

Message #20

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Life of David

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HOW THE KINGDOM OF GOD GROWS

2 SAMUEL 4-5

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

How we have arrived at our current medical and economic situation has been the subject of considerable attention. There are sure to be books and studies and articles written about this for years to come. They will be authored by medical researchers and historians and economists. I may be going out on a limb, but I am making a wild guess that politicians might even have one or two things to say about it.

The latest thinking seems to be that this coronavirus originated in a research lab in Wuhan, China. A researcher contracted the disease, probably from a bat. She unknowingly began to spread it in the community. It then began to take on a life of its own. The Chinese government tried to control it, but it kept spreading. There is some evidence that once they understood the potential epidemic that they had on their hands, they stopped flights and other transportation means from going to other parts of the country. But the Communist leaders kept sending flights to other parts of the world. It appears to some as if they were encouraging the spread of the virus. Since then, the spread of the disease has been unstoppable.

It seems to me that there is an illustration here of the kingdom of God. The obvious difference is that the virus is a bad thing, and the kingdom of God is a good thing. But the kingdom of God, like the virus, had a very small beginning. Some might trace it to an earlier time, but others would trace it to one man, to Abraham, who responded to the call of God to go to the land of Canaan. From its small and humble origin the kingdom of God grew. It began with one group of people, the descendants of Abraham. Eventually it began to spread throughout the world. Some have tried to stop it. Other have encouraged its spread. It has seemingly become unstoppable.

Jesus gave us another illustration of the spread of the kingdom of God. In Mark #4 vv. 30-32 He said, **“With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when**

it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” The basic point is the same. The kingdom of God starts out small. It inevitably grows. It eventually becomes large. In the end it has an effect upon all kinds of people.

A simple definition for what we mean by the term “kingdom of God” is “the establishment of God’s rule upon the earth.” In our study of the life of David we have been looking at one phase of this kingdom. It has to do with the establishment of an earthly king, God’s representative leader, to rule over His chosen people. Today’s passage tells us about how this kingdom grows, and what part we might have in it.

Saul was the first king of Israel. Because of his disobedience to God, he was rejected by the Lord. We saw at the end of the Book of 1 Samuel that he and his three sons were killed in battle against the Philistines. David, who had been appointed by God to replace him, initially set up rule over his own tribe of Judah in the south. The other tribes, beaten down by the Philistines, submitted to the leadership of Saul’s chief general, Abner. After a few years Abner set up

Ishbosheth, Saul’s sole remaining son, to be king in the north. We saw two weeks ago that Abner got mad at Ishbosheth and set out to hand over the kingdom to David. David’s chief general Joab intervened and killed Abner, because Abner had killed Joab’s brother Asahel in battle. As our passage in 1 Samuel #4 begins, Ishbosheth is still king in the north, but he is a weak ruler.

I.

So in 1 Samuel #4 we find that **THE KINGDOM GROWS BY THE INADVERTENT ACTIONS OF EVIL MEN.** We read in v. 1, **“When Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died at Hebron, his courage failed, and all Israel was dismayed.”** Literally, the text says, “His hands became limp.” Abner was the power who had propped up Ishbosheth. The king realizes that he is in over his head. His people recognize that also. They are upset and distressed. There is a power vacuum.

According to vv. 2 & 3, **“Now Saul's son had two men who were captains of raiding bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, sons of Rimmon a man of Benjamin from Beeroth (for Beeroth also is counted part of Benjamin; the Beerothites fled to Gittaim and have been sojourners there to this day).”** These are the two bad guys in the story. They are brothers and army

officers. They belong to the same tribe of Benjamin as does the family of Saul. Their hometown is from just a little west of the Israelite capital.

Verse 4: **“Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.”** Mephibosheth is the only other potential candidate in the family of Saul who would qualify to serve as king. But he is now only twelve years old, and he is physically handicapped. So he doesn’t seem right for the job.

According to vv. 5-7, **“Now the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out, and about the heat of the day they came to the house of Ish-bosheth as he was taking his noontime rest. And they came into the midst of the house as if to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. When they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedroom, they struck him and put him to death and beheaded him. They took his head and went by the way of the Arabah all night...”** Stabbing someone in the stomach seems to be preferred method of assassination in these days. It was how Joab killed Abner, and it was how Asahel died at the hands of Abner.

Rechab and Baanah recognize that there is a power vacuum, and they decide to do something about it. They have access to the palace, and they kill Ishbosheth during the afternoon siesta. Then they head 30 miles to the south to bring David the head of the Israelite king. They are political opportunists.

Verse 8: **“...[they] brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David at Hebron. And they said to the king, ‘Here is the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life. The Lord has avenged my lord the king this day on Saul and on his offspring.’”** The two men claim to be acting as God’s agents in this deed. They know the history of Saul’s persecution of David. They clearly expect David’s approval and probably some kind of reward.

According to vv. 9-11, **“But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, ‘As the Lord lives, who has redeemed my life out of every adversity, when one told me, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news. How much more, when wicked men have killed a**

righteous man in his own house on his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hand and destroy you from the earth?” Suddenly it does not look like such a good day for Rechab and Baanah.

David has had a consistent and respectful attitude toward the kings of Israel, though they have opposed him. He had the Amalekite killed when he falsely claimed to have done in King Saul. These two guys openly describe what they have done. But David regards this as murder. So he orders their execution.

Verse 12: **“And David commanded his young men, and they killed them and cut off their hands and feet and hanged them beside the pool at Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth and buried it in the tomb of Abner at Hebron.”** This public humiliation was an appropriate punishment for those who had killed the king of Israel. The conflict between David’s men and Ishbosheth’s men began at the pool of Gibeon. Now it ends at the pool in Hebron.

David provides an appropriate burial for the remains of Ishbosheth. David has been sincere and consistent in his treatment of the rulers of Israel. At the same time, David’s reaction is important for gaining the support of the northern tribes. If he is seen as orchestrating, or at least supporting, the killing of Ishbosheth, the northerners may be less enthusiastic about accepting his rule. How David handles the situation seems to be accepted by the northerners.

The effect of this evil deed on the part of these two men is to pave the way for David to become king over the whole country. Thus it is that the kingdom of God grows by the inadvertent actions of evil men. That is indeed what happened in the death of Jesus. The Sadducees and the Pharisees plotted to have Jesus killed. These religious leaders convinced the Roman governor Pontius Pilate to have Him crucified.

This was an evil deed, and these were evil men. Yet they inadvertently contributed to the greatest advance ever for the kingdom of God. For it was the death of the God-man Jesus which paid the penalty for the sins of the world. It was the death of Christ that made it possible for Gentiles as well as Jews to become part of the kingdom of God simply by faith in Jesus.

II.

In the first five verses of #5 we learn that THE KINGDOM GROWS BY THE REPENTANCE OF GOD’S PEOPLE. We are seeing here a significant advance in the development of God’s kingdom program. For

here God's chosen leader is becoming king of the whole country. This is the person who will be identified as the forerunner and the physical ancestor of the coming Messiah.

Look at vv. 1-3: **"Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they**

anointed David king over Israel." The repetition of the word "all" in these verses stresses that the chosen people are finally coming together into this form of the kingdom of God.

There are three reasons which they give for submitting to David's leadership. The first is that he is a fellow Israelite. In Deuteronomy #17 Moses stressed that any legitimate king of Israel had to be a fellow Hebrew. That would not always be the case in Israel's history. Second, David had been successful in the past in leading Israel. He had been the most successful military leader in fighting against the Philistines. Third, and most importantly, he was God's choice. Even King Saul at a weak point acknowledged that David was God's choice to replace him.

This is also the first time in the Bible when a leader is directed to "shepherd" God's people. Earlier the Lord had been described as a shepherd of God's people. Now David is the first leader to be charged by God with the responsibility of shepherding God's people. This terminology was familiar in the Ancient Near East. Hammurabi in Babylon several centuries earlier was described as a shepherd of his people. Other kings were, too. So this is a familiar description that is rich in meaning.

1 Chronicles provides a parallel account of key events in the life of David. In #12 v. 39 we are told that this gathering of leaders involved a three day feast. The climax was the anointing of David to be king over the whole country. Twenty years earlier the prophet Samuel had shown up in Bethlehem to anoint David as Israel's future king. Seven years earlier David had been anointed in Hebron as king over Judah. Now he is anointed as king over all of Israel.

These first three verses also make mention of a covenant. We are not given details of this covenant. Probably it involved a description of what the responsibilities of the king and the various tribes would have toward each other. Things like taxes and military service were probably included.

According to vv. 4 & 5, **“David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.”** Thirty years of age was when Joseph became second in command in Egypt. The Old Testament law said that a priest had to be thirty before he could begin his service. The New Testament Gospels tell us that Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His public ministry. David’s forty year reign was the same as the length of Saul’s kingship. Forty years is often treated in the Old Testament as the length of a generation.

Israel should have accepted David as king after Saul’s death. Here they acknowledge David’s claim to be king. They are, in effect, repenting. They are turning from their wayward path to obey God’s call for David to be their king.

Repentance is part of what it means to become a part of God’s kingdom. When both John the Baptist and Jesus began their public ministries, they called upon their fellow Jews, saying, **“Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.”** In Acts #2 v. 38 Peter, on the day of Pentecost, called upon his fellow countrymen, saying, **“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

The literal meaning of the word “repent” is “to change one’s mind.” In the New Testament it generally means to turn from sin to faith in the true God. In contexts involving eternal salvation it means to turn from sin to faith in Jesus. It is one of several terms that the New Testament uses to describe what our responsibility is to become part of the kingdom of God and the family of God. The most commonly used term is “to believe.” Thus it is that the kingdom of God grows when people repent and turn in faith to Jesus.

III.

In vv. 6-9 of #5 we find that THE KINGDOM GROWS BY THE PLANNING OF GOD’S PEOPLE. The anointing of David as king over Israel is one of the two most important events in this chapter as it relates to the

history of God's people. The other one is the establishment of Jerusalem as the political and spiritual capital of the nation.

Look at v. 6: **“And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, ‘You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off’— thinking, ‘David cannot come in here.’”**

Our text does not say that David got any specific direction from the Lord to attack Jerusalem or to make it his capital, but it seemed like a wise choice. It was on the border between the tribe of Benjamin--- Saul's tribe--- and Judah--- David's tribe. It had something of a central location. It had a milder climate than the desert regions of some of Israel. It was also occupied by Canaanites, specifically Jebusites. They were pagans. It did not seem right to have them occupying a central region of the nation.

So the king and his men approach the city. The reference to “his men” may describe the 600 men who had joined him when he was a fugitive and who had fought together with David in their earlier battles. They are met by a confident and proud opposition who claim that the blind and the lame could defend this city from any attackers. The fortress occupied an eleven acre site that is now the southeastern hill of the old city of Jerusalem.

According to v. 7, **“Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David.”** The term “Zion” is used inside of the Bible and outside of the Bible to refer at times to this southeastern hill of Jerusalem, to the northern hill where the temple is later built, to the southwestern hill of Jerusalem, to the city of Jerusalem as a whole, and to the nation of Israel. So one has to consider the context to determine which Zion is in view.

Verse 8: **“And David said on that day, ‘Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack “the lame and the blind,” who are hated by David's soul.’ Therefore it is said, ‘The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.’”** I interpret this hatred directed toward the lame and the blind to be a reference to the Jebusites who controlled the city and bragged that no enemy could capture it. Thus the Jebusites were to be excluded from the worship center. They were conquered by David and his men, but there is no indication that they were all killed.

The way in which Jerusalem was captured by David and company has been the subject of interest by archaeologists. The predominant theory is that they went up a water shaft inside the

city walls. There is a spring called the Gihon spring that lay outside of the walls of the ancient city.

There was a channel that went inside of the walls. Then there was a shaft that went up into the city. People used pails attached to ropes to lift up the water from the pool below, which was connected to the Gihon Spring. So the suspicion of many archaeologists and Bible scholars is that David's men snuck into this water channel and climbed up the shaft into the city, probably at night when no one was guarding the entrance and the water shaft. The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles #11 v. 6 says that Joab took the lead in this operation.

Verse 9: **“And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward.”** “Millo” means “filling.” The reference is to a stepped stone structure which was part of the defensive wall on the east side of the city.

This capture of the city and establishment of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel was the result of wise planning on the part of David. Clearly his effort was blessed by God and was part of God's sovereign plan. This operation is an illustration of the human element and the human responsibility in the advance of God's kingdom. We have a certain responsibility to act wisely and to advance God's kingdom purposes within the boundaries that He has established in the Word of God.

One of the prime examples of this responsibility is the Great Commission. In Matthew #28 vv. 18-20 Jesus told His followers, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”** We Christians are not told exactly how to do this. We have some responsibility to use wisdom and to do reasonable planning to carry this out in the time and circumstances in which we find ourselves.

IV.

In vv. 10-25 of #5 we find that THE KINGDOM OF GOD GROWS not only by the inadvertent actions of evil men, by the repentance of God's people, by the planning of God's people, but also BY THE BLESSING OF

GOD. Verse 10: **“And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.”** God was with David, and thus he enjoyed the blessing of God.

The events in this chapter do not necessarily follow in chronological order. Hiram, whom we will look at next, ruled in Tyre only toward the latter part of David’s reign. The battles with the Philistines, which are described after that, probably happened before the capture of Jerusalem. So this chapter is giving us the highlights of David’s forty year reign.

Notice v. 11: **“And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, also carpenters and masons who built David a house.”** Tyre is to the north of Israel. The nearby region that we know today as Lebanon was famous for its cedar trees. Because Hiram came to power only about 26 years into David’s reign, the building of this great palace for David must have come later.

Verse 12: **“And David knew that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.”** The prosperity which David experienced was an encouragement to him that God was indeed with him. At the same time, David recognized that this blessing was for the benefit of his people, not simply for him. David was a true shepherd king.

According to vv. 13-16, **“And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David. And these are the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhaz, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.”** David has a growing family. In that culture growing royal families were regarded as a sign of the blessing of the god or gods. It was, however, contrary to the pattern of marriage which God had established, and it will prove to be a problem for David.

The one son of special note in this list is Solomon. He is number ten son in the line of succession to the throne. He will, however, be the king who follows after David. Absalom, who was born in Hebron, is the number three son, but he will make a claim to the throne later on. Ironically both Absalom and Solomon have the same Hebrew consonants as are contained in the name of the city Jerusalem.

Verse 17: **“When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold.”** There are three indications here that at least the first battle with the Philistines happened before David conquered Jerusalem. The first is that the Philistines attacked when they heard that David had been anointed as king. That happened when David was still in Hebron. It was the news that Israel was becoming united under one king that prompted concern from the Philistines. They wanted to attack before those Hebrews started becoming a power to be reckoned with.

Secondly, the text says that the Philistines went up to search for David. If David was already established in Jerusalem, there would have been no need to search for him. Thirdly, the text says that David went down to the stronghold. If David was already established in Jerusalem, there would be no need to go down to a stronghold. He already would have been in a stronghold. Besides, going to Jerusalem was always regarded as going up.

Verse 18: **“Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim.”** The Valley of Rephaim was a little to the west and south of Jerusalem.

Verse 19: **“And David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?’ And the Lord said to David, ‘Go up, for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.’”** Apparently David went to the chief priest and asked him to use the Urim and Thummim to receive guidance from the Lord.

Verse 20: **“And David came to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. And he said, ‘The Lord has broken through my enemies before me like a breaking flood.’ Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim.”** The location of this place is unknown. The literal

meaning of the name is “Master of Breakthrough.” Perez, as in Perazim, was the name of an ancestor of David who came from Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar.

Verse 21: **“And the Philistines left their idols there, and David and his men carried them away.”** In the face of death the Philistines leave their gods behind. The pagans carry their gods around. The true God

carries His people around. In 1 Chronicles #14 v. 12 we are told that the Israelites burned these gods. Apparently they were made at least partly of wood.

Our story concludes in vv. 22-25: **“And the Philistines came up yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, ‘You shall not go up; go around to their rear, and come against them opposite the balsam trees. And when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then rouse yourself, for then the Lord has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines.’ And David did as the Lord commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba to Gezer.”** The Philistines fled from west of Jerusalem to near the border of the Philistines. The Philistines were not totally destroyed. But as the result of these two battles, they would not be a threat to Israel during the remaining rule of David and during the reign of Solomon.

Clearly God was blessing David and his people in these conflicts. He was getting divine instructions about how to defeat them.

Today we followers of the true God have a part to play in the advance of God’s kingdom. We are responsible to repent and turn in faith to the true God. We have a responsibility to plan and act wisely to promote the advance of God’s kingdom. But we must always realize that the advance of the kingdom comes primarily through the blessing and sovereign work of God.

Pastor Kareem Yashou came to realize this during the recent tumultuous times in Syria. He was a pastor in Damascus. Life there was difficult enough for a Christian and a pastor, but Kareem and his wife both had a dream in which Jesus told them to move to a Druze village. The Druze are an Arabic religious group numbering about a million people who are scattered throughout Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel. They claim Jethro, the in-law of Moses, as their prophet. They believe in reincarnation and have some other strange religious beliefs.

So Kareem and his wife and his two kids moved to a Druze village in the southeast of Syria and set out to befriend their Druze neighbors. The day when they moved in, they were visited by the local government security officer, Musa Fatah. Kareem’s home in Damascus had been bugged by the government. So Musa Fatah already had a thick file on this Christian family. He also bugged this new house the day before they moved in. Musa Fatah warned Kareem that if he made any attempt to proselytize the Druze, he would be arrested. Musa’s job was to keep the peace between the various religious groups. Any adult who left the Druze faith was required to be killed quickly by his own people.

That first evening the family went to a cafe for supper. They soon struck up a conversation with other diners. The cafe owner recognized that this new family was not Druze, and he called up Musa and told him about the visitors. Musa visited the next day and warned Kareem that he was going to end up in jail.

Kareem and his family managed to avoid trouble with Musa for the next year. They made friends with many people in this village. But they also found no one who showed any interest at all in Jesus. Then one day Yazan Kasam showed up at his door. He told Kareem that his daughter was very sick, and he knew that Kareem prayed to Jesus. He had heard that Jesus can heal people. He asked Kareem to come and pray for his daughter. His twelve year old daughter was being treated for cancer. Her cancer was in an advanced stage, and there seemed to be little hope.

Kareem had never seen anyone dramatically healed from prayers to Jesus. But he prayed for God's intervention. Soon after he got home, the security agent Musa showed up, and dragged him off to the police station. He and two thugs beat him up. They sent him home with a warning that they might eventually have to kill him.

A week later Kareem was at home, still smarting from his injuries, when there was a knock on his door. He went outside and discovered a line of about 50 people stretching from his porch to the street. At the front of the line was an elderly man with his wife in a wheelchair beside him. The man said to him, "**My wife is paralyzed on her left side by a stroke. Will you pray to Jesus for her?**" Kareem did not know what to make of this, but then Yazan Kasam, the man with the daughter with cancer approached him from the middle of the line and announced that his daughter was well. She had gone to Damascus for another doctor appointment, and they could not find any signs of the cancer.

So Kareem spent the next hour praying for twenty people with various maladies. At the end Yazan, the father of the little girl with cancer, told all these people that they must believe in Jesus. About this time security agent Musa showed up. Yazan insisted to Musa that he needed to have Kareem pray for him, too. Yazan called upon Kareem to do that, which he did. Musa walked off in disgust.

In the next week Kareem began to hear stories of answers to his prayers. People began to come to faith in Jesus. This humble man who had never really witnessed a miracle of God became known as the man who prayed, and the hand of God moved. A church was started, and the Gospel began to spread to other villages. Eventually Musa showed up and told Kareem that he and his family had to get out of town by 5 PM that day, or he would be taken to prison. So Kareem and family did return to Damascus.

But the kingdom of God has taken root among the Druze people. More than 2000 have become Christians, and missionaries have already been sent out from these people. They have been sent to Saudi Arabia and Brazil. How about that!

The kingdom of God cannot be stopped. It grows by the inadvertent actions of evil men. It grows by the repentance of God's people. It grows by the planning of God's people. Most of all, it grows by the blessing of God. It takes people who are available to Him, people like David and Kareem and maybe even you and I. We can make plans. But it is so often the gracious and unexpected blessing of God that accomplishes His purposes through people who are simply available to Him.