

David

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[0 : 0 0] Well, continuing in our progress through our little short series about Bethlehem itself and the lead-up to its ultimate prize in a time of honour and a time of blessing before the Lord, we look at how, we've been looking at how the Lord has used this little town in the past.

We looked initially about how when Rachel, Jacob's wife, was buried there, and that's the first mention about Bethlehem in the Scriptures, and then, we said about a thousand years on from that, was the time of Ruth, when she returned with Naomi, her mother-in-law, to Bethlehem, after they had both been widowed in the land of Moab, and how the future that the Lord made for them with and through Boaz, and the birth of Obed, who was of course the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.

And so we move on, about maybe a couple of hundred years later on. We don't know exactly how long, you see, because as we mentioned last time around in Acts 13, at verse 20, Paul is saying that the Lord gave unto the children of Israel judges about the space of 450 years until Samuel the prophet.

Now we don't know how far through that 450 years the time of Ruth and Boaz was, but given that, albeit Jesse went for an old man in the days of Saul, and he was already an old man by the time that David came along and was born.

So even so, allowing for that, if he was an old man, and perhaps Obed was older when he had Jesse, and so on, you can't say exactly, but we could posit perhaps a couple of hundred years, maybe at the most, by the time we have moved on now to this return again to Bethlehem, where Samuel comes now to seek out the Lord's anointed replacement for King Saul.

[2 : 0 5] Now when we say anointed replacement, we have to bear in mind that Saul, of course, reigned for 40 years. David at this point, when he is anointed, again we can't speculate exactly what age he was, maybe 17, maybe 15.

If we take, for example, the age of 15 that he might have been when he is anointed, then, you know, Saul has been on the throne about 25 years already by now, so there's another, say, 15 to go, because David was 30 years old when he became king, finally, with the death of Saul.

So, here we have about a couple of hundred years on, roughly, after the time of Ruth. We read verses 4 and 5. Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem.

And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Come hast thou peaceably? It's something of a kind of dread in which Samuel must have been held by the people of Israel, and usually, you know, his encounters with them have been ones of maybe rebuke, and of strict disciplinarianism, perhaps, but that is no doubt what the children of Israel needed.

Remember that when Samuel first began to be used of the Lord as a boy, and then as a young man, it was a time of great sink of iniquity in Israel, where the sons of Eli, although they were priests, greatly abused the priest's office, and brought the whole worship of the Lord into disrepute.

[3 : 36] And Eli, although a godly man himself, was unable or unwilling to restrain his sons and to discipline them at all. So, if even the priests were sunk to that level, you can imagine what the rest of the population was like.

And remember how, of course, the times of the judges were times of great darkness and depravity and cruelty. And when there was no king in Israel, everybody just did that, which was right in his own eyes.

And it's out of that sort of cesspool of darkness and paganism that Samuel emerges. And if he's going to give the kind of godly leadership that the country needs, then he probably has to be quite a stern sort of figure.

You know, if we were to think of our own country's Reformation, and we think of something like John Knox, you know, you don't think of John Knox as just sort of, you know, your cuddly teddy bear kind of a former.

We think of him as stern and severe, and one that would clear away all the dregs of popery at the time of the Reformation, and so on, and how he would set the country firmly on a scriptural footing.

[4 : 46] But it doesn't make you sort of easy and sort of feel good, warm, fuzzy feeling kind of thing. So you can imagine if John Knox appear at somebody's parish church around that time of the Reformation, they would probably, as they do here with Samuel, they'd tremble and say, well, are you coming peaceably?

And so Samuel said, yes, yes, it's all right, peaceably. I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and called them to the sacrifice.

Now, the implication is he doesn't just single out this family alone, but rather he seeks to sanctify, to set apart, and perhaps to bless especially, no doubt, most of the leading men of the town of Bethlehem, which, remember, would be still a comparatively small city, in the sense that it would have a city wall, but still a small and comparatively insignificant place in the Holy Land overall.

So there wouldn't be that many leading men and their families. And those who are called to the feast are, of course, greatly honoured, and probably a wee bit anxious as well at the same time.

So he calls Jesse and his sons to the feast. And this is Samuel returning to Bethlehem to seek out the future king of Israel, a king who would be many years, perhaps as many as 15 years, in the training and in the sort of gaining of the necessary experience, both of blessing and adulation and heroism and also of adversity, and of being a hunted fugitive as well, and rejected by those in authority, including those who had begun by loving him, as we saw at the end of this chapter.

[6 : 36] So Samuel did that which the Lord commanded, and he comes then to Bethlehem, because the Lord had said, Fill my horn with oil, verse 1, and I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided me a king among his sons.

Now we might then think to ourselves, OK, well this is going to be Bethlehem's finest hour now, up until this point, the anointing of David the king. And this is what makes it the city of David, in that sense, and that's what makes it special.

Well, in one sense, that is true. You know, Bethlehem is the town in which David has his own nativity. It's the town in which David was born.

And of course, at the time when David is born there, nobody thinks, oh yes, Bethlehem, isn't it special? People would probably think of Bethlehem, much as in the New Testament, they thought of Nazareth.

You know, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? You know, the Messiah can't possibly come out of there. The future king of Israel can't possibly come out of Bethlehem. You know, insignificant little town.

[7 : 41] And yet, David's birth there, probably about 15 years before this event, is, you know, a non-event. Nobody records his birth, nobody specially states anything about it.

By the time Jesse has David, he has at least seven sons, big, great, strapping men of Samuel. Thought, yes, surely, these are the Lord's anointed.

Eliab, the eldest, the firstborn, this must be the future king of Israel. But the Lord said, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him.

For the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. And when David is finally identified, remember, he is the youngest.

He is the least significant. And we think, well, David was out there with the sheep, as a little shepherd boy, sort of thing, out there on the hillside. And we think, oh, isn't that idyllic?

[8 : 40] You know, the shepherd boy, we tend to think of these kind of Victorianised pictures of, you know, little shepherd boys, kind of, you know, idling away, relaxing on a green hillside, playing a wee flute of something, all the little lambs round about.

But of course, such an idyllic picture, is really only in people's imaginations. You know, if you think of the kind of weather, that we have, just now, it might not be quite as cold as that by day, in the Holy Land, but they would have their winters, just as they have their summers.

The shepherd is meant to stay with his sheep, and the boy that looks after the sheep, has to stay with them, look after them, be responsible for them. When a lion comes, as David says, later on in chapter 17, to try and attack the flock, you can't just run away and hide.

Even as a teenager, you've got to face down the line. Or you've got to face down the bear. You take it on with your slingshot, or whatever you use, and you have to kill it. And that's exactly what he did.

He has the courage, to defend his father's flock. But remember, that the work of a shepherd, just as Jacob says to Laban, way back in Genesis, you know, in all weathers, in the freezing cold, and in the blistering heat, and without shelter, without protection, he was there with the flock, looking after it, bringing on the young, and then the next generations, and he had them were killed, or he had to figure that responsibility, and so on.

[10 : 09] It wasn't a fun job. It wasn't an idyllic, sort of lazy, leisurely job. It was one with constant responsibilities.

You're constantly looking out, that all the sheep, all the lambs are there, and probably counting them, a hundred times a day, leading them to whatever the pasture, the safe place might be. Always looking out for predators.

You're on the watch the whole time. You sleep where they are, and you know, you could be disturbed at any time. And you're the one responsible, for their safety.

So never mind your own safety, it's the safety of the flock, and the lambs, that you have to worry about. It's not a fun job. And it's the one, which the youngest, and the least significant, in the family, would be given.

So this is David. This is David, out with the sheep, the job nobody wants, so the others have all had to do, and they're younger, and now there he is, out in either the blistering heat, and the freezing cold, night and day, there he is looking after the flock.

[11 : 09] So they bring him in. Insignificant, little David. But God says, remember, I don't look in the outward appearance. You look in the outward appearance, but I look in the heart. Now what does it say about David, in scripture?

It says that he was a man after God, his own heart. He was one who never put a foot wrong, except in the matter of Bathsheba. He was the one who loved the Lord, followed the Lord, served the Lord, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.

And the Lord had chosen this boy, because of the man that he would become, and the king that he would become, and coming out of this insignificant little town, David would become the ultimate, personification of Israel at its best.

Even better than his son Solomon, who for all his outward glory, and all, and palaces, and the temple that he built, and all his 700 wives, and 300 concubines, and there's the rather part of his problem later on, when his heart was turned away from the Lord, that didn't happen to David.

His heart didn't turn away from the Lord. Yes, he fell. Yes, he sinned against the Lord, but he repented when he sinned. He was the man after God's own heart, and he was raised up out of this obscure little town, because the Lord has plans for this obscure little town.

[12 : 37] This, which is the city of David, the one for which he originates, would become more honoured yet, in the fullness of time. But we think, well, because David's from here, that's what makes it special.

But, after this point, when David, obviously, he goes, and serves a bit of time, with Saul, looking after his armour, and being on hand, to play with a heart, whenever the evil spirit from the Lord, came to trouble Saul.

But then he obviously, goes back home again, when Saul goes off the water. And he, despite the fact that he's obviously, made a good impression on Saul, Saul forgets again, who he is, because by the time he comes, to actually take on Goliath, the Philistine, Saul doesn't really remember him, and who he was.

So, he has to be reminded again. So, here's David, again, comparatively obscure. Very young, and insignificant. Just like Bethlehem, itself.

But when we think about Bethlehem, we think, oh well, that's your city of David. David, doesn't spend much time in it. He is born there, yes.

[13 : 47] When he has to be sent for, where is he? He can't, he can't graze sheep, in the streets of the city. They have to be out, on the hillside. So, he's not in Bethlehem, itself, much. When he goes off, to follow Saul, and chapter 17, when he kills Goliath, or Gath, the Philistine, he doesn't come back, to Bethlehem, much after that, at all.

In fact, the references, to him coming back, are extremely few. When we have, Saul, beginning to sort of, want to kill David, and his life, being in danger, he enters into this, pact with Jonathan, remember, where Jonathan says, well, look, if my father asks for you, this particular feast, then if my father, at all, Misty, then say, David, earnestly ask leave of me, that he might run, to Bethlehem, his city.

For there is a yearly, sacrifice there, for all the family. If he save us, it is well, thy servant, shall have peace. But if he be very wroth, then be sure, that evil is determined, by him.

And again, of course, this is what Jonathan exactly says, verse 28 of the same, chapter 20, in 1 Samuel, Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me, to go to Bethlehem, and he said, let me go, I pray thee, for our family, the sacrifice in the city, and my brother, he hath commanded me, to be there.

And now, if I have found favour in my eyes, let me go away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Now, the fact that he says, my brother commands me, to be there, you might think, that means that Jesse is dead by then.

[15 : 18] But he's not, because a couple of chapters further on, in 1 Samuel 22, we read that David sends his father and mother, into the land of Moab. So he must be really, really old by now, and pretty decrepit.

But what David fears, is that Saul, will use David's parents, as leverage, to go and either capture them, or kill them, in order to get at David.

So he sends them away, into the land of Moab, in 1 Samuel 22. But that's the only reference, really, to Bethlehem, once David leaves. Once David enters, Saul's servants, and then he has his military career, and then he's on the run, as a fugitive, and so on.

That's the only reference, to Bethlehem. It's as if it's, you know, wiped through his memory. All his future career, is elsewhere. It's like, you know, unlike, I suppose, when people leave the island, and you go off, whether to university, or follow their career, or the mainland, or the central belt, or forces, or to sail the seas, or around the world, or wherever it happens to be.

This is where they're from, and this is the place of their nativity, and they don't forget it, and they always identify themselves, as being from here, but still, most of their lives, is left away from it.

[16 : 35] Just as most of David's life, is left away from Bethlehem. And the final, sort of, well, final, but the only future, real reference, that there is to it, thereafter, in David's life, is when he's busy, fighting the Philistines, and things are going badly, in the campaign, and it's almost, nostalgically, that he says, in 2 Samuel 23, David longed and said, oh, that one would give me drink, of the water, of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate.

And that's when three of his soldiers, break through the Philistine land, and they bring him water, from the well of Bethlehem, and he pours it out, but that's, that's another story, he pours it out to the book. The point is, that David is almost certainly thinking, no, oh, I'm getting really thirsty, it must be a couple of hours, since I've drunk the water, of the well of Bethlehem.

No, he's thinking back, to a younger, simpler stage, of his life, to his boyhood, and how he used to love, the cold, deep, clear waters, of the well of Bethlehem, and he longs for a taste, of those far off days, again, so that's what his men do, they go through, they break through the lines, and they go all the miles, like 15 miles, or whatever, from where he was at the time, and they bring him water, from the well of Bethlehem, but there's not, that much reference to it.

Is it the city of David? Well, yes, in one sense it is. But if we go on a little further, we see into it, for example, in 2 Samuel, chapter 5.

2 Samuel 5, this is significant here, where we read after David, and his men come, to take the city of Jerusalem. Verse 9, So David dwelt, in the fort, and called it, the city of David.

[18 : 21] And David built round about, from middle and inward, and David went on, and grew great, and the Lord, God's host, was with him. Now, what is the city of David? It's Jerusalem. The old part of the Jebusite city, the city of Zion, the name that means Flint, that bit of a rock, that's much lower down the hill, than where the temple, subsequently was built.

It's quite a comparatively low down, insignificant bit of fortress, that David captures. But he calls this, the city of David. And this became, the sort of, ancient royal part, of the city of Jerusalem, as it subsequently spread out.

And all the subsequent references, in the Old Testament, to the city of David, are usually used, in a burial sense.

It says that, you know, Reboim, and Abijim, and Jesus knows how many others, were buried, in the city of David. And instead of being, a sort of place of, royal residence, as the kings, and Solomon in particular, moved up the hill, to the new palaces, that were built, around the sort of, temple area, the city of David, became almost like, like the island of Iona, was to the ancient kings, of Scotland.

It became a sacred, burial place. Because you go through, the kings of Judah, and the only reference, you read to the city of David, is that's where, they were buried. And something like, 20 references, to a king being, buried in the city of David.

[19 : 52] And then of course, most of these are, are paralleled, in references to the chronicles. A couple of references, in Isaiah as well. But all the Old Testament, references, I'll say that again, all, the Old Testament, references, to anything described as, the city of David, refer not, to Bethlehem.

But to Jerusalem. To Jerusalem, which David, made his capital, and made his name, and his presence, and his royal, seat of authority, to dwell there.

And he made that his city. He named it, the city of David. He called it, verse 9 of 2 Samuel 5, he called it, the city of David, and that's what it remained, throughout all the Old Testament times.

And he, he said, but wait a minute, aren't we told about, you know, the city of David, and so on, isn't it? Yes, that's down to basically, one reference, or one and a half, depending on how you, how you count.

In the New Testament, Luke's account of the Gospel, chapter 2, verse 4, Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house, and lineage of David.

[21 : 13] And again, then at verse 11, for unto you, the angel said, is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

That's the only actual references, in scripture, to Bethlehem, as being, the city of David. All the times, in David's life, and in the lives, of his sons, and grandsons, and posterity, that followed after, in the Old Testament, it was Jerusalem, that people referred to, as the city of David.

And we might think, well, that's a bit strange, isn't it? Surely, the city of David, is Bethlehem, that's what we think, in terms of, that's what the angel said, and yes, that's what we have to, recognize, because the angel, is no more, and no less, than a messenger of God.

And God, has plans, for Bethlehem, just as he has plans, for Jerusalem, and what is to happen there, if Bethlehem, is to be, the birthplace, of not only, the king of Israel, King David, but the ultimate, king of Israel, King Jesus.

And Jerusalem, is to be, the death place, not only of David, in the city of David, but likewise, also of the Messiah, cannot be, that a prophet, perish, outside of Jerusalem, Jesus said, that as he has plans, for both, it is God, however, through his messenger, who calls Bethlehem, the city of David.

[22 : 40] And it is, comparatively rare, it is only, in a New Testament, context, that it is identified, in this way. It is only, with hindsight, it is only, looking back, just as, anybody's, birthplace, only becomes, significant, in retrospect.

If somebody, goes on, to do great things, in the world, and become a great general, or a great leader, or a great king, or a great statesman, or whatever the case may be, then of course, their birthplace, becomes, a significant point, of historical interest.

But at the time, they were born there, it wasn't, of any great significance, it only becomes, important, in retrospect. Our birthplace, and the focus, upon our birthday, only becomes, significant, in the light, of what our lives, unfold as.

It's not simply, where does your life, begin, in this earth, but what do you do, with it? What do you do, with the life, the Lord, has given you?

Now, what David did, with his life, was a way, unfolding a way, that he, almost certainly himself, would never have imagined. Samuel came, seeking him out.

[23 : 57] He came, seeking him out, where he was. Where was he, when Samuel came? He was out, doing his job. He was doing, what he should be doing. You know, if he had been, a lesser man, or perhaps, a sort of, easily distracted, young boy, then the buzz, would have gone around, from the city, out onto the hills, Samuel's come, Samuel's come, oh my goodness, I wonder what he wants, and sneak down the hill, and up the hill, and peek over the wall, and say, Samuel, I wonder what he's saying, he looks like he's giving, my brother's into trouble, hee hee, and then, oh no, they're not in trouble, now they're being sanctified, they're being called, to this great sacrifice, and then they send for him, and then he'd be found, but David is not, peeking over the wall, interested, curious, as to what's happening, what the buzz, and what the noise is, he's where he ought to be, he's doing his job, he's fulfilling his duty, he's out on the hillside, and it is from the doing, of his ordinary, commoner garden duty, that he is called, from that, to a far greater calling, he has anointed, in the midst of his brother, so that the world can see, this insignificant boy, has been set apart, for great things,

Bethlehem, is to be given a place, as the birthplace, of this future, royal king, it doesn't have, that significance, at that time, but it was going to have it, in retrospect, but in the case of Bethlehem, of course, in the Lord's perfect provenance, it has it, not only in retrospect, but also in prospect, also as it looks forward, to the birth, of the ultimate, king of Israel, but we'll come to that, of course, in due course, so we have to recognize, that wherever we may be, beginning from, the significance, of that beginning, is only interpreted, in the light of, how things develop, and how they unfold, what do you do, with the life, the Lord has given you, you know, the parable of the pounds, or indeed, of the talents, as we have it, in the New Testament, remember, the Lord gives, or the master gives, to his servants, sometimes differing amounts, of money, or of talents, and sometimes, it's exactly the same amount, depending on the parable, but what matters, is what those servants, then go on, to do with it, they've each been given, something, they've each been given, something, submitting it, what do they do, with it, and it's what they do, with it then, that interprets, whether the master, regards them, as a good and faithful servant, or as a wicked and lazy one, now the Lord, lays before us, and into our land, a talent, a pounds worth, of opportunity, which we are given, the opportunity, to work with, to read, as the servants, in the parable, of the New Testament, to work with, and to make, something of it, which the Lord, the master, has given into our hand, and intends us, to make something of it, it is he, who calls David, to this great cast, this great kingship, but what you'll notice, of course, is David, does not then, go from that straight, to a throne room,

David has an awful lot, of years, of struggle ahead of him, he is working, as it were, with the talent, with the power, the Lord has placed, in his hand, he has come, from this obscurity, in Bethlehem, he is being, trained up, and exposed, to all the experiences, of the court, and the military life, and the danger, of facing the life, and many other enemies, and he is brought, through it all, he faces, even rebellion, by his own, trusted men, and the Lord, brings him through, because David, encouraged himself, in the law, he faces, constant battles, constant, constant rebellions, constant difficulties, and in retrospect, the Israelites, moved back, on the way of David, as the golden age, of Israel, when King David, was blessed, by the Lord, and held everything, under, under safe control, and his enemies, were silent, they weren't silent, they were constantly, attacking him, but he was, constantly, beating them, he was, constantly, winning, he was, constantly, securing his borders, but he was, constantly, having to be, at it, and the Lord, brought him, through it all, and in retrospect, it looked like, a golden age, and in retrospect,

Bethlehem, has this, high significance, in the reign, and the life of David, but you see, your life, and mine, is yet, in the process, of being, unfolding, the pages, are still blank, and so many, pages of the book, of our life, or they seem to be, you and I, are writing them, as we go on, from day to day, and it may not, seem to us, the most exciting, page turner, the world, has ever read, but we are not, called upon, to be exciting, we are called upon, to be faithful, this is what David is, the man, after God's, own heart, and in retrospect, the page, after page, of his quiet, faithfulness, and diligent, devotion, to duty, whether to the sheep, on the hillside, whether to the military, men in his army, whether to the battles, that he attended upon, whether to the governance, from his throne, whether to all the affairs, of state, how he was faithful, in all things, in retrospect, it looks like, a golden age, only when the Lord, closes the final chapter, of our, a book of our lives, in this world, and a book, so open, hereafter, will there be, any kind of pronouncing, of what was this life, actually like, that the Lord, put into your hands, this talent, this talent, that he gave you, what did we actually, do with it, because ultimately, see, the significance, of our birthplace, or our place of origin, only looks important, in the light, of what follows on, and into our life, because ultimately, our birth certificate, ultimately, our citizenship, as we know, is not here, it's not in any place, it's not in, in Stardom, or Glasgow, or Salvia, whatever it may happen to be, if we are the Lord's, our citizenship, our birthplace, is in heaven,

Psalms 87, verses 5 and 6, and Zion, it shall be said, this and that man, was born in her, and the heights, himself, shall establish her, the Lord, shall count, when he writeeth up, the people, that this man, was born there, Salah, that means, born from above, born again, by the spirit, and by the grace of Christ, that's still citizenship, that's your inheritance, that's your passport, as it were, your place of origin, is not merely, some earthly point, point on the map, you know, this world, your place of origin, if you are Christ's, is from all eternity, and that, in turn, ennobles, wherever the Lord, has placed his people, in this world, you know, the greatest, what will be, the greatest place, in the world, in retrospect, when the Lord, counts up all the days, that this world, had ever been, I don't know, what it will be, but I would suggest, to you, that it will be, wherever was, the highest, concentration, the deepest, density, of the number, of the Lord's people, and of their devotion, where will be, the hot spots, on the surface, of this globe, where over the years, there was such a, density, such a, intensity, of the Lord's, praying, serving people, that patch of ground, that country, that community, that neighborhood, that place, will be amongst, the most honored, in all the nations, and places of the world, where the Lord's people, dwelt, and served, so you see that, the blank pages, of the book of your life, have yet to be written, in that sense, it has yet to be unfolded, how you and I, will discharge, the duty, the opportunity, the trading, with the pound, we have been given, which is said before us, wherever our place, of origin, in earthly terms, may be, you know, where your citizenship, is meant to be, where your origin is, from all eternity, if you are Christ's, and if you would honor, the place that you love, as your place, of nativity, in this world, if you honor, if you would honor, your homeland, you can confer, no greater honor, upon it, than to be Christ's, and to be his, with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, to give yourself, completely to the Lord, will honor, not only him, it will put honor, upon your own head, at the last, it will put honor, upon every place, associated with you, just as David, gave honor, to Israel, and honor, to the kingdom, which he, inhabited, and ruled over, and honor, ultimately, to the place, of his birth, even to Bethlehem, if you love, your land, if you love, your country, if you love, the place, of your birth, then bestow, upon it, that honor, of you, being the Lord's, for time, and for eternity, that is the Lord.

[33 : 59] God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.