



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 23:1-7

Topic

An aged King David writes the last of his inspired psalms

Title

“David’s Swan Psalm”

Introduction

Yogi Berra once said, “The future ain’t what it used to be!”

I’m pretty sure he wasn’t addressing issues in the church but I do see a possible application of his words in contemporary Christianity.

Over the past two or three decades there has been a noticeable shift away from an emphasis on the coming of the Lord and the establishing of His kingdom on the earth. As evidence I could cite that as far back as 1988 Dave Hunt saw this trend and wrote a book about it insightfully titled, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* In it he substantiated the shift in thinking away from the blessed hope of the imminent return of Jesus to focusing on the here-and-now.

For a lot of Christians, *the future ain’t what it used to be*. It isn’t a motivation to serve and to sacrifice now with the understanding that the real rewards are waiting for them in Heaven. No, Christians are concentrating more on the here-and-now rather than the hereafter.

David has something to say about this in the verses we have before us today. They are the final psalm he was inspired to write. In it he

summarizes his life and he surveys his coming afterlife in relation to the coming of the Lord.

What was true of David is just as true of us. Our life and afterlife ought to be shaped by the coming of the Lord.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Are Anointed In Life To Reveal The Coming Of The Lord, and #2 You Are Appointed In The Afterlife To Revel In The Coming Of The Lord.

#1 You Are Anointed In Life
To Reveal The Coming Of The Lord
(v1-4)

Bible characters seem larger than life. They seem like spiritual superheroes. It can therefore be difficult to relate to them.

We need to get over our awe and see that God is working in and through us in just the same ways He did with them. As proof I'd offer the statement in the Book of James that encourages Christians to pray because we are of like passions with none other than the prophet Elijah.

Hebrews chapter eleven would be another passage. After mentioning some of those we definitely consider super-saints it says that the same faith was at work in tons of unnamed saints.

David is going to tell us that he was an ordinary guy. In fact, he was sub-ordinary. Nevertheless God used him in extraordinary ways.

2 Samuel 23:1 Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; Thus says the man raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel:

By "last words" the author means that this was the last inspired psalm David wrote. David wrote seventy-three of the one hundred fifty psalms in the Book of Psalms and he wrote others, like this one, that aren't in the Psalms.

The house of Jesse was a lesser house, a humble house, among the Israelites. You remember, too, that David was considered the least one in that house. From those ordinary, humble origins he was “raised up on high.”

“Raised up” is one of those terms we use a lot in the church. It means we look to see how God has gifted and is using someone then we recognize it. It means God is promoting the person, not themselves or others.

It’s far too easy to promote yourself or to get others to do it for you. Wait for the Lord to promote you. Mean time enjoy your fellowship with Him right where you are.

David was “the anointed of the God of Jacob.” This refers to his being chosen by God to be king over the nation of Israel, the twelve tribes who sprang forth from Jacob.

“Anointed” is another term we throw around in the church. It means *to smear or rub with oil*. In Bible times people were anointed with oil to signify either God’s blessing or His call upon their lives. For example, prophets, priests, and kings were all anointed. David’s anointing, or being chosen, by God was symbolized when the prophet Samuel poured oil over his head.

Objects were also anointed to signify they were set aside and dedicated for use by God.

Our connection to being anointed is that **every believer is said to be anointed.**

2 Corinthians 1:21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,

1 John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you...

Those verses indicate that **every** believer is anointed. That’s important because we sometimes use the word to describe someone that is super-spiritual. We say things like, “That guy is really anointed,” as if we are not.

I understand that there are times God really uses someone in a special way. But we need to grasp the concept that we **all** are anointed by God, having received the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Don't perpetuate the myth of the super Christian.

David was "the sweet psalmist of Israel." Maybe this was a kind of stage name! For example:

- Who is "the piano man?"¹
- Who was "the man in black?"²
- How about "the velvet fog?"³
- The "Motor City madman?"⁴

What would *your* nickname be - based on your gifting and calling?

2 Samuel 23:2 "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.

This is a declaration of the inspiration of the Scriptures. We believe in what is called verbal plenary inspiration.

- Verbal means that every word of Scripture is God-given. The idea is that every single word in the Bible is there because God wanted it there.
- Plenary means that all parts of the Bible are equally authoritative. This includes such things as the genealogies of the Old Testament. All parts of the Bible are of divine origin. Jesus said, "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail" (Luke 16:17).
- Inspiration means God guided the process. The idea behind the word inspiration is that God supernaturally guided the biblical authors to write the exact things that He wanted expressed. The result is Holy Scripture.

¹ Billy Joel

² Johnny Cash

³ Mel Torme

⁴ Ted Nugent

A.W. Pink described inspiration by saying, “It is not simply that their minds were elevated or their spirits sublimated, but that their very tongues were regulated.”

2 Samuel 23:3 The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God.

2 Samuel 23:4 And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds, Like the tender grass springing out of the earth, By clear shining after rain.'

David seems to be talking both about his reign as king and about a future King who will reign.

- Verse three is pretty much a job description that God gave to David. By the way, notice how concise it is! We don't really require huge job descriptions for ministry.
- Verse four seems a little more far-reaching. His phrase, “the light of the morning when the sun rises,” is reminiscent of what the prophet Malachi said of the coming Messiah, that “the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings” (4:2).

David saw his service as king as a type, as an illustration, as a prefiguring, of Jesus' coming to serve as King over the earth when He returns to establish the thousand year Kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

Take all that we've learned in these four verses and put them together and here is what you have. Every ordinary, humble believer is raised-up and anointed by God to serve Him as a type, as an illustration, as a prefiguring, of Jesus Christ's coming to rule over the earth.

You really are anointed in this life, as a believer, to reveal to others that the Lord is coming. You're to be revealing His coming all the time. Even in things that you don't normally associate with His coming.

For example. In his teaching about the proper attitude with which to receive communion, the apostle Paul said that you “proclaim the Lord's death **till He comes**” (1Corinthians 11:26).

At the end of the Book of the Revelation Jesus says three times, “I am coming quickly.” Then we read that the church is to say “Come” and to declare this coming to others in our invitation for them to receive eternal life.

All you need to do is take seriously the imminent return of Jesus. If you really believe He could return any moment, it *must* dramatically affect your life.

#2 You Are Appointed In The Afterlife
To Revel In The Coming Of The Lord
(v5-7)

Yogi Berra also said, “It’s tough to make predictions, especially about the future.”

That’s not true when it comes to **your** future, if you are a believer!

- If you die before the Lord’s return to resurrect and rapture the church you will be absent from your body and immediately present in Heaven with the Lord.
- At the Lord’s coming the dead in Christ will rise first and receive a glorified body. Then we which are alive and remain shall be changed into our glorified bodies.
- We will enjoy Heaven with Jesus while the earth endures the seven years of the Great Tribulation.
- At the end of the seven years we will return to earth with Jesus in His Second Coming.
- Jesus establishes a one thousand year kingdom on the earth and we will help Him to rule over it.
- After the thousand years there will be new heavens and a new earth where we will live forever and ever in a perfect state in the mansions the Lord is busy preparing for us.

There’s an afterlife quality to David’s closing words.

2 Samuel 23:5 "Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; Will He not make it increase?"

2 Samuel 23:6 But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away, Because they cannot be taken with hands.

2 Samuel 23:7 But the man who touches them Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place."

Let's take verses six and seven first. David saw the eternal punishment of those who in the end reject Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

What does he mean when he says "they cannot be taken with hands" "but the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear" in order to cast them into the place they will burn?

It reminds me, using a slightly different illustration, of Jesus' description of the judgment of sinners at His Second Coming.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus said,

Matthew 13:41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

Matthew 13:42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 13:43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

In the Gospel of Luke John the Baptist described this using a different illustration.

Luke 3:17 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshingfloor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.

Unrepentant sinners have an appointment with Hell. God is not willing that any should perish, but a person must come to Jesus to receive eternal life.

When you receive Christ, you are appointed to the afterlife I described a moment ago.

Look now at verse five. Let's read it again in the context we've just established.

2 Samuel 23:5 "Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; Will He not make it increase?"

The first words, "although my house is not so with God," are somewhat of a nightmare for translators. They seem to mean that even though David's life was blemished, God had established his "house" by an unconditional "everlasting covenant." God's covenant was therefore "ordered in all things and secure." It did not depend upon David.

David could look back on his life and see it the way God did. His life was all about God's "salvation," and despite David's faults, God was his "desire."

In the end David saw that God would "make it increase." Make what increase? It seems to refer to his salvation.

How can a person's salvation increase? I think David had in mind that God would complete the work He had begun in David and that God would reward him for his service.

Salvation is a three-stage process:

1. First you are justified. When you as an ungodly sinner simply believe on the Lord for your salvation, you are declared righteous and you are accepted by God just-as-if-you'd never sinned. You are saved.
2. Second you are being sanctified. Day-by-day God is working on you to make you righteous. This is a work you can cooperate with or that you can hinder.
3. Third and finally you will be glorified when by death or at the rapture you receive your glorified body.

We are promised that God, Who has begun a good work in us, will in fact perform it and complete it.

We're told that we will stand before the Judgement Seat of Jesus to be rewarded for those things we did from the right motives and in His Spirit.

In short, like David but with even more confidence, we can know that we have an appointment in the afterlife where we will "increase."

- We can look forward to that appointment with disappointment at missed opportunities and a life lived for self.
- Or we can revel in it, knowing we have committed ourselves not just to the Lord but to serving Him, to surrendering to Him, to sacrificing for Him.

C.S. Lewis said, "The future is something which everyone reaches at the rate of 60 minutes an hour, whatever he does, whoever he is."

God gives us each hour towards that inevitable future as a gift. In those sixty-minute blocks we can cooperate with His sanctifying work or we can hinder it.

Once again my belief about the Lord's coming is the key. If I really believe He could return within the hour, I will do everything I can to cooperate with Him to be changed into His image.

If "the future ain't what it used to be" *for you* because you are too busy living in the here-and-now, think about the hereafter and about looking into the beautiful face of the Lord Who saved you to set you free to serve Him.