

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

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The main part of the message this evening will focus on the first 13 verses of 1 Samuel 16. But I'd like to lean back earlier in beginning the examination of the life of David to 1 Samuel 13 and 15. Verse 14. The occasion is Samuel's arrival in Saul's presence to bring him the news that God has rejected him as king because of his disobedience to the Lord. Samuel has not yet been to David's place, to the home of Jesse. But the Lord already has his agenda in advance and he has announced it through his prophet Samuel. "Will not the Lord before he does anything make it known to his prophets?"

And here it is. Now Samuel announces to Saul "Your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and the Lord has appointed him to be prince over his people."

What an incredible statement. David is not even aware of it. He has not realized that the songs of his shepherd heart have reached the throne of God and have been pleasing to God and God has already appointed him to a position that he is not even aware of or a vacancy in the kingship that David does not know exists.

How exciting it is to consider that God may also in his heart appoint us to tasks and to responsibilities way ahead of the time when we actually know them ourselves.

In 1 Samuel 15:28 Samuel again to Saul after another major failure in Saul's life "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you." Again David is not yet aware that the kingdom is going to be placed upon his shoulders.

David's introduction into scripture in 1 Samuel 13 is with that phrase "God has sought him a man after his own heart." This becomes a theme of the New Testament examination of the life of David where David is again called "a man after God's own heart." That is an intriguing phrase. It is a phrase, which will on the one hand to those who know the life of David cause tremendous joy when you look at the proper resources and potentiality that was in his life. And it will also cause real deep pain.

For many years I wouldn't read the psalms because I said these things written by a man like David who in cold blood murdered an innocent person called Uriah and committed adultery with his wife, no man like that has a right to speak of God. Surely the scriptures must have erred when they called him "a man after God's own heart."

I would like to look at that kind of attitude toward David as we go through his life in these weeks. That is his introduction on the scene of history. A man after God's heart. He was a young teenager at the time.

We're going to ask some journalistic questions: Who is he? When did he arise? Where did he come from? These kind of things.

Who is he? First, no one else in the Bible bears his name. That's kind of unique. Alone is this man David. His story spans 1 Samuel 16 through the rest of 1 Samuel, all the way through 2

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

Samuel, and into 1 Kings 2. That lengthy body of material is paralleled by 1 Chronicles 11-29. A total of 58 and a half chapters of history all together about David. Then of the 150 Psalms 73 are attributed to David. We cannot say for sure that they're authored. But the early and best traditions ascribe nearly half the psalms to David.

Thus in the scripture there are about 10% of the total chapters in scripture taken up with either the description of David or writings from the life of David.

In the New Testament, David's name is one that is most frequently mentioned. Second only to Moses. His name is mentioned some 59 times in the New Testament. So even there is a dominant character. In fact the Bible closes as a reference to Christ as being the root and the offspring of David. A way of saying that all of the godliness which emerges in David's life which we will see owes its emanation from a source – Jesus Christ, who exists before time. So on the one hand Jesus is his root, his source. But on the other hand Jesus in the human sense as he appeared in time and space is David's offspring.

David's life divides into some easily recognizable periods. First of all his anointing by Samuel which we see in 1 Samuel 16. Secondly, his earlier years as a warrior and a singer in Saul's court. Thirdly, his years in exile, running from Saul. Then a fourth phase when he is king in Hebron which is the southern tribe of Judah below Jerusalem for seven years. He is thirty years of age when he becomes king at the capital of Hebron and there he reigns for 7 years. At the end of that time he seizes Jebus which becomes Jerusalem, the city of peace, city of David. And he reigns, finally, in Jerusalem for a period of 33 years. A reign that is marred by three significant episodes. Bathsheba, Absalom, and the contentions of his children at the end of his life for his throne.

The instrument that David played. He is described as playing a harp. This may have been a two stringed instrument, certainly probably the most elemental harps were two strings. But the potentiality also exists that he played 10 string instruments. Josephus the first century Jewish historian, says that David was instrumental in inventing this instrument.

I think the instrument that David played though is instrumental in understanding his life. Someone has said that Moses' life was like a trumpet blast from Sinai. His life was lived on one long sustained note. That's the image you get of Moses, isn't it? One commanding general of the army.

David's life though, is very much like a harp. A harp of many chords. For no person in scripture passes through the course of so many changes, no person in scripture, outside of the Lord touches human life at so many points. None are so tempered and polished by the swift alternation of heat and cold. By such heavy blows upon his life. By the friction of such rapid changes in fortune.

These quick transitions in fortune for David and this wide experience formed the many colored threads of which the tapestry of his life is woven. He has a harp. As a leader in Israel he will become, outside of Jesus, the greatest king. When he comes to the kingship there is really no such thing as a kingdom in Israel. Saul actually, if we look at scriptures closely, only reigned over about 2½ tribes – Ephraim, Benjamin and maybe the half tribe of Dan, and possibly some in the area of Gilead. But he did not have the consolidation of David.

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

David however is important because he stands as a fountain of all the institutions of the Jewish kingdom. He is Israel's shepherd boy and therefore the representative in Israel of her toiling classes. He is Israel's musician, the successor to Jubal after the time of Noah. The successor to Miriam the sister of Moses. The successor to Deborah, the judge. He is the one who brings music to his people on a level which they had never known before. It is as if like Martin Luther for the German people, he created the hymnal. Or like Charles and John Wesley for the English. There is that creation of music before God, which comes from his life. He is Israel's soldier. He is the conqueror for Israel of the Goliath that would steal her poor. He is Israel's king, numbering her army, regulating her government. And he is Israel's priest, substituting a broken and a contrite spirit as being more acceptable to God than the blood of bulls and goats. He is Israel's prophet. With his last breath practically he looks forward to that phase of his kingdom which is everlasting. He is Israel's poet. Most of her psalms are called by his name.

So he's a many sided man. His name itself probably means "beloved." There's some debate over that but it appears to be a shorted form of "beloved of God."

And even though the Bible does not flatter its heroes and we see in scripture many terrible blemishes against David's character, there always remains that winsomeness to the life of David that marks him as a beloved person.

I look some of the old Scottish preachers like Alexander McClaren. He in describing David's name, beloved, says this: "From the day when David's soul like a sunbeam into the darkened chamber where Saul wrestled with the evil spirit, he bows all harms that come in under his spell. The women of Israel chant his name with song and timbrel. The daughter of Saul confesses her love unasked. The noble son of Saul, Jonathan cleaves to him. The rude outlaws in his little army peril their lives to gratify his longing for a draft from the well where he'd watered his father's flocks. The priests let him take the consecrated bread and trust him with Goliath's sword. His lofty courtesy wins the heart of Abigail. The very king of the Philistines says that he is as good in his sight as an angel of God. The unhappy Saul's last words to David is a blessing. [this is really incredible as you look at the text of scripture. His long time enemy blesses him.] Six hundred men of Gath, the Philistine city forsake home and country to follow his fortunes when he returns from exile. And even in the dark and closing chapter of his reign, even in spite of sin and self indulgence and neglect of his kingly duties which had weakened his public's loyalty his flight before Absalom is brightened by instances of passionate devotion which no common character could have evoked. Even that his people are ready to die for him and in their affectionate pride call him, 'the light of Israel.' It was a prophetic instinct which made Jesse call his youngest boy by a name – David, beloved."

You really never understand David in the scripture unless you fall in love with him. When he falls in love with Bathsheba you will absolutely hate David. And you will never see him as God sees him unless from the outset you can develop some of the feeling in God's heart towards this person. Then maybe get some of the feeling in God's heart toward you as a person.

Who is he? I tried to just look at his place as a monumental individual in history and in scripture.

Second journalistic question: When did he emerge?

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

His reign begins in about 1010 B.C. He reigns for forty years. It is probably therefore that he would have been born about 1040 B.C.. The time he emerges though his nation is a very weak nation and beset by many, many enemies. (Poland might be a modern example. People held down by a foreign oppressor.) When he got done with his kingdom the borders of Israel were as great as they ever were. He had practically the ideal dimensions that had been promised to Abraham. From the river Euphrates in the northeast to the Nile in the southeast. All the way from Assyria to Egypt. God gave him great prosperity.

Third journalistic question: Where did he come from?

He came from Bethlehem, five miles south of Jerusalem. He comes as the third person in history that we see in scripture from Bethlehem. I think it's so exciting what happens in Bethlehem. There are some towns that become hallowed by their association. Here is this little shepherd's village outside the ancient city of Jebus. The first mention we have of Bethlehem in the scripture is Jacob burying Rachel for whom he had labored fourteen years in order to secure her as his bride. They have two children – Joseph after many long years of Barrenness and finally late in life, a love child, Benjamin. Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin. And she is cradled in Jacob's arms as he lays her to rest in Bethlehem.

On one of the hills that David would have walked over continually therefore was this tomb of Rachel. A prophecy, by the way, that Jeremiah will later make in respect to Christ that Rachel is weeping over her children. Why? She lies buried on the hillside at Bethlehem. When Herod kills the babies of Bethlehem in the days of Jesus, Rachel is seen as weeping in her grave.

The second reference to Bethlehem is that delightful book of Ruth. Which again is a scene of love. Ruth winning the heart of the gentleman farmer, the squire, the neat guy Boaz.

The third reference is the birth of David. It comes again in history n reference in the 8th century prophet Micah, some nearly 200 years after David when he says of this Bethlehem that "from it would come forth a ruler whose origin is of old." A reference of the eternity of the Messiah, David's son, Jesus, who would be born in Bethlehem by the unique circumstances of events which involved an emperor in Rome making a decree that drove a family out of Nazareth down to Bethlehem that the Christ child might be born, the second David, in David's home where Rachel was laid to rest.

So where he came from was a town already by the time he was born laden with historical and symbolic significance.

What was his family? A fourth journalistic question. The name's of Jesse and his wife's children certain suggest faith in God. David in psalm 86:16 and 116:16 refers twice to his mother as the handmaid of the Lord, describing the religious faith of his mother. I cannot help but think and apply from this that godly parents do have an effect upon their children.

A fifth question, one we can just take a few moments on from 1 Samuel 16: why was he chosen? Why at this point as Samuel emerges on the scene of 1 Samuel 16 to anoint David why is this man chosen to be king? There are two reasons.

First of all because God rejected Saul from being king. It would take a whole kind of message by itself to sort of deal with the factors, which led to the rejection of Saul. I think I can sum it up

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

by saying that if you watch Saul's life carefully in his inner life he never really cared for the things of God. This can be illustrated in something called the Ark of the Covenant. When Saul attains success over the Philistines he really never sought to bring the ark of God into a place of honor and respect among the people even though he had it within his power. What was this piece of wood? A box in which there were the tables of the law and Aaron's rod that budded and a flake of manna? It was insignificant to him.

The first thing David seeks to do when he secures his capital is to bring in the ark of the Lord. His heart is set after honoring the Lord and worshipping the Lord.

Saul makes critical mistakes of stubbornness. He is so stubborn that at one point after God had already rejected him being king, he is at war and he gives a stupid order to his army that no one is to eat anything from the fields as long as the battle is going on. His own son Jonathan is out fighting. He didn't get the command not to eat anything. He takes some honey and eats it. And the people come and tell Saul that Jonathan has eaten the honey and Saul says, I gave the order that anyone who eats will die and Jonathan, my own son, will die. The people rose up in arms against Saul and said, You're not going to do that to Jonathan! And he finally backed down. But he was stubborn.

One ancient divine said that there is a symbolism in the fact that with Samuel found Saul, Saul was searching after his father's asses, the donkeys. When he found David he was watching sheep. In what they tended are the two natures of Saul and David described.

He is so violent by the time Samuel comes to see David, Samuel fears for his life in even making the ten-mile trip. He finally winds up attempting to slay David on a number of occasions and becomes himself the first suicide victim in the scripture.

The difference, by the way, between Saul and David is that as history completely unfolds may be reflected in two New Testament personalities. Saul is the equivalent of the New Testament Judas. And David is the equivalent of the New Testament Peter. Saul's sins are sins of deliberation. David's while apparently are sins of deliberation appear more to be in the nature of sins of error. There is in David's sin not a direct rebelliousness against God himself. Rather, terribly wrong moral choices, which he thought he could evidently get away with and still, serve God. Saul's rebellion is just that.

There's a tremendous decline Saul does. Samuel, by the way, loves Saul and he is deeply grieving as 1 Samuel 16 opens and the Lord has to tell him to quit grieving, to get down to Bethlehem, to overcome his fear. Samuel at this point in his life by the way, has not even learned the lessons of history because he looks at Jesse's first son Eliab and he says, That's the man. The reason why he said that was Eliab looked good. He's a commanding presence. Saul, we know from his description in 1 Samuel is a person who stood head and shoulders above the rest of the people. Meaning he was a tall man. Samuel sees in Eliab another giant that he could anoint. The Lord had to say "No. The people chose Saul. But I have chosen David."

So one reason why David is chosen is simply the Lord had rejected Saul as being king. He looked into his heart and found it right from the beginning a heart that was off course.

A second reason why God chose David is he found in David a right heart. A right heart. It was there from the beginning. And as we'll see and trace David's course we'll know how that right

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

heart appears later when David will cry out after the worst sins that a person can commit "Create in me a right heart, O God."

The selection of David as we have seen tonight is contrary to reason. One does not do this in a rational sort of a way. But when Samuel appears to David he is appearing only because the Lord already knows this young man. The Lord had examined David's life. When David was not aware that his life was being examined, when least expecting it also we ourselves are being scrutinized, watched, tested in the daily common places to see if we'll be faithful in them. That god may make us faithful in more momentous issues. The Lord watched his shepherding.

Psalm 78 says the Lord took such delight in his shepherding that he did something special for David. From tending he took David his servant, verse 70, and took him from the sheepfolds from tending the ewes that had young he brought him to be shepherd of Jacob his people of Israel his inheritance. In his vocation, the Lord watched the care of which David took care of sheep. And the sheep that were with lambs. And he said A man who will take care of sheep like that is fit to care for my people.

I think also what was found fitting in David's heart that the Lord warmed to was the fact that God was listening to his music. I cannot help but believe that David at this time already in his life had songs that were rising in praise to God. As a shepherd out on the hillside with his lyre, his string instrument, he was already pouring out his heart to God.

We can go through some of the psalms that are attributed to David and make some fairly intelligent guesses about the periods of life that these psalms might fall into. We'd expect for example any psalms from David's young life to have an absence of a mention of his enemies because as yet he doesn't have any. We'd expect them not to mention any sin for he has not yet sinned against God. We'd expect them to mention the city of Jerusalem. For of course he has not yet taken it. That eliminates quite a few psalms.

We're left with an intriguing possibility that certain psalms may have been composed by David in his youth. Let me note a couple that are especially striking which may describe why God warmed to this young man.

Psalm 8 is one in particular. "O Lord our God how majestic is thy name in all the earth..." His reference to moon and stars one could call this his nighttime psalm. There were others who lived close to where David did who believed that the moon and the stars themselves were gods. Like people today who are involved in astrology, they somehow affect man's course. David looked at the moon and especially stars and said they're the work of your fingertips. He closes, "Oh, Lord. How majestic is thy name in all the earth."

That psalm coming from a teenage young man's heart perhaps thrilled the heart of God.

Psalm 19 is a psalm, which could have been sung by day. David notes the rising of the sun. Verse 4 "He has set a tent for the sun which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber and like a strong man runs his course with joy. It's rising is from the end of the heavens and it's circuit is to the end of them. And there is nothing hid from its heat." Then while he exalts God's work in nature he turns right around in Psalm 19 and exalts in God's law. "The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." He rejoices in this aspect of God's risen revelation. Then he prays a fitting prayer of youth at the

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

close of the psalm. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

How beautiful an expression of a young man.

In Psalm 29 he gives a leaping eulogy to the God of the thunderstorm. He's sitting out watching his flocks and he sees the lightning flashing and he's hearing the thunder roll. He personifies it to refer to God by saying "Ascribe to the Lord o heavenly beings. Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters [Out there on the Mediterranean its thundering.] the God of glory thunders. The Lord upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. The Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. Up to the north, the thunder is rolling in the Lebanon mountains. He makes Lebanon skip like a café and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth like flames of fire. The lightning he sees in the distance. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness down in the south. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. He's seeing all across the expanse of his homeland God working in the thunderstorm. The voice of the Lord makes the oaks to whirl and strips the forests bear. And in his temple all cry Glory. The Lord sets enthroned upon the flood. He's in the rain. The Lord sets enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people. May the Lord bless his people with peace." It is easy to see the young man, David, in these. They certainly fit an early manhood existence as a shepherd. Where else could have gotten that concept "The Lord is my shepherd..." except that he as a young man himself had cared for sheep. God saw in this music that David was giving to him, a ready heart.

I might make an application if you'll allow me. The Lord still listens to the music coming out of our heart. He listens to the music that pours forth from our lips. He makes determinations about us on the basis of what is going through us.

Here is a young man who finds it natural to have as his hit tunes of the day songs, which glorify God, which he himself has composed.

How do we take this and apply a little bit to our lives? Two things especially strike me in conclusion.

God still seeks right hearts. Ezekiel 36:26 promises "A new heart I will put within you. A new spirit I will give you." God still seeks hearts that are tender before him.

Secondly, God still anoints the members of his kingdom. David is a representative, a type, an example of what God does when he brings us as members of his kingdom into existence. He pours forth oil upon our heads. He anoints us.

This anointing in the New Testament becomes an anointing of the Spirit of God whereas in the Old Testament it was anointing represented by material form, oil and can note that in that anointing the Spirit of God was also being transferred. In reference to David in 1 Samuel 16:13 it says this "Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward."

THE CHOICE OF GOD'S HEART

From that day forward he was different. The Spirit of God had been outpoured in his life. Immediately after the Spirit of God is outpoured God will put into focus into operation and set of circumstances which will then bring David into the court and danger of his enemy.

It's always the same way with the anointing of the Spirit of God. When Jesus is anointed of the spirit he comes out of the waters of the Jordan, the Spirit immediately drives him into the wilderness where he is tempted of Satan.

When the early church is anointed by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost it is immediately put into persecution.

When the Spirit of God comes upon his people they are never as they were before. But it is always a Spirit and power to deal with accelerated pressure and danger and trouble.

God is seeking people after his heart that he might put his Spirit upon them to do his will in their generation.

We find ourselves, heavenly Father in the line up before you. Wondering are we the person upon whom you will pour the oil of anointment. To set aside to some special calling. Then we find the answer that indeed you will pour forth your Spirit upon all flesh. That it is no longer as in the case of David an anointing of one man for a kingdom. It is the anointing of many to be kings and priests unto the Lord our God. Fall upon us, by your Spirit, Lord Jesus. May the story of David inspire us to look in our hearts and to seek the cleansing that is needed if our hearts are not right. To seek the joy which a jubilant heart can bring to you when it is filled with the music of the Spirit, to rejoice in your love, to be beloved. These things we ask for ourselves that we might be good instruments of yours. In Jesus' name. Amen.