be attackers. He kept the sheep safe from the lions and bears using the rod. The staff was an instrument used to give direction to the sheep. I have pictured this in my mind as a tool the shepherd uses to gently keep the sheep on the correct path with a nudge, hopefully, but at times a little more than a nudge. I have heard it said that at times a shepherd would break the leg of a sheep that had a tendency to stray. In doing this the sheep could not stray, but the

shepherd would then be forced to carry the sheep. David says that the shepherd's rod and staff gave him comfort.

The protection and guidance of the shepherd for his sheep is due to his love and care of the sheep. That truly is comforting!

Thank God for His shepherding care!

### **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

#### **FIRST READ PSALM 23:6**

Think about God's goodness. Of course you don't have everything you have ever wanted or dreamed of, but most of us can honestly say we have received incredible blessings from God. I often think back to my college and seminary days. I looked forward to serving in a church and one day being a pastor. But in my wildest and most hopeful thoughts and dreams, I would never have dreamed of being the pastor of such a wonderful and incredible church. In this regard, I have definitely received the goodness of God.

The only hope any of us have of anything good coming to us from God is found in the forgiveness bought for us by the death of Jesus on the cross! In this verse, intentionally jumped to for today, David anticipated receiving only God's goodness and mercy. How else can such goodness come from a holy God who chooses to associate with sinful man except by His grace and mercy? David looked forward to living in God's house and presence forever. Obviously, David is making reference to the eternal life that would be purchased by the shedding of the innocent blood of Jesus, the sinless Son of God!

Now we know that the basis of David's hope was in the shepherd. Jesus proclaimed, "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*" (John 10:11). This was much more than the shepherd risking his life by fighting an attacking bear or lion. This was Jesus, the good shepherd, intentionally laying down his life to accomplish the forgiveness and salvation of the sheep. He did not risk His life. He gave His life! We now know what David anticipated and we can anticipate, with absolute confidence, that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Thank God for His goodness and mercy and joyfully anticipate living in His house forever!

## Day 4

### FIRST READ PSALM 23:5

This verse does not reflect a change in metaphor. David was still using the image of the shepherd. He was not talking about a banquet but about a flat place in a hilly country. “Table” here does not mean a piece of furniture. The word simply means “something spread out.” So in this scenario, “table” means a flat place where the shepherd would gather the sheep to eat and rest before going to the sheep fold. So, out in the open, in a very large and flat place the shepherd would have one last time to deal with his sheep before they slept for the night. The sheep fold was an area surrounded by a stone wall. The shepherd would sleep across the opening that served as the door. While the sheep slept, thieves and wild animals would come to the fold but they could not get to the sheep. The sheep slept after eating in the presence of their enemies. In the New Testament, Jesus is the shepherd and He says that He is the door of the sheep—meaning the sheep fold. He protected them.

I am sure that for many nights David would sleep and be the door of the sheep. The sheep would sleep in peace with no concern for their enemies. David knew of his enemies. The sheep did not and they did not have to be concerned with their enemies because the shepherd was. We, too, can find this rest as Jesus keeps us safely as the door.

David continued with this analogy speaking of the anointing oil. Warren Wiersbe says:

The shepherd would examine the sheep as they entered the fold to be sure none of them was bruised, injured, or sick from eating a poisonous plant. To the hurts, he applied the soothing oil, and for the thirsty, he had his large two-handled cup filled with water. He would also apply the oil to the heads and horns of the sheep to help keep the flies and other insects away. The sheep knew they were safe and they could sleep without fear.<sup>4</sup>

David knew that the Lord had blessed him to a point of overflowing. I am often overwhelmed with the blessings of our Lord. Give thanks to Him for His loving care and abundant provision.

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<sup>4</sup>Bible Expositin Commentary (BE Series)-Old Testament-The Bible Exposition Commentary-Wisdom and Poetry.

## Day 5

### **FIRST READ 2 SAMUEL 7:1-17**

On day five we look at a passage from Psalms or one of the prophets to see how it points to Jesus.

In this passage we read that David wanted to build a house for the Lord and, in particular, for the ark of God. He saw that he had a nice cedar home and the ark was in a tent. The prophet Nathan received a word from God for David. He told David that he would not be the one to build the house for God. Nathan told him that God had blessed David and made his kingdom and his name great. The Lord used this as an opportunity to tell David some things about his place in the future. In this passage we find what is known as the Davidic Covenant. This covenant had great meaning for David, but also for today, in particular, for Israel and the church.

I am sure that for David, there was initial disappointment that he would not build the temple, but to know that his son would build it was a blessing and encouragement. He was encouraged to know that his throne and line would continue. What the Lord started in Abraham would continue through David's family. He would continue to shepherd the people.

For Israel, the Davidic Covenant builds on the covenant the Lord made with Abraham. It, too, speaks of the land, the nation, and the Messiah. The Lord told David there would be rest for the people. The rest was in the land but, ultimately, it looked forward to the coming Messiah and His kingdom that would bring rest. He also told David that He would establish David's house. The word 'house' is used fifteen times in this chapter. It refers to David's palace, the temple, and to David's dynasty, culminating in the Messiah Jesus Christ. The coming Savior was prophesied in Genesis 3:15—He would be human. In Genesis 12:3, the Savior would be born of Abraham's line—a Jew. In Genesis 49:10 we read that He would come through the tribe of Judah. In Micah 5:2, we are told He would be born in Bethlehem. In these passages, David was told that his house and kingdom would be forever.

For believers today, the Davidic Covenant encourages us, because we see God's plan unfolding from the beginning. In Matthew 1:1 Jesus is called the "*Son of David, the Son of Abraham.*" Connecting the dots! God is in control. The whole universe finds its origin in Him, its destiny in Him and He is moving history toward that glorious destiny! Sing praise to Him!

## **Week 60- Solomon and the Temple-----Chris Watson**

In reading books such as 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles, you will find that these books have accounts of the same activities. For instance, you will find in 2 Samuel and in 1 Chronicles similar accounts with different focuses of Saul taking his life and the ark being brought back to Jerusalem. In between 2 Samuel and today's devotions, David had been at war for several years. This is also the time he yielded to temptation with Bathsheba. This week we pick up in 1 Chronicles 22 where Solomon is going to be instructed to build the Temple of God.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read 1 Chronicles 22:7-10**

The time had come to build the temple of the Lord. As today's passage tells us, David originally hoped to build the temple, but because he had too much blood on his hands, God told David that his son, Solomon, would build it instead. Notice in verse 9 and 10 that God told David before Solomon was born that Solomon would be the one to build the temple. This didn't happen by chance. The Lord had planned this out in advance and had given His plan and message to David. God would bring Solomon into this world, through David, to build the temple of the Lord and, as scripture tells us, he would bring peace. Of course, we know that God would actually bring the peace, but He was going to do it through Solomon.

The temple, of course, was where the presence of the Lord would be and God had raised Solomon up for this time. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, we are reminded that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. To believers this means the Holy Spirit, God Himself, lives in us! It means that God dwells in our hearts and is with us wherever we may go. You and I are God's temple. He made (built) us to be His dwelling place, just like He dwelt in the temple that Solomon would build. This means I can seek God any time, pray at any time, cast my cares on Him at any time, and call on His name at any time. The very presence of God, which dwelt in the Temple that Solomon built, lives in every believer today. Incredible!

We need to be reminded that we have the very presence of God, the Holy Spirit, living in us. He walks with us, talks with us, and guides us. Just like the Lord gave David instructions for the temple and who was to build it, that same Lord instructs and guides us every day. The Creator of the universe dwells in us, we are His temple. Today, let us recognize that we are a living temple and that God is in us. Might we live our lives to honor God.

## **Day 2**

### **First Read 1 Chronicles 22:11-19**

Not only was the Lord preparing and giving instructions to Solomon through David concerning the temple, but He was also raising up other leaders to help Solomon build the temple. This was no small feat. Marty Machowski from the Long Story Short devotion says if you were to translate the gold and silver alone to today's time and values it would be in excess of 84 billion dollars. We are not talking about a measly temple. This temple was being built for the Lord and it was to be done right.

Notice the words that David gave to Solomon, words that we should heed today. In verses 12 and 13 he told Solomon to observe the laws and decrees of the Lord, be strong and courageous, and do not be afraid or discouraged. He also told him in verse 19 to devote himself to the Lord and that the building of the temple was for the Name of the Lord. What words of wisdom, spoken by David, to his son Solomon! I believe these were words from the Lord, given to David, to encourage and challenge Solomon as he set out on this step of obedience. I am sure Solomon would look back and remember these words encouraging him to keep following the Lord and to be obedient while building the Temple. The temple was a building with great detail that took years for Solomon to build.

As we saw yesterday, you and I are temples of God and He is still working on us. At times we get discouraged when we don't feel like we are where we need to be. At times in our lives we can become scared or unsure. At those times we need to hear the words that David gave to Solomon, to devote ourselves to the Lord and realize that all of what we do needs to be for Him. God continues to work on us, refining, guiding, directing, and sometimes rebuking us. Thank God He is still working on us and wait and trust on the Lord.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read 1 Chronicles 28:1-19**

As David gave his speech to the officials of Jerusalem he reminded them of God's direction. Let's look at verses 4-5 again. *"Yet the Lord, the God of Israel, chose me from my whole family to be king over Israel forever. He chose Judah as leader, and from the tribe of Judah he chose my family, and from my father's sons he was pleased to make me king over all Israel. Of all my sons—and the Lord has given me many—he has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne*

*of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel*". We know from verse 4 that from David's line would flow Jesus, that's how David could say he was chosen from his whole family to rule over Israel forever. From the tribe of Judah, God chose his family and from there, David, and in time Jesus would follow, which is how that family would be king over Israel, God's chosen people, forever.

This is pointing forward to Jesus, the Savior of the world. Not only was God on His throne then but He is on His throne now. I think we have all seen that the Old Testament is so full of connections to the New Testament and in particular, to Jesus. These are not coincidences, but truth. From the very first time we see Jesus in Genesis 3 until now, He is all over the pages of the Old Testament and we haven't even hit all of them!

We serve a big, yet detailed God. We see in detail in this passage and others the instructions for the temple and what it was to be built with, how much of each, and exactly how it was to look. God cares about every detail; He cares about all aspects of our lives. That's why He sent Jesus, so we could know Him and spend our time on earth, and in eternity, getting to know Him more and more. Thank God for His elaborate plan and how even in the building of the temple we see Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!

## **Day 4**

### **First Read 2 Chronicles 7:1-18**

In both Kings and Chronicles we see the account of the Temple of the Lord that Solomon built. In today's passage we see the dedication of the temple and the Lord's response to Solomon's prayer in chapter 6. The Lord was pleased with the Temple. We see that the Lord filled the temple and the people began to worship and Solomon offered many sacrifices to the Lord.

After the Temple was built and Solomon had carried out all that the Lord had in mind, God answered his prayer. We often remember 2 Chronicles 7:14, we have either memorized it or we have seen it printed on many different items. This verse was a response to the prayer that Solomon offered in chapter 6. In particular, it is an answer to the part of the prayer that we see in 6:26-31. Solomon was pleading for his people based on some prior decisions and what he knew might come. He knew that his people would turn from the Lord; he knew they would do things on their own and they would forget God. So he asked God to please forgive them when they returned to Him in confession and repentance.

2 Chronicles 7:14 was the answer to his prayer. In fact when they sinned, if they would come humbling themselves, praying, seeking His face, and turning from their wicked ways, then He would hear, forgive, and heal. This stands true for us today. In fact, we are a lot like the people of Israel. At times we are walking almost step in step with the Lord and our relationship is great. But then sin creeps in, we begin to worry, bitterness digs in, or pride takes over. We then find ourselves depending on ourselves and turning away from God. However, if we turn to Him with repentance and conviction and humble ourselves, then God will hear us, He will forgive us, and He will direct us. But it doesn't start with others; it starts with me, it starts with you. We need to be right before the Lord, we need to seek Him daily.

Thank God for His forgiveness, not only for our salvation in Jesus, but for the fact that even when we turn and go our own way, God has gone nowhere. If we turn and seek Him, He will hear and forgive. Praise the Lord for being a loving, all-knowing, forgiving, and gracious God. May we walk step in step with Him, the author and perfecter of our faith.

## **Day 5**

### **First Read Isaiah 60:16-20**

What a glorious day this will be! Our Passage today speaks of eternity with our Lord. Just look at the things that will or will not be. We will meet our Redeemer face to face. We will no longer experience violence or destruction. There will be no more sun because God will be our light. Wow! That's exciting.

As believers, we are experiencing God right now. As each new day appears, hopefully we are learning and growing as we spend time with Him in prayer and reading scripture. We will be with God for the rest of eternity. If we are going to spend eternity with God, we should get to know Him and walk in His ways while here on earth.

When we enter God's presence we will be amazed. We will also be sinless and live in a never ending sinless environment. You and I can't exactly fathom this idea. All we have ever known is sin. We were born into sin and we sin; it is all around us. So when we say we will live for eternity with God in a sinless heaven we can only imagine what that will be like. Not only will there be no sin, but we will be with God for eternity and things will be perfect. There will be no pain, no heartache, no sickness, no hate, no more lying, cheating, or stealing. Thanks be to God for what He has and will do.

Right now we are preparing for that day. Of course, if you are a believer you know God and God is where you are, but on that day we will experience God in an incredible fashion. On earth we grow, learn, study, and walk hand in hand with God and we know heaven will be much like this. May our time here prepare for us for what is to come. And, of course, may we desire for others to know God through Jesus and may we share His truth with everyone we meet. Thank God today for the fact that He is with you right now and when you enter heaven He will be with you forever. Spend some time thinking what that day might look like!

## WEEK 61 THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED---Dennis Watson

At the very beginning of his kingship Solomon humbly asked only one thing of the Lord. He asked that the Lord give him a wise and understanding heart so that he could be the king he needed to be. God answered that prayer and made him wise and discerning, but also gave him great riches and honor. King Solomon was off to a great start. The Lord allowed him to build the temple that David wanted to build. The temple was completed in seven years. The Queen of Sheba came to see the greatness and wealth of Solomon's reign. But a great beginning does not guarantee a great ending. In fact, the failure of Solomon to guard his own heart led to his downfall and his kingdom being divided.

### Day 1

#### FIRST READ 1 KINGS 11:1-8

**Proverbs 4:23** is one of the proverbs attributed to King Solomon in which he wrote, *"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."* This is one of my favorite verses and, in fact, a life verse for me. However, it was in this very thing that Solomon failed. He gathered to himself 700 wives and 300 concubines. In essence, he had 1,000 wives! That led to his downfall. With these wives came hundreds of false gods and Solomon became an idol worshipper. Starting out, his heart was devoted and loyal to God, but with his wives, many whom were the result of alliances with foreign kings, his affections were compromised. The danger here was the departure of his heart from following God. This is called divided affections. At first it is subtle and does not seem like such a big deal. However, eventually the heart is totally turned away from the Lord.

Solomon was the son of King David. King David was a man who was loyal to God. He was not perfect. He was a real human. However, his heart was loyal to God. Solomon started out like his father. He loved the Lord and only wanted wisdom and understanding to lead the people. It is sad when a person does not guard his heart. The heart is considered the place of our affections. Solomon no longer had a heart for God. His heart had departed from God. A departed heart can lead to some pretty devastating things. The most devastating of all is the forfeiture of blessings. Perhaps the greatest blessing of all, apart from the personal relationship we have with God through Jesus, is the blessing of being used of God. God chose Solomon to be the king after David. He chose Solomon to be the one to build the temple. It seems there were many more opportunities for Solomon to be blessed as an instrument of God.

What about your heart? Has there been a time in your life when you were walking more closely with God? A departed heart usually happens over time. The heart grows colder over time. If your heart is moving away from God, seek Him with your whole heart. As David said, *“Delight yourself in the Lord.”*

## Day 2

### FIRST READ 1 KINGS 11:9-12

David wrote in **Psalm 53:1**, *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God.’”* Wisdom is skill in godly living. It is taking the Truth of God and applying it to daily living. I have come to believe that the people of God often live like fools. By that I mean we at times live like there is no God. It is not our confession but at times it is our profession —living like there is no God. Sadly, many of God’s own people merely give lip service to Him—*“honoring Him with their lips but have removed their hearts from Him” (Isaiah 29:13)*. Solomon began with confession and a matching profession of loving and serving God. As he continued and turned to idols he lost his way. The man who wanted wisdom more than anything else became foolish in his living.

The wisest man in the world, and a great king, now found himself standing before the judge of the universe. I do not believe God was angry with Solomon. No, this is a case of the warning of **Galatians 6:7**, *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”* Solomon became a victim of his own folly. His kingdom would be taken from him. We see God’s mercy in this, in that He told Solomon this would not take place while he was alive because God was keeping His word to David.

This is very agonizing. I have seen godly people with what seemed to be incredible potential forfeit the opportunity to be used of God in an incredible way. Greater love for other things drags their heart away. Possessions, lust, and longings for things with which we become obsessed can cause our hearts to be drawn away from God.

Ask God, by His grace, to enable you to keep your heart set on Him.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **FIRST READ 1 KINGS 11:13-40**

In 1962 Mary Wells recorded a song entitled, “Two Lovers,” that went to the top ten on the music charts. The song says, “Well, I’ve got two lovers and I ain’t ashamed Two lovers and I love them both the same.” I know that quite often songs say ridiculous things and this one is no exception. Jesus says that we cannot have two masters because we will love one and hate the other (Luke 16:13). Solomon could not have two masters either. He turned away from the Lord and pursued false gods. He may have claimed to love God, but His affections were elsewhere.

The result was exactly as the Lord said; the kingdom was torn away from Solomon. Ten of the tribes were torn away, thus dividing the kingdom. The math says there were two left, but only the tribe of Judah was actually left. This also included the small tribe of Benjamin which was associated with Jerusalem. The southern kingdom would be known as Judah and the northern kingdom as Israel.

This passage says that Solomon would spend the remainder of his life as king, for the sake of his father, David. God had made a promise to David that he would have a son on the throne forever. So Solomon remained king. The long-term view was to Jesus who would come from the tribe of Judah and, in particular, from the line of David. God is in control and He is in the details.

Good news! Solomon received bad news but also good news. Most of the kingdom was torn away from him—the bad news. The good news—he would remain king over Judah and God would keep His promise. This promise comes to us also. There is bad news and good news. The bad news? There is sin in the world that seeks to tear us away from the blessed design of God. The good news? The gospel of Jesus who came to restore the image of God to all who will receive Him!

Have you?

## **Day 4**

### **FIRST READ 1 KINGS 11:41-12:20**

Solomon had been king over Israel for forty years. Solomon had run up some very large bills for the people, which seems to be the thing for government leaders to do, leaving the people with the tax bill. When he died, his son Rehoboam became king in his place. On-the-job training is a good thing if the person being trained is wise and listens to the more seasoned and proven people. However, when the new guy only listens to the less experienced he may be headed for trouble. Rehoboam was approached by some people about lowering their taxes and making things easier on them. He told them to come back in a few days and he would give them an answer. First, he sought the advice of some of the older people who were associates of Solomon. They advised the young king to be kind, gentle, and to serve the people. Rehoboam rejected their words and then sought the advice of some of the younger people with whom he had grown up. They told him to pour on the power and intimidation. Rehoboam took their advice and there was backlash. The people of the north selected Jeroboam as their king, who led them into idolatry, and Rehoboam was king over the southern kingdom. The kingdom was divided.

God told Solomon this would happen, but Rehoboam, by his own foolishness, made it a reality. He listened to the wrong group. He really heard and listened to what he himself wanted. He was power hungry and found those who would affirm his power grab.

Who are you listening to? Are you in tune only to people who will tell you what you want to hear? Seek wise counsel and make wise decisions.

## **Day 5**

### **FIRST READ PSALM 132:8-14**

We have seen on many previous occasions that God established a kingdom that will be forever. That is not “temporarily” forever but “eternally” forever. Saul was the first king of Israel, an interim king before God’s intended king of Israel. That king would be David. This psalm was probably a song that was sung by the people when they carried the ark into the temple Solomon built.

The psalm speaks what we have already seen, “*For the sake of your servant David*” (1 Kings 11:13). God made a promise to David that one from his family would be the king and that the line of David would continue. We know that there was a long line of kings that came from David’s family tree. However, the ultimate fulfillment was in Jesus, the King of King and Lord of Lords. The dynasty of David would continue forever.

It is a wonderful thing to know that all of this is the result of God’s sovereignty. This promise to David was totally dependent upon God and not on the behavior of David’s offspring. Just look and see the character of the kings starting with David. They were all sinful! God is the faithful one and the kingdom is totally dependent upon His faithfulness.

God established the eternal kingdom. The line of David is fulfilled in the Messiah-- Jesus Christ. He is the One who will be King forever. He is called the son of David (Matthew 1:1). All of this culminates in Jesus. All that we have studied and read to this point is about God establishing a people, a nation, and kingdom that would ultimately be eternal!

In today’s passage the term ‘Zion’ is used. Zion is Jerusalem. It is not just the temporal Jerusalem, but also the New Jerusalem spoken of in Revelation. In the book of Revelation we read these words:

*Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.  
3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

**Revelation 21:2-3 (NKJV)**

The kingdom that God speaks of is the eternal one. It starts with David and continues, by the grace of God, through the Line of David. Jesus is the King of Kings and He will reign forever!

## **Week 62- God Provides for Elijah in Miraculous Ways**----- Chris Watson

The kingdom is now divided and the Israelites are at it again. They are worshiping and following other gods, doing things their own way, and not seeking to trust the Lord. Many of the kings were leading the people to do things totally opposite of what the Lord desired and what His will was. As we will see this week, the Lord often raised up prophets to show the people the error of their ways, seeking to lead the people back to God.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read 1 Kings 16:29-17:7**

Fifty plus years had passed since the kingdom was divided (1 Kings 12). Between the division and this passage, Israel had gone through several kings while Asa was king of Judah for forty one years. Toward the end of Asa's reign, we learn that Ahab became king over Israel. As we see in today's reading, Ahab was one "bad dude." He even set up idol worship and built an altar for Baal. Verse 30 tells us that Ahab did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than those before him.

However, notice how God intervenes. Ahab was going against the ways of God, totally doing that which was not right in the eyes of God, and seeking to worship false gods. God sent Elijah along to tell King Ahab that there would be no rain over the next few years except at Elijah's word. Notice he tells Ahab this with the authority of the Lord, the King of Israel (verse 17:1).

We don't read that the Ahab's "gods" helped him out but we do read that the one true God fed Elijah and provided water for him. God was letting Ahab know, through Elijah, that He was in control. No man-made god or person could do what only God could do. God was in control and he provided for Elijah's needs.

Isn't there peace in knowing that God is in control? In spite of the storms of life, the ups and downs, and the highs and lows God is in control. He was letting Ahab know who the one true God was. Be thankful we don't serve a God who is powerless, unmerciful, unjust, or unloving. Rather, we serve a God who is holy and righteous and He will make sure that His name is known. He accomplished this through Elijah. How might God want to use your life to help others hear and grasp the power and love of your God?

## **Day 2**

### **First Read 1 Kings 17:8-16**

The widow trusted God to an extent. Without rain, things had gotten so bad that all she had left was a handful of flour and a little oil. Elijah found her gathering sticks before she was going home to make a meal for her and her son to eat before they died. But notice what she does when Elijah asks her to make a small cake of bread for him before making one for her son and herself. She does just that! Just as Elijah told her, there was enough food for Elijah, the widow and her son and they didn't run out, food was always there when they needed it. She trusted Elijah (God) enough to do what Elijah had said.

Not only did the widow trust God but so did Elijah. He trusted what the Lord told him in verse 14, that the flour would not be used up and the jar of oil would not run out! Elijah trusted that the Lord would provide. If the Lord had not provided, this woman would have died after Elijah had taken all that she had!

I want to trust God like that. I want to trust God and His words. We have His very words here in the Bible. We have heard them and now we need to trust them and take them to heart. We need to believe them even for our next meal as Elijah and the widow did. They were following God in some very wicked times and they trusted that God was in control.

Let us realize that God is sovereign and always in control. Take some time today to write down some things that you are trusting God for, putting them in His hands. Pray over those things and trust God to carry out His will and His plan.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Luke 4:16-30**

In today's passage Jesus speaks of Elijah and the widow. God was sharing with the people that salvation was not just for Israel but for all people. Coming from the Old Testament into the New Testament the Jews were having a hard time coping with the news that God (salvation) was not just for them but also for the Greeks (everyone who was not a Jew). In fact, you can read more about this in Romans. Paul was seeking to convince the Jews that God and Jesus were for all! When the Jews in this passage heard that God was for all they were upset and sought to drive Jesus right out of town.

We also read in today's passage that God sent Elijah to a foreign widow instead of one of Israel. The widows of Israel had rejected God and His prophet and were now worshiping false gods like Baal, rather than the one true God. In fact, Jesus was comparing his situation to Elijah and the people to the evil king, Ahab. He even said in that time many had leprosy in Israel but they were not healed and they did not seek after the one true God.

Not only were these people rejecting Jesus but they were seeking to get Him out of town, in fact, they were trying to dismiss the Messiah. Scales were on their eyes and they would not accept and acknowledge that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah.

The people rejected Elijah and his words from God and these people also rejected Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Remember we are to share Jesus. We are to teach His life, His hope, His death, His burial, and His resurrection along with the fact that He is love. If folks reject it, remember that they are not rejecting you. They are rejecting Jesus, the King of the universe. Share that God is the only way to heaven through Jesus and when folks don't listen, pray. When people won't hear it, continue to share the truth of God. God is our only hope through Jesus. Thank Jesus for your salvation today!

## **Day 4**

### **First Read 1 Kings 17:17-24**

While Ahab was praying to Baal to send rain, God was in the process of making His name great and real to the widow with whom Elijah was staying. The widow's son died and understandably, the mom was distressed. She even asked Elijah if he came to remind her of her sin and kill her son! She had just seen God work a miracle in providing for her, her son, and Elijah, yet now her son was dead. Why? Was God sleeping? Did He not know that her son would die? Did He make a mistake?

God was using this situation to bring glory to Himself and, in particular, to help the widow understand that Elijah was God's servant. When God performed this miracle it helped the widow fully believe in God and in His prophet and understand that it was all for God and for His glory. It wasn't so much for the widow, although she obviously desired her son back. It was for God's glory, so the woman would know and see God for who He is.

We all face struggles, good news, difficulties, pain, celebration, hardships, tragedies, and the like. However, in each of these situations God can work! He desires His name to be glorified and magnified in all situations. After all, He created the world! He created you and me, and He holds all of us in His hands. We will all face struggles and tragedies. We will hurt and we will cry. We will also face life's finest moments and as we continue to walk through these situations, let us be certain that it is God's desire to be magnified, in all these situations. God is right there with us, He is near and He wants all people to come to know Him.

During such times we are to trust God. Sometimes it comes easy and other times it may be difficult. We pray and seek God but in the end, we pray for God's plan and will. It may happen as we would hope or God may have another plan in mind. In the end, though, it's all for God's glory. Even in the difficult times, may God's name be made known. Whether or not God answers our prayer like we want, He is sovereign. May His name be glorified! Whatever the case may be, we can be certain that we know the Creator of the universe, the One who makes our hearts beat, the One who watches over us and holds the whole world in His hands. We can trust Him. It's been said that when you cannot see His hand, trust His heart. Even when we don't understand we can trust God knowing His plan will prevail and He will get the glory. Today, lay those things down at His feet, and trust His heart.

## Day 5

### **First Read Psalm 78:23-39**

These few verses give us a very clear picture of the life of the Israelites. I have often said they had the "bent neck" syndrome. Their necks would bend towards God then away, towards Him and then away again, and it happened over and over again as this passage shares. Verses 36-38 says *"But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant. Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath."* They would lie to God. They were not loyal, even unfaithful to the covenant, but He was merciful and forgave them, not destroying them.

What a loving God we serve. Sure God hates sin and it has to be punished, but He loves us just like He loved the Israelites. God is faithful, we are not! I may not be able to speak for you, but speaking for myself, I often do things my own way, not God's. By the grace of God I usually recognize my foolishness quickly (though not all the time.) God then reminds me who I am and who He is. I wish I could say it has only happened once, but I can look back and see how I have questioned God in the past. Maybe thinking God didn't know what He was doing, or deciding to do things my way instead of God's. By His grace, He was patient as He loved me through His blood, conviction, and His choice! I can be just like the Israelites, following God with everything I am one minute and in the next minute questioning what He is doing. Thank God, He doesn't leave.

God waits for us with open arms. If we are caught in blatant sin, God waits for our return! If we are making unwise choices, God waits for our return. If we are questioning God's choices or motives, God waits for our return. Even if we have run far, far away like the prodigal son, God waits for our return. Verse 38 tells us, "he was merciful and forgave their iniquities." Praise God, He has done the same for us. He didn't leave us in our sin but He brought us to Himself to walk hand in hand with the Creator of the world and the Savior of our souls.

Spend some time today thanking God that He forgives and that He is patient! May we model His forgiveness and His patience as it has been given to us.

## **WEEK 63 ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL--**

Dennis Watson

In American history there was a real showdown known as the shootout at the OK Corral. It lasted thirty seconds and took place Wednesday afternoon, October 26, 1881. In Israel's history there was a showdown on Mount Carmel that took longer than thirty seconds and, in this showdown, God once again showed Himself all powerful. This week we will look at that showdown and see how God used the prophet Elijah and how the event points to Jesus.

### **Day 1**

#### **FIRST READ 1 KINGS 18:1-19**

Last week we were introduced to the prophet Elijah. God sent Elijah to King Ahab to tell him that, due to the wickedness of his kingdom and the idolatry in the land, there would be a drought. Elijah told the king that there would be no rain and then he hid himself. During the time of the famine, as instructed by God, Elijah stayed by a brook and was fed by ravens. When the brook dried up his provisions came from God, through a widow. God knows how to care for His people.

Also during this time King Ahab was back in Israel, enduring the drought and famine. After more than three dry years there was little or no water and no place to graze the animals, in particular, the horses used in battle. King Ahab had the caretaker of his house, Obadiah, go in one direction while the king went in another to look for water and grass to feed the animals. Obadiah was a believer. His name means "Servant of Jehovah." He was serving the Lord behind enemy lines by hiding the prophets from King Ahab's murderous wife, Jezebel. During the search for grass and water Obadiah met up with Elijah. Elijah told Obadiah to tell King Ahab that he had found Elijah, but Obadiah was fearful because he knew that Elijah could just disappear. He feared that when the king came, Elijah would be gone. But he was not.

In the encounter with Elijah, King Ahab greeted him, calling Elijah the "troubler of Israel." In reality, as Elijah responded to the king, it was the king who troubled Israel by leading the people to worship the false god Baal.

Now, approximately three and a half years later (see Luke 4:25 for the length of the drought), Elijah was to present himself to the king and let him know there would be rain. God was sending Elijah to

announce the end of the drought. He was going to show that it was not the false god Baal who controlled the weather, but the one true God of Israel. We also see here how God provides for His own.

Thank God for His provisions for us and His sovereignty.

## Day 2

### **FIRST READ 1 KINGS 18:20-35**

Talk about bold! Elijah followed God's leading in throwing down the gauntlet. He challenged the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah to meet him on Mount Carmel for a test to see who the real God was. The children of Israel and the 850 prophets of the false gods come together and Elijah presents the challenge. The false prophets went first at Elijah's urging. They took a bull, cut it up, and put it on an altar and called out to their false gods to burn up the offering. For six hours the false prophets cried out to their gods but nothing happened. Elijah mocked them by saying that maybe their god was on vacation, eating, or maybe asleep. They cried out and were cutting themselves but nothing happened. It was an exercise in futility!

Then Elijah called the people to come close. He alone rebuilt an altar that had been there but was in disrepair because it had not been used. He used twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, although the nation had been divided. He put the wood on the altar along with the bull that he had cut up. He then wanted to make sure there was no doubt that this would be a miracle of God. He had the people bring buckets of water to pour on the bull and the wood. There was so much water that it filled the trench Elijah had dug around the altar. The altar, the wood, and the bull were soaked with water.

Elijah was grossly outnumbered. There were all of the Israelites who had made no commitment at the beginning of this challenge. He asked them, *"How long will you falter between two opinions?"* They were noncommittal by their silence. Elijah was alone but not really alone. Martin Luther said, *"One with God is a majority."* Elijah was alone with God, but he was in the majority!

Ask the Lord to enable you to trust Him more so that you can stand alone with Him.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **FIRST READ 1 KINGS 18:36-38**

This whole setup—the challenge, the altar, the sacrifice, and even the water was God’s idea. Elijah prayed and acknowledged that he had done all of this, “*at Your Word.*” God had planned this and set it all up to display His power and majesty. As I read those words it makes me think of the words of Peter recorded in Acts 2:23 regarding Jesus:

*This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and fore-knowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Acts 2:23 (NIV)*

God set the whole thing up for Jesus and His death on the cross. God showed His power over the false gods at Mount Carmel and He showed His power over death, sin, and Satan, at the cross of Jesus Christ.

The goal of both encounters was to turn God’s people to Himself. Elijah cried out and the fire came down from heaven, burned up the bull, the wood, and licked up all the water! God orchestrated the battle, then fought and won it! He showed Himself to be the victor. At the cross He did the same. He drew the line and then fought and won the battle to liberate us from sin and its power. When Jesus was raised from the dead the victory of all victories was won! Oh victory in Jesus!

God hears and answers our prayers. Give thanks for the victory He gives.

## **Day 4**

### **FIRST READ 1 KINGS 18:39-45**

At the first of this encounter the people were silent. They had nothing to say as they lived their lives “*between two opinions.*” Now that God had showed Himself mighty and powerful they fell on their faces and declared, “*The Lord He is God! The Lord He is God!*” The people joined with Elijah and followed his instructions to execute the prophets of Baal.

Now the power of God was further displayed as the three and a half year drought came to an end. Even before his prayer Elijah told the people, including King Ahab, "Go up and eat for there is the sound of abundance of rain." Elijah then went up again to Mount Carmel and prayed for rain. Elijah knew God was going to send the rain. He stepped out and gave instructions and then prayed for the Lord to send the rain. He sent his servant to look toward the sea to see if there were clouds. This took place seven times and on the seventh time the servant reported that there was a small cloud about the size of a man's hand. He sent a warning to King Ahab to get on his chariot and ride before the rain hit and then Elijah took off running and beat Ahab to Jezreel.

God keeps His word! You can count on it and live by it. Elijah trusted the Lord to do what He said He would do and then ordered his life accordingly. Trust Him and walk with Him in obedience and surrender.

Thank God for His sovereignty

## **Day 5**

### **FIRST READ PSALM 98:1-9**

This wonderful psalm is a celebration of God's victory of salvation. Since we are reading this with hindsight we know that there were many victories like the one we just looked at this week with Elijah and the prophets of Baal. This psalm ultimately is celebrating the victory of salvation that was won at the cross when Jesus died. It is this psalm that was the inspiration for the wonderful hymn by Isaac Watts, "Joy to the World." We think of it as a Christmas carol but it is really a kingdom hymn. Although we get excited and carried away at Christmas time, Jesus did not focus on His birth but on the cross and the victory won there. The hymn says, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Let earth receive her King."

The psalmist was not familiar with Jesus but he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not knowing that he was writing about one to come many centuries later. He wrote about celebration and singing. He spoke of salvation that was known by all the nations. It was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that made salvation known to the nations.

The cross of Christ ushered in the victory but the final victory cry will be when Jesus rules and reigns in the New Heaven and the New

Earth. That celebration will take place for eternity. In the meantime we sing new songs and play instruments and join with the seas, rivers, and the hills as they celebrate the victories and the anticipated victory! The psalmist was looking forward to an event to come and inviting all to celebrate. We look back to victories in the Old Testament and the victories at the cross and empty tomb. We also look forward to the establishment of the rule and reign of the King of Kings. We have a reason to celebrate!

Thank God for the call to sing and celebrate. Now do it for all time and beyond!

## **Week 64- Elijah is Taken up to Heaven**-Chris Watson

From last week's devotions to this week a few things have taken place. The main thing is that Ahab was killed in battle and just as Elijah and Micaiah had prophesied, the dogs licked up his blood. Remember, he was a wicked and evil king. Also, we learn that God was not necessarily going to bring disaster to Ahab but would wait and bring it on his house in the days of his son (1 Kings 21:29). In 2 Kings 1, we see that judgment take place on Ahab's son. Ahaziah became king over Israel, but it only lasted two years before he died. His death was not the result of falling through a roof, as much as that when he fell he consulted another god instead of God. Because of that, he never recovered from the fall. Ahaziah had no son, so Joram succeeded him. We also see in 1 Kings 19 the call of Elisha as a prophet. He became Elijah's attendant. This leads us to where we are today.

### **Day 1**

#### **First Read 2 Kings 2:1-6**

Elijah was about to be taken up into heaven and we know that he and Elisha knew this. Obviously, God had revealed to them what was going to happen. In 1 Kings 19 we see the call of Elisha. In verses 19-21 we see Elijah taking him under his wing, and verse 21 refers to Elisha as Elijah's attendant. Also in today's passage, we see that Elijah was Elisha's master. While it was a master/ attendant relationship, Elisha wanted to go wherever Elijah went as the Lord sent him. Their relationship was one of godly love and I believe they learned from each other. God knew this before it was even made known that Elijah would be taken up into heaven. He put Elisha with Elijah so when the time came Elisha would be ready to continue the work and direction from the Lord as Elijah had. They had such a relationship and Elisha was so loyal that he wanted to go wherever Elijah went and he also didn't want to miss when God took him to heaven. He wanted to be there to experience it as well; he wanted to see his master and mentor be taken up.

God was preparing Elisha to, in essence, take Elijah's place. Elijah was mentoring Elisha and God was getting them both ready for what was to happen. Who is mentoring or discipling you and who are you mentoring or discipling? In other words, who is pouring into your life the things of God and life experiences and into whose life are you pouring the things of God? Elijah was preparing Elisha for his departure and getting him ready to continue on in God's work.

We all need someone pouring into our life and visa versa. Are you pouring into someone else's life? I believe if you are married it starts with your spouse and then your kids. For men, what other men are you pouring into? Women, what other women are you pouring into? Knowing that in time, others will need to carry the torch as it is passed on. Sometimes we do this by default but it's best done on a regular basis with one person as you glean the truths of God. May we all be like Elijah knowing in time we will be called to heaven and wanting to ready those believers that will come behind us. May all who come behind us find us faithful!

## **Day 2**

### **First Read 2 Kings 2:7-14**

This must have been quite an experience for both Elijah and Elisha! Can you imagine the story that Elisha had to tell when he got back across the water? We will see tomorrow that not even the fifty men that were with them believed what had happened.

Notice what we see both from Elisha and Elijah, a desire to follow and obey God for His glory, not their own. Elisha had asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit and he knew that his spirit was that which followed God. These men followed God and spoke truth, and it wasn't always easy. In a time when many were not God-fearing or followers of God they followed God with all of their hearts. They were definitely not in it for the credit or for themselves but because they knew and walked with God. They spoke truth.

Balance is an important word. As believers we must speak the truth like Elijah and Elisha, but we must do so in love. Know that when speaking the truth, based on God's Word, many will question you, laugh at you, or even shy away from you. Elijah found himself in a cave because he thought he was the only one still serving God. Standing on the truth, speaking the truth, and standing on the Word of God can sometimes be lonely; however with God near we are definitely not lonely. Elijah loved and served God so much that God took him up into heaven. He had been faithful in his service and God decided it was time for him to go.

What are you standing on and for? Are you standing on the Word of God and His truth? Are you standing on your opinions? Are you focusing on what others say or what God's Word says? May we be like Elijah and Elisha and stand on the Word of God and speak truth and live. Be ready as others might leave, laugh, or even say you are crazy. God is still near, He is what we need!

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **First Read Mark 9:2-9**

Some 800 years after Elijah left in a whirlwind, he came to earth again with Moses, Peter, James, and John, looking on as Jesus was transfigured. In verses 5-6 we see that Peter was frightened as Moses and Elijah stood before him. You can imagine why Peter was frightened; these were two men that Peter would have known had been gone for many years.

Jesus was trying to help Peter, James, and John understand that Elijah and Moses were pointing to Jesus. "Elijah's life pointed forward to Jesus as a prophet who would bring God's Word to His people. The life of Moses pointed forward to Jesus as a mediator who would stand in the middle for us, pleading with God. Jesus traded His perfect life for our sinful one that we might be saved. To be sure the disciples understood who was most important, God the Father spoke out saying that Jesus was His son. Jesus remained while Moses and Elijah disappeared."<sup>5</sup> Verses 11-13 of Mark 9 goes on to speak of Elijah.

Jesus was trying to help these guys see that not only did Elijah and Moses point to Jesus but everything in the Bible, all things, point to Jesus. We have seen this in our study so far. We have seen others in the Old Testament point to Christ as well. We saw how Genesis 3:15 was all about Jesus and this happened just after the fall. Also, Abram was willing to sacrifice Isaac, but suddenly a substitute was provided. We also saw how Joseph was a "type/ picture of Christ." All of God's Word points to Jesus who is our only hope. He is not only our hope to have our sins forgiven, but our hope to have a relationship with Christ.

Thank God for His Word and how it directs everything to Jesus!

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Marty Machowski, Long Story Short, 324

## Day 4

### **First Read 2 Kings 2:15-22**

These fifty men wanted to go and look for Elijah. Verse 7 calls them “*fifty men of the company of the prophets.*” Most likely these men followed Elijah around and it can be a safe assumption that Elijah had taught them many things about God. He taught them how to pray and listen to God, and now the one who they looked to was gone.

We see many men of faith in the scriptures like Moses, Abram, Elijah, and David. These were men that others often looked up to or looked to for spiritual guidance and direction. I believe God places people in our lives that lead us closer to God and challenge us to walk more in tune with God. I think this is what discipleship looks like, a man or woman of God who walks humbly with God, leading others and instructing others in His ways. This would be people in our lives who regularly challenge us in our walk with Christ. Elijah was that person for these men. I believe that’s why they wanted to look for him. They had looked to him for Godly wisdom and counsel.

As we know from scripture and from our day and time, while it’s biblical and good to have other godly men and women to look to, the best person to keep our eyes and focus on is Jesus. Others can and will let us down and, like Elijah, some of those we look to for wisdom and counsel will one day be gone. That’s not to say we don’t look to them for wisdom and counsel, of course we do, as scripture tells us to. However, we are careful to make sure our guidance and direction is ultimately found in our relationship with Jesus, the One who will always be here, never leaving or forsaking us, but walking hand in hand with us.

Take some time today to thank God for those people in your life that are spiritual mentors and leaders to you. Maybe give them a call or send them a text or email to let them know how much they encourage you. Most of all thank God for His leading and His direction in your life!

## Day 5

### First Read Malachi 4:4-6

If you take our passage today and then turn over to **Matthew 11:13-14** we read, *“For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup> And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. <sup>15</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear”*. We also see this account in the other gospels. Elijah was the one to come and he came through John the Baptist. John wasn’t Elijah reincarnated, but he represented Elijah!

John Phillips says, *“When Jesus came the first time, God did indeed send a forerunner: John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah to call the nation back to God. The nation responded by murdering John and crucifying Christ.”<sup>6</sup>*

Many of the Jews are still waiting for the first Elijah, if you will (John the Baptist), as some didn’t accept that John was coming in the spirit of Elijah. They are looking for Elijah himself. In fact if you remember the study of the Feasts of Israel, months back, the Jews even place a cup for Elijah known as The Cup of Hallel or Elijah’s cup as they are still waiting on him to come before the Messiah. Since Jesus came until now many Jews have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah and the prophecy concerning Elijah is just one reason.

Thank God for His word and how it is all connected. Thank Him for allowing you to understand it, grow in it, and study it. Pray for those who have not yet seen the truth and their eyes have not yet been opened. Pray for people you know who have heard the truth conveyed to them in a clear way but still have not put their faith in Jesus or who can’t believe that Jesus would love them. Pray specifically that the Jews will in fact see the true Messiah! Pray for God’s name to be proclaimed throughout the earth!

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<sup>6</sup>John Phillips Commentary Series, -Exploring the Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary

## WEEK 65 ELISHA'S MINISTRY----- Dennis Watson

Many biblical historical events took place after the showdown on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. When Elijah was taken up to heaven Elijah told Elisha that his request for a double portion of his spirit would become a reality. "This was not a request for twice as much of the Holy Spirit, or for a ministry twice as great as that of Elijah, but for a greater degree of the inner spirit that motivated the great prophet."<sup>7</sup> Elisha continued the ministry of Elijah. During Elisha's ministry he worked ten miracles. We will look at a few of those this week. However, the important thing to note is that it was God who was providing the power for the miracles. There would come One far greater who would work even greater miracles—Jesus.

### Day 1

#### **FIRST READ 2 KINGS 4:1-7**

Elisha was like a son to Elijah, which explains why he asked for a double portion of his spirit. The oldest son in the family was to receive a double portion of the inheritance. Obviously, Elisha saw himself not just as one of the sons of the prophet but as Elijah's firstborn and therefore thought he deserved the double inheritance. We see this was his request in **2 Kings 2:9** where he requested "*a double portion of his spirit.*"

This account sounds a lot like the one about Elijah and the widow whose flour and oil did not run out during the time of the drought. This widow had many debts. When Elisha asked her what she had, she told him all she had in the house was a little oil. In this case Elisha told the widow to go and gather all the jars she could from her neighbors. After she had done this she returned home. She, along with her sons, filled all of those jars from the little oil she had until they were all full and then the oil stopped. Elisha told her to go and sell all of that, pay her debts, and live on what was left over.

What a mighty miracle! This was a miracle, no natural explanation, an act of God through Elisha on behalf of the widow. The widow really wanted a solution to her predicament. Elisha told her what to do and she followed the man of God's instructions completely and God provided for her needs miraculously. She believed and acted on her belief. The oil continued to flow until her needs were met. She

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<sup>7</sup>Bible Exposition Commentary (BE Series)-Old Testament-The Bible Commentary-History

had and practiced abiding faith. Abiding faith is faith that is acted upon not just talked about.

Ask God for His grace so that you may have abiding faith.

## **Day 2**

### **FIRST READ 2 KINGS 4:8-17**

Serving God shows up in serving others. When you see someone who loves to serve others it is often motivated by the blessings of God. God gives blessings. Blessed people bless people. In today's biblical historical account there is a woman who wanted her and her husband to bless Elisha. In reality they were serving God and it was expressed in serving the man of God, Elisha. I believe that the woman and her husband were serving without ulterior motives. However, God knew the woman was childless and longed to have a child. So the man and woman fixed a little room for Elisha in which he could stay when he was in their area. One day Elisha was so moved by what they had done he asked the woman what he could do for her, but she did not tell him anything. Elisha's servant told him that she had no son and her husband was old. Elisha announced to her that she would have a son. The next year, she did!

We see in scripture that there are times that God gave children to women who had none. Sarah had Isaac. Rebekah had Jacob and Esau. Rachel had Joseph. Hannah had Samuel. Elizabeth had John the Baptist. Of course, the greatest miraculous birth of all was the birth of Jesus to Mary, the virgin! He was fully God and fully man.

God is so kind to us. Think of the many kindnesses He has shown to you. Give thanks to Him for His kindness and be prepared to show kindness to others and to also be a servant.

Ask God for the grace to be a servant.

## **Day 3 CONNECT TO JESUS**

### **FIRST READ 2 KINGS 4:18-37**

Job lost just about everything he had and then said, "*The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away*" (**Job 1:21**). The woman in yesterday's account did have a child but there came the day that all parents fear, the child died. God had graciously provided her a much wanted son and now he had died. Elisha was a miracle worker. There are ten

miracles that God worked through him. We have already seen the miracle of the oil for the poor widow. We have seen the miracle of the birth of a son to the Shunammite woman and her husband. Now we see the miracle of the raising of the Shunammite woman's son.

The woman went in search of Elijah, found him, and told him of the death of her son. She knew where to turn when she found herself in a hopeless situation. She knew that through Elisha God has miraculously given her a son. Because of this she knew to go find the man of God and tell him what had taken place. Elisha went with the woman to her home where the child lay dead. God empowered Elisha to raise the child from the dead.

Again we have a wonderful perch from which to read the Bible. Elisha was a great miracle worker who even raised one from the dead. Now we know about the greatest miracle worker of all—Jesus. However, He did not come to be a miracle worker. He came, *“To seek and to save that which was lost.”* I am thankful for and am truly amazed at the miracles recorded in the Bible and, in particular, those of Jesus. But that for which I am most thankful is that Jesus came to deal with the number one enemy of God and man—sin. The greatest miracle of all was when Jesus died on the cross and took away the power of sin over all people! Sin plagues us every day, but Jesus won the victory and proved that victory in the resurrection. Sin's power has been removed!

Thank God for the glorious miracle of the defeat of sin's power and consequences through Jesus Christ!

## Day 4

### **FIRST READ 2 KINGS 4:38-41**

After the fall God said that He would put enmity between the woman and the serpent and the woman's offspring and the serpent's offspring. Of course that enmity was far reaching beyond just the enmity between Satan and mankind. Conflict arose within nature. There would be thorns and weeds that man would have to deal with in raising food. We see the conflict between man and the wild animals but also with poisonous plants. In today's account Elisha works another miracle when a meal of the prophets becomes poisoned.

A stew was being prepared and one of the prophets was out

gathering food items to be put in the stew. Unknowingly, some kind of poisonous vegetation was placed in the pot of stew. Immediately upon taste it was discovered that it was poisonous. The men cried out to Elisha, “*Man of God, there is death in the pot.*” Elisha put flour in the pot and the poison was removed. The flour did not make the difference, it was the miraculous power of God.

Can you imagine what it was like for Adam and Eve in the Garden to eat freely from all of the vegetation except from the forbidden tree? They did not have to think about sickness or death because such things did not exist. God will one day remove all of the effects of sin, sickness, and death. In the New Heaven and Earth there will be no poison. Look at how Isaiah describes that time:

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. <sup>7</sup> The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup> The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. <sup>9</sup> They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:6-9 (NKJV)*

Paul says in Romans 8:21 that creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

Give thanks to God for His power over the corruption brought to creation by sin. Anticipate the glorious time of deliverance from corruption!

## **Day 5**

### **FIRST READ HABAKKUK 1:5-12 AND ACTS 13:38-48**

Often during the Old Testament days God would use a godless foreign enemy to bring judgment upon His people when they were disobedient and not seeking Him. In the passage in Habakkuk that we read today God responded when Habakkuk asked God why He did not do something since the people were being so evil. God told Habakkuk that He was going to do something very unusual. A foreign enemy would attack suddenly and violently.

Paul used this passage in Acts to tell the people that God was going to act suddenly and in a very unusual way. But in the case of Paul speaking, he said that God sent Jesus to bring the good news. Paul

told them the amazing thing God had done in their day was to send Jesus to die on the cross. Paul was alerting the people to warn them just as Habakkuk did. He was warning them not to miss the blessing of the coming of Jesus and His death and resurrection. In both cases Israel did not believe what God told them. The message of Paul was clear—do not miss what God has provided for you in Jesus Christ your Savior.

However, in the account in Acts the Jews rejected the words of Paul because of envy. Their hearts were resistant to the gospel. It was here that a turning point occurred in the book of Acts. It is expressed in the words of Paul and Barnabas to the Jewish people:

*“Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.” Acts 13:46 (NKJV)*

The focus would now be to take the message of Jesus and salvation to the nations.

What about you? Have you received the wonderful news of God’s salvation! Don’t miss it!

As we come to the last section of the Old Testament we move from the time of the judges to the time of the kings. Technically speaking Samuel was not just a prophet and a priest, he was also the most significant of the judges. Samuel provides the transition from a very loose tribal government to a monarchy. With this we come to Saul, the first King anointed by Samuel. We then see King David the king who established the royal line leading to Jesus the true king. This next section will be very active and there is so much going on historically that you need to hold on as we swing into the phase of biblical history that will lead us into the New Testament journey.

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