

## CHRISTMAS THROUGH THE EYES OF DAVID

### INTRODUCTION

It is always a challenge for us pastor-types to come up with new and fresh perspectives on the most familiar Christian holidays. This is especially true for someone like me who has been around one church congregation for a long time. I have had messages on Christmas through the eyes of Joseph, Christmas through the eyes of Mary, Christmas through the eyes of Herod, Christmas through the eyes of the shepherds, and Christmas through the eyes of the Wise Men.

Since we have just begun a Sunday morning series on the life of David, I thought today that we might look at Christmas through the eyes of David. The relevance to us is this: We tend to look at Christmas as a one-time event. But Christmas is part of a long program that God has which stretches back to David a thousand years before the time of Jesus, and that program continues to have relevance to us today. Looking at Christmas through David's eyes, I hope, will help us to appreciate the long term significance of this historical event.

David was not around in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. He lived a thousand years earlier. But the assumption that I am making this morning is that he had some awareness of what was happening in Bethlehem. The Bible does not give us a lot of information about what God's people know about what is going on here on earth after they die. It is something that many of us have been curious about. But I find that there are a few hints in the Scriptures that the saints who have gone to heaven know something about what is happening here.

Consider first the story of the transfiguration. The Gospels tell us that on one occasion Jesus went up on a mountain with three of His closest apostles. There they saw Jesus transfigured. His clothes became radiant, and he had some kind of glorified appearance. In Mark #9 v. 4 (PROJECTOR ON--- MARK 9:4) we are given this additional bit of information: **"And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus."** How did Peter and James and John know that it was Elijah and Moses? Were they wearing name tags? I doubt it. I expect that they heard some of the conversation. It seems to me a reasonable inference that these two famous Old Testament characters had some awareness of what was going on with Jesus in Galilee and the events surrounding Him.

The Book of Revelation describes the return of Christ to earth and the tribulation period which precedes that. In #6 there is a description of a series of judgments that God brings about on the earth. In vv. 9 & 10 (REVELATION 6:9) we read this, **“When he [the Lamb of God, Jesus] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. (REVELATION 6:10) They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”** These Christians who have died and gone to heaven seem to be aware that God has not yet brought judgment upon their persecutors. This seems to point to the idea that believers in heaven have some awareness about the events on earth.

Consider one additional passage from Revelation. Chapters 17 & 18 describe judgments from God upon Babylon. At the beginning of #19 (REVELATION 19:1) we read this: **“After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, (REVELATION 19:2) for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.’”** This great multitude appears to be aware of the judgment that has happened to Babylon.

Theoretically it could be argued that this multitude only involves angelic beings. But in v. 5 (REVELATION 19:5) God the Son appears to address this multitude, saying, **“Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”** The term “servants” was used in v. 2 to describe followers of Jesus who had been martyred. Thus it is likely that these servants would refer to human beings who now reside in heaven. All of this is to say that it seems reasonable to believe that the saints in heaven, especially someone like David, have some awareness of the events that happen on earth, especially key events that relate to the unfolding of God’s program.

I.

With this as background, let’s consider Christmas through the eyes of David by beginning with Roman numeral one in the outline, **THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES TO DAVID ARE MADE.** (I. THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES TO DAVID ARE MADE) The key passage here is 2 Samuel #7 vv. 8-16, which can be found on p. 259 of the black Bibles. The context here is that David has become king of Israel. He has experienced some initial success in consolidating power and authority over the twelve tribes. He has had initial victories over the surrounding enemy nations. He expresses his desire to build a temple in Jerusalem as a worship center for the God he serves. But the prophet Nathan comes to him and says that David is not the one to do this.

Beginning with v. 8 of 2 Samuel #7 this is what God says through the prophet Nathan to David, **“Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, 15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. 16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.””**

Notice the promises here that relate to Christmas. David is going to have a great name. He is going to have a house, which seems to be referring to a dynasty, although the use of the term in v. 13 appears to refer to a temple. God says that He is going to raise up an offspring after David who will have a kingdom and a house and a throne. This kingdom and this house and this throne will last forever.

I suspect that David’s understanding of these promises was limited. Old Testament prophets themselves often had a limited understanding of what they were foretelling. David could reasonably have concluded that he was going to be famous. He could have concluded that he was going to have a son after him who would continue on the throne of Israel. He could have reasonably concluded that he was part of a dynasty that would continue forever. This dynasty and this rule over Israel was going to be blessed and guarded by God.

Before David died, he installed his son Solomon upon the throne of Israel. After David died, he may have seen from heaven that Solomon flourished and his kingdom grew in power and influence. Other descendants would follow Solomon. There may have been partial fulfillment of the promises of God to David in these descendants. Certainly God disciplined these Davidic kings. But complete fulfillment lay far in the future.

Some 300 years after the time of David fascinating promises were made through the prophet Isaiah. I suspect that David in heaven had some awareness of these promises. I wonder if he puzzled over their

meaning. In Isaiah #9 God spoke through Isaiah. (ISAIAH 9:6) Beginning in v. 6 he said, **“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”**

A son is going to be born. He is going to be in charge of government. His name is going to be “Mighty God.” How could that be? I can understand how my descendants will be kings. But how could a descendant of mine be called “God”? How could any human being be called “God”? And “Eternal Father”? What does this mean?

(ISAIAH 9:7) The prophecy continues in v. 7: **“There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”** This has to be about the promise that God made to me. He is talking about my throne and my kingdom. It is eternal. But who is God talking about? A child? How could any human fit this description? “Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace?” My suspicion is that David did not yet know how this all fit together.

II.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel also made references to these promises concerning David. But let’s move on to Roman numeral 2, THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES TO DAVID ARE THREATENED. (II. THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES...) In the years that followed David’s death and ascension to heaven, the promises made to David were seemingly threatened. Perhaps he had some awareness of this, and perhaps he had concern.

A.

One of the ways in which these promises were threatened was by THE DIVIDED KINGDOM. (II. A. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM) How can David’s descendants rule over all of his people if the kingdom is divided? Son Solomon was successful in expanding the territory and the power of the nation of Israel. But toward the end of his reign his obedience to God wavered. All of the wives that he acquired began to turn his heart from the true God. He let them bring in idols to false gods.

So when Solomon died, his son Rehoboam encountered a problem. His advisors convinced him to be harsher toward his people. A rival arose and forced Rehoboam to answer the concerns of the people of Israel. He might retain the loyalty of the tribes of Judah and Simeon, but the other tribes were not to be convinced.

Thus we read in (1 KINGS 12:16) 1 Kings #12 v. 16 that a major split happened: **“When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, ‘What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!’ So Israel departed to their tents.”**

For the next several centuries there was a separate Jewish kingdom in the north ruled by kings who had no connection to David. All of their kings were labeled as evil. Eventually the Assyrians came down from the north and wiped out this kingdom. Many Jews were taken into captivity. Only a few were left in the land.

B.

A second problem arose which David may have witnessed from heaven. The threat came from THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS DESCENDANTS. (II. A. B. THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS DESCENDANTS) In order for God’s promises to David to be fulfilled, his kingly line had to continue. But that line was threatened.

Mac has been leading us on Sunday nights in a study of Elijah and Elisha. One of the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah during this time was a man by the name of Jehoram. He was a descendant of David. After he came to the throne, he killed off all of his brothers. He wanted to be the only one in the line of David. He did not want his position as king threatened by his brothers. Jehoram compounded his evil deeds by marrying Athaliah, the daughter of evil King Ahab and Jezebel from the northern kingdom of Israel. Athaliah and her mom were Baal worshipers.

Jehoram died young. His son Ahaziah became king. He died after only a year. At that point evil queen Athaliah stepped in and claimed the throne that rightfully belonged only to the descendants of David. That itself threatened the promises made to David. In 2 Kings #11 v. 1 (2 KINGS 11:1) we are also told, **“Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal family.”** Thus it would seem that God’s promises and God’s plan has been thwarted. The promised line has been wiped out.

But--- but there is verse 2 (2 KINGS 11:2): **“But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were being put to death, and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not put to death.”** The promise of God hangs by a thread, but it is a strong thread. For it is a

promise made by the all-powerful God of heaven. Verse 3 (2 KINGS 11:3): **“And he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the Lord, while Athaliah reigned over the land.”** The high priest protects young Joash. Eventually Joash is revealed as king, and the evil Athaliah is killed.

The Davidic line remains in power in the southern kingdom of Judah. By the sixth century BC, however, the kings and the people of Judah have become corrupt. They have not listened to the prophets sent by God warning them to turn back to God. So God brings along discipline in the form of the Babylonian Empire. (BABYLONIAN EMPIRE)

There are a series of three invasions. In the third invasion in 586 BC the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem. The temple is burned and the walls of the city are torn down. Many of the people are killed. Some are carried away captive, including King Zedekiah, the descendant of David. Again the Christmas promises to David seem threatened. (PROJECTOR OFF)

But after seventy years the Persians are in power, and the Persian king allows some of the Jews to return to their homeland. The temple is rebuilt and the walls of the city are put up again. Still no descendant of David is put back on the throne. For the next five hundred years the land is ruled mostly by governors and foreigners. For a brief time in the second century BC a kingship is restored. But the people on the throne are not descendants of David.

Still there is an awareness among the Jewish people of the promises made to David centuries ago. There is a hope among some that the Messiah will come. In the first century there was a document written entitled “Psalm of Solomon.” At one point the author (PSALM OF SOLOMON 17:4) has this prayer: **“Lord, you chose David to be king over Israel and swore to him about his descendants forever, that his kingdom should not fail before you.”**

A bit later this plea (PSALM OF SOLOMON 17:21) is included: **“See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God.”** If David was aware of this hope and even such statements by these religious leaders, I suspect that he was wondering how all of this would play out.

III.

Consider then Roman numeral 3--- THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES TO DAVID ARE FULFILLED. (III. THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES TO DAVID...) The first event that happened chronologically as the Christmas story unfolded on the ground was that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. Now I don't know whether David was listening in on that conversation in a way like people were listening in on the President's conversation with President Zelinsky of Ukraine last July. I suspect that this was a completely perfect conversation, and I suspect that at some point David found out about this important event in the Christmas story.

The Gospel According to Luke describes what happened. After telling Mary that she had found favor with God, that she was going to have a son, and that she should name Him Jesus, Gabriel (LUKE 1:32-33) said this, **"He will be great--- remember, the Davidic promise was that David would have a great name--- and will be called the son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."** It is almost as if the angel is quoting the promises made to David a thousand years earlier. The meaning of the original Christmas promises to David is becoming clearer.

Gabriel goes on to explain how it is that this virgin can have a child. He explains that the Holy Spirit will come upon her. Thus it is that this baby will be both man and God. Thus it is that the promises of Isaiah #9 v. 6 will be fulfilled. Thus it is that this Child can be called Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Gabriel also appears to Mary's fiancé Joseph with a similar message. Joseph and Mary were living in Nazareth in the north of the land of Israel. At the beginning of Luke #2 (LUKE 2:1,3) we find this further development of the story: **"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. .... And all went to be registered, each to his own town."** (LUKE 2:4-5A) **"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary..."**

How about that? God uses a pagan Roman Emperor, who claims to be the son of God, to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem so that this descendant of David, the true Son of God can be born in Bethlehem, the home town of David. I wonder if David was smiling in heaven.

In addition to this, we learn that shepherds outside of Bethlehem are visited by angels during the night who inform them that a Savior has been born in Bethlehem. (LUKE 2:11-12) According to Luke #2 vv. 11 & 12, they declared, **"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a**

**manger.**” David once tended sheep in these same fields. Perhaps some of these shepherds were actually his descendants. David may have been delighted to see how all of this was coming together.

Matthew’s account of the life of Jesus begins in this way (MATTHEW 1:1): **“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”** What follows is a genealogical list that begins with Abraham and goes down to David and continues to Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. It is evident that the Jews kept detailed lists of their ancestors. Genealogy was very important to them. It was necessary for the promises to David to be fulfilled that it be shown that Jesus was in the royal line of descent from this famous king.

But then there is tension. A year or so after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary are visited by magi, by wise men, coming from the East. (PROJECTOR OFF) Somehow these government advisors have analyzed the sky and determined that a great Jewish king has been born in the land of Israel. They show up in Jerusalem to find out where they can find this newborn king. Herod is the evil king ruling under the authority of the Romans. He is clueless about the question of these magi. He calls in the religious leaders to find out what they know about this. They refer him to an Old Testament prophecy in the Book of Micah which declares that Bethlehem is to be the birthplace of this great king.

These wise men show up in Bethlehem and worship the baby Jesus. They leave the family with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Herod has asked these wise men to return to him with a report about what they found. These wise men are warned by a dream, however, that they should not go back to Herod. When they don’t show up back in Jerusalem, Herod gets upset. He doesn’t want a claimant to his throne with whom he has no connection. So he sends his troops to Bethlehem to kill all of the baby boys that can be found there. Fortunately God has warned Joseph and Mary to leave town.

If David was able to see this part of the story unfold, I suspect that he would have had a strong emotional reaction. For a thousand years earlier he had been appointed to be king of Israel. But there was an evil king by the name of Saul who got wind of that. He set out to have David killed. Such it was that David had to flee for his life. Indeed he spent a number of years on the run from the king who wanted to do him in. But Jesus would have the same kind of divine protection that David had. For the Christmas promises to David could not be broken.



IV.

We come finally to the last point in the outline: THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES TO DAVID ARE PRODUCTIVE TODAY. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE CHRISTMAS PROMISES...) When Jesus grew up, He had a public ministry of teaching and performing miracles. He fulfilled the requirements contained in the Old Testament prophecies about the future Messiah. He was rejected by His own people and crucified on a Roman cross. His death was necessary, however, so that He could pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. As a human being, He qualified to serve as our representative. As God, he qualified to make that sacrifice have universal benefit. The one requirement that we have to benefit from that sacrifice is to put our trust in this Jesus, to recognize our sinfulness that separates us from God and to accept by faith the gift of salvation offered to us.

Jesus rose from the dead to show that He was really God. Later he ascended into heaven, where, according to the New Testament, He sits at the right hand of God. From there He leads an invisible kingdom. That kingdom consists of those who have put their trust in Jesus. That kingdom continues to grow and be productive today.

I suspect that David has some awareness of how that happens today. Perhaps he has some awareness of how the message concerning His descendant Jesus continues to be proclaimed, even in his home town of Bethlehem. (NUCCIARONE MANGER SQUARE) The guy in the middle of this picture with the guitar is Al Nucciarone. I went to seminary with Al. We used to do street evangelism together. Al is now pastor of Jerusalem Baptist Church. Every Christmas Eve he brings a group from his church to Manger Square in Bethlehem. They sing Christmas carols, share testimonies, and preach the gospel. (PROJECTOR OFF)

John Leonard was a missionary in France with Arab World Ministries. On his first furlough back in the US he spoke in his home church. After the service someone told John that there was a man in the parking lot who wanted to speak to the father. John went out and met the young man who said that his name was Farid and that he was a Palestinian from Bethlehem. He said that he had been delivering pizzas on this street the night before, and God told him to come to this church the next day. What are the odds that it would be a missionary to Muslims who would be speaking that Sunday?

Farid explained his story: **"I was born in Bethlehem into an important Muslim family, but I never felt that Islam was for me. I never practiced Islam, except for keeping the fast at Ramadan... When I was in high school, each day I walked by the church where Jesus was born. Beside the church there was a beautiful garden that seemed calm and peaceful. One day I decided to go inside and sit in that quiet place. I liked the garden[;] so whenever I had time on my way home from school I would go sit in it. ...**

**“One day... one of the Fathers asked if he could sit next to me. He said he had often seen me in the garden. I told him I hoped I was allowed to be there since I was a Muslim. The Father was very nice and said, ‘I’m happy that you are enjoying the garden; please feel free to come back whenever you like.’ Over the next several years, the Father and I became friends. We spoke about many things, but what I enjoyed most was listening to stories about Jesus.**

**“...I had never known any of the stories the Father told me. The more we spoke together the more I began to believe that Jesus was the truth and that I must follow him, but I was afraid to convert to Christianity because of my family. So I kept all of these things a secret. .... I decided I would come to America to do my university studies and that while I was here I would confess my faith in Jesus.”**

John went over the gospel with Farid. According to John, Farid prayed, **“Jesus, you know I have wanted to follow you from the time I visited your church in Bethlehem. Thank you for these new friends who have explained to me how I can belong to you. I know I have sinned against you and I confess all these sins to you now. Thank you, Jesus for dying on the cross for my sins and sending your Holy Spirit to make me a different person. I now ask you to come into my life and make me yours. Help me to follow you always. Amen.”** If David could see this from heaven, I suspect that he was pleased. (John Leonard, *Get Real*, pp. 90-93)

This same message continues to be spread throughout the world, and the kingdom that was once described to David continues to expand. It will not come to its complete fulfillment until Jesus returns to earth and establishes the earthly form of that kingdom.

Meanwhile, heaven watches to see how all of this unfolds. Before Jesus told “The Parable of the Prodigal Son,” He made reference to this heavenly audience. In Luke #15 v. 10 (PROJECTOR ON--- LUKE 15:10) He said, **“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”** Pastor and author Vance Havner says about this verse, **“This joy is said not to be among the angels (although that is true also, I am sure), but in their presence. They share it undoubtedly, but who else is there to do the rejoicing? The saints, of course! It must include loved ones in glory thrilled maybe at the conversion of a dear one on earth. It must include faithful preachers and others seeing the answer to their prayers and witnessing while on earth. This tells us more than the fact of their rejoicing, it shows that they are conscious and aware of things happening down here. It reveals the presence of angels who never walked down here, but in whose company we celebrate over there.”** Perhaps it also includes David, to whom special Christmas promises were given 3000 years ago.

Those promises find their fulfillment in the birth of Jesus. But this is a gift that keeps on giving. We participate in this divine program when we put our trust in this Jesus. We also participate when we share this gift with others.