

## Bible overview 13: God's King 2 Samuel 7:8-16

King Arthur – mighty, brave, honourable, valiant – worthy indeed of the title “King”. With the knights of the Round Table he reigned majestically, slaying all his enemies with the mighty sword Excalibur and one day, when our country in dire peril legend says that he will return – of course these days the police will probably tazer him for carrying an offensive weapon and he'll end up with several hundred hours of community service rather than being able to rescue nation.

It's a nice story – a legend, the stuff of Sunday teatime TV dramas, or all action movies, or even Monty Python mockery, but is King David, really just a bit like King Arthur? A great king who we hear will reign for ever, but who is actually a bit past their prime in a world which has moved on from swords and horses?

Well, at first glance there doesn't seem to be too much difference between them, you suspect that you could transport King David into Camelot without too much trouble, but actually that would be to dumb down the great message of the Bible and the reason for God initiates David's reign.

You see, as we come in our Bible overview to David – the greatest human King in Israel's history we need to grasp that he is more than a romantic legend and that it is not David himself who will return to bring salvation, but rather it is David who points us to Jesus who will come to rescue God's people. David is (if you like) the model, the template and the example (most of the time) of the sort of King who is to come and who does come in the person of Jesus.

So let's put this into context. Now in our time we know a thing or two about bad leaders.

Leading a country is a pretty thankless task at the best of times, but sadly there are many leaders who have fallen far short of the mark. Just at the moment we can think of countries like Syria and Libya where the leaders have not acted in the way in which their people would have liked. When leaders behave in a way which is greedy and selfish and oppressive the population cry out for justice and good leaders who want what is best for their people.

And that is the situation we find Israel in. Remember that in the book of judges they were locked into a destructive cycle which began with their rebellion against God, then God's discipline, then the people crying out to him for help and finally God sending a judge to rescue them, before it all began again?

Well, eventually the people said, "Look this isn't working, I tell you what will end this mess now - a king." Now, it's funny isn't it? They are right, it isn't working, the cycle they are locked into is self-destructive and depressing, so what is their solution? Well, we can see that it should be to repent of their sin and once and for all commit themselves to following God – allowing him to rule over their lives, but they look around at the pagan nations surrounding them and instead they want to be more like them – they want a King, they think a human ruler will solve their problems.

Now, this is like trying to put a sticky plaster on a gunshot wound – it just isn't going to work, in fact, it makes things worse.

For a start, do you remember when we looked at Genesis a couple of years ago and what we saw it said about men and women? Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Do you remember that in every other Ancient Near Eastern culture there was only one person who carried the image of their god – the king. In contrast God’s people shared that honour and privilege and status, but now (instead of moving closer to God) they are moving further away! They are saying “we want to be like other nations,” but in doing so they want to lose their privileges and freedoms as God’s people! And it proves to be so because their first king is Saul who looks good (he’s tall and strong) doesn’t obey God – quite clearly a human king is not the solution.

The problem is that Israel had been a theocracy, they had been ruled over by God and God alone, but that wasn’t good enough for them, they wanted to be like everyone else and to have a human king, but when that king lost his faith in God, or when he began to trust himself more than he trusted God, then his life and his reign and his country spiralled out of control – cross reference with Syria, Zimbabwe etc.

So what was God to do? Well, God graciously reminds his people that being ruled over by him is the best thing there is and he does that by sending them a godly king; king David someone whom the Bible describes as being “a man after God’s own heart” and although king David isn’t perfect, he points us ahead to Jesus; the King of kings and the time when God will again rule over his people and when we will (at last) be rightly satisfied with God and submit to his rule in our lives.

And God makes three great promises to David, he promises;  
A home forever  
That God will be with his people for ever and  
That David’s throne would last forever.

So first of all God promises a home forever.  
Now, have you ever really looked forward to moving home?

A new start you think, maybe off to college, or moving into your first home, getting married, or a new job with the need to relocate, or simply you have outgrown where you live. You look around at the clutter and the garden you never quite go around to sorting out and you think to yourself, “When we move we will start afresh and not get into this muddle”?

But somehow, two years later, you have! So perhaps we shouldn't be surprised when God makes this promise to David, “I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people shall not oppress them any more, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel.” The Promised Land (where they lived) was a land flowing with milk and honey – a good place, but the Israelites hadn't settled it in accordance with God's instructions so it was flawed and imperfect and surrounded by enemies, it was good, but not perfect.

When David came to the throne he brought victory and peace to Israel and God's promise of for a kingdom of victory and peace too, but as we will see that perfect kingdom is in the future and it is intrinsically linked to promises 2 and 3.

So secondly God promises that he will remain with David's successors and with his people for ever. This is what God says in verses 12 and 13, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”

Now at this time God is still being worshipped in the tabernacle, the tent of meeting. David had realised that he had a fabulous palace, but God was still in a tent so he begins to plan for a temple to be built.

However, God's message is that the building of a temple won't be David's task, it will be his son's. Why? Well, David was to show us God's free unhindered reign, not one where God was kept within the walls of the temple and we will see in a moment the importance of that.

And thirdly, God promises David a throne forever in verse 16, "Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever." So like King Arthur? David will reign for ever? No, God has already spoken about David's descendants, but David's throne will last for ever. God's plan was for Israel to always have a king like David ruling over them.

Now, the reality was that it didn't always work out – David himself was sinful and many of his successors turned out to be bad kings and they ruled Israel recklessly and selfishly bringing God's judgement upon themselves and the country, but the three promises stood:

A home forever

God with them forever and

A throne for ever, so how did it work out?

Well when we turn to the New Testament and begin with the first Gospel; Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 this is what we read, "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David". The New Testament starts off by picking up the Old Testament promise. "Look," says Matthew, "Here is the good news about Jesus and we know that it is good news because here is the king who is descended from David who will reign for ever and fulfil the promises God made to David!"

Time and again in the Gospels we read of people addressing Jesus as "Son of David" and it's not an accidental title, Jesus is recorded in his genealogy as being the son of Joseph.

So when people call him “son of David” they are saying something profound, in fact we read in Matthew 17 that “All the people were astonished and said, Could this be the Son of David?” When they said that they weren’t getting confused as to who his father was, they knew. No, they were asking – is this the great King? The descendant of King David? The Messiah come to lead us as David led God’s people and bring us peace through victory?

And the answer is “yes!” because Luke has spelled it out for us at the beginning of his Gospel when the angel announces to Mary that she is going to give birth to Jesus. The angel says, “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; his kingdom will never end.” (Luke 1:31-33)

And John gives us a brilliant comic moment when he allows us to eavesdrop on the conversations people were having about who Jesus was, “Others said, He is the Christ. Still others asked, How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” (John 7:41-42) – it’s like those programmes where you find yourself shouting at the TV – you want to go, “But he was born in Bethlehem, he just grew up in Nazareth!!!”

Jesus is the descendant of David – Paul spells it out in Acts chapter 13 when he says, “After removing Saul, [God] made David their king. He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.' From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus, as he promised.” (vv 23-23)

Then Paul goes on to talk about Jesus' death on the cross, the way by which Jesus won for us the victory over sin and death before going on to add, "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'

The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

'I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'  
(vv32-35)

So Jesus, not David is the eternal King of Kings, Jesus is the one who receives the holy and sure blessings that God promised in our Old Testament reading, Jesus is the means by which God is with us for ever – not in a temple, but with us through God's Holy Spirit poured out on God's people after the risen Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven.

And then God will be with his people for ever as we are assured in the final book of the Bible; Revelation "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (Rev 21:1-3; 22)

Here is that Promised Land of peace won by the victory of Jesus, the place where God's people can live forever with God (there is no temple so nothing separating them from God) it is where God reigns over his people in holiness, justice and love and where God's people love him and worship him.

So John is reassured in Revelation chapter 5, “Then one of the elders said to me, Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David [that’s Jesus], has triumphed.”

The point is that King David in the Old Testament points us to Jesus in the New. Don’t you look around at the global governments and the country that we live in and don’t you say to yourself, “If only it were better – if only our leaders were just and righteous, holy and gracious, if only our country was a place of peace and there was no more poverty, or illness, or death.”?

King David shows us how good things can be under an earthly king who is a man after God’s own heart, but he also reveals to us that because he is no more than a man who is given over to sinful desires things will never be as perfect as we might like under a human ruler.

But God also promises David that there will be a descendant of his who will be that perfect king, who will triumph over sin and death and who will reign over God’s people for ever in a world which is once more as God intended it. That is the promise of the Old Testament fulfilled in the New.

So here is the question for us, here today – who is your king? Which kingdom do you want to be part of? Are you happy where you are? Are you hoping to end up forever in a place ruled over by a totally godless ruler? I hope not because you really should long for something and someone so much better; the king of Kings. So are you a citizen of heaven and of the new creation? Is Jesus your king? Does he have authority over your life? King David is there to point us to King Jesus; not a myth, or a legend, but the greatest ruler in all time and space, will you claim the victory over sin and death in his name and ask him to rule over you as loving King for ever?