

A Heart For God: The Son of David

John Tucker, Milford Baptist Church, 3 December 2006

We've spent several weeks now looking at the life of David.

- In the first week we saw how David, when he was just a young boy, single-handedly took on a giant called Goliath. You may recall that we were all given stones at that service and we agreed that with God's help we would take on our own Goliaths.
- Then we saw how David grew up and experienced a friendship with Jonathan like few human beings have ever known. And we saw that true friendship involves laying down our lives for our friends.
- We crouched alongside David in the cave of Adullam, in the cave of discouragement, where God seemed absent. And we discovered that God does some of his best work in caves.
- Then a couple of weeks ago we learned about sin and fallenness as David committed murder and adultery and lived for months in denial and hypocrisy, until he confessed his sin and was forgiven by God.
- And last week we saw that David, while he was forgiven and restored by God, still suffered the consequences of his sin. And we were reminded that our response to suffering profoundly shapes the kind of people we become.

Today we're finishing this series about David. And as we move towards Christmas I want to finish this series by looking with you at something interesting that happened to David's name in the New Testament. The New Testament opens with these words. In Matthew 1:1 it says, "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David..." And the last words of Jesus recorded in Scripture, in the very last chapter of the last book of the Bible, go like this: "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16). Now here's the question: Why is Jesus called the "son of David"? In the New Testament he's never called the "son of Moses" or the "son of Elijah." But over and over again he's called the son of David. Why? Was it because of David's character or faultless moral track record? No. There are Old Testament characters – like Joseph or Daniel – who appeared to live far purer lives. Was it because of David's extraordinary giftedness or ability that Jesus was called the son of David? No. There were other remarkably gifted men in the Old Testament, like Moses. The truth is, it had nothing to do with David at all. Jesus was called the "son of David" because of what God had done in David's life. And that title, "son of David," reveals what God was up to in Jesus' life. What I want to do in the moments that remain is to simply outline how this name, son of David, exposes two facets of Jesus' identity and mission, and then talk about the implications for you and me.

A title of hope

The first reason that Jesus was called the Son of David is this: it was a title of hope. David's reign was forever remembered as "the golden age of Israel." Think about it for a moment. The first king of Israel was Saul. But he was a disappointment and divided the country. Then David became king, and he united the people of Israel, he brought them freedom from their enemies, he led them into an era of unprecedented devotion to God, and unsurpassed prosperity. But after the death of his son, Solomon, the country was divided into two kingdoms: Israel in the North, Judah in the South. Then came centuries of exile and oppression by one foreign power after another, right up to Jesus' day. So there was only one brief moment in the whole of Israel's history when the country was united and free and at peace, and it was under David, God's anointed king. So the name David became a kind of symbol of hope.

Let me give you a kind of analogy. Can anyone remember the golden era of New Zealand cricket? We did have one. It was the 1980s. We were a force to be reckoned with. Because we had players like Martin Crowe and Ian Smith and John Wright and, most supremely of all, Richard Hadlee. There was a day when the Aussies would come to Eden Park "and the presence of Hadlee appeared unto them, and the glory of Hadlee shone around them, and the Aussies were sore afraid." But then Hadlee left, and the glory left with him. And all we were left with was the memory and the hope that maybe one day we'd have another Hadlee, someone like him who will come restore New Zealand to her former glory. Well, by the time of Jesus, that was Israel's hope. For centuries the people of Israel had been oppressed by the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the Greeks and the Romans. The glory of Israel was a distant memory. But prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel reminded the people that God had promised King David that he would establish his kingdom forever through his offspring. And so the people of Israel came to hope that one day they'd have another king like David. The son of David, the Messiah – literally, "the anointed one" – would appear and would restore Israel.

The problem was that when Jesus appeared many people didn't recognize him because he wasn't the kind of king they were expecting. But some people did recognize him. They realized that here was the Son of David, here was someone who could restore broken lives. And it's interesting. If you go through the New Testament and study when this title, "Son of David," is used, it's generally used by desperate people who are crying out to Jesus for help, people who are putting their hope in him. So in Matthew 9:27 it says, "As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!'" Then in Matthew 15:22, "A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.'" Then one of the great stories in the New Testament, the story of a blind beggar called Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52): "⁴⁷When he" – Bartimaeus – "heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth [passing by], he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" ⁴⁸Many [of the bystanders] rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' ⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus."

You can just see the crowd saying to Bartimaeus at the beginning, "Look, pipe down will you. Jesus is too busy to listen to you." But then Jesus says, "Bring that man to me." And the crowd turns around and says, "Cheer up, Bartimaeus. It turns out he does want to hear from you." He does. Because the Son of David came to bring hope. To bring healing. He loves it when people cry out to him and ask for help. He's never too busy. So let me ask you a question: As we come to Christmas, if you could ask the Son of David for anything – like Bartimaeus – what would it be? What makes you want to shout out? Do you need healing – physical healing? Maybe it's healing of the heart, for yourself or for a friend. Maybe it's sight, the grace to see clearly the right path to take, the right decision to make. I think about what we as a church need to ask for from the Son of David. I think about the scores of people who will come to Christmas services here over the next few weeks, people who need God's Spirit to open their eyes to the greatest gift of all. Let's take a moment right now and in twos or threes or fours spend a few minutes praying to the Son of David. You can pray on your own if you'd feel more comfortable with that. But let's just take a few minutes to cry out to the Son of David. Tell him what's on your heart. And ask him to use us – and our services – this Christmas to touch many lives.

A title of humanity

So this name, "Son of David," is a title of hope. It speaks of the hope that Jesus brings. But it speaks of something else too. It emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. Romans 1:3-4 says this about Jesus: "...who as to his human nature was a descendent of David, and who though this Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God..." Jesus was the Son of God. He was divine. But he was also the Son of David. He was a real human being. Would you turn really quickly to Matthew 1 (p. 933). It starts with a genealogy, a series of who begat who. It doesn't seem like a particularly gripping way to start a book, does it? Have you ever spent any time with someone whose family is obsessed with their genealogy? My family can trace our roots back quite a way. I can recall the odd family get-together, spending hours talking about family trees and stories about our descendants that go back generations. And I was moved to tears. But they were tears of boredom because it was not, for me, exciting stuff.

But to the Jews, it was exciting. They loved creating genealogical tables, especially for their heroes. But there are a few things to understand about these tables. For one thing, Jewish genealogies would only mention Jews or Israelites, because the purpose of such a genealogy was to establish the purity of your bloodline. In ancient times, for example, a priest had to show an unbroken pedigree all the way back to Aaron. If there was any foreign blood in his family, he would be disqualified from being a priest. Another thing about these tables is that they only mentioned men. Back then women had no legal rights. So a Jewish genealogy would no more mention the name of someone's mother than one of our genealogies today would mention the name of our pet goldfish. It just wasn't considered to be relevant. Then thirdly, Jewish genealogies would only contain respectable or heroic people. A genealogy containing scandalous or shady characters was pretty much unheard of.

- Now, look at the genealogy of David in Matthew 1. I'm just going to point out a few names here. First of all, look at verse 3: "Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was *Tamar*." Now isn't that interesting. Think about it. Tamar was not a man. Secondly, she was not Jewish. She was Aramean. And thirdly, if you read Genesis 38 sometime, her story is reasonably scandalous. After she was widowed, she disguised herself as a prostitute, and seduced and slept with her father-in-law, Judah, so that she could bear children. She was no heroine, but here she is in the genealogy of Jesus.
- Look at verse 5: "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was *Rahab*." Again this is a woman, not a man. You might remember Rahab from the story of Jericho. She was not Jewish. She was a Canaanite, an outsider. And if you remember her story, you'll remember she didn't disguise herself as a prostitute, she was a prostitute. But she helped the Jewish spies, and so she was saved. She's in this story.

- Also in verse 5 we read on that Boaz was "the father of Obed, whose mother was *Ruth*." This is the third woman in this genealogy. And Ruth also was not Jewish. She was a member of the Moabites, the enemies of Israel. But she lived with the Israelites because of her mother-in-law, so she ends up in the story.
- Then in verse 6: "David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been *Uriah's wife*." Here's a fourth woman who doesn't belong. Do you remember her name? Bathsheba. She was an adulteress. And she was married to Uriah the Hittite. In other words, she was a foreigner, or at least married to a foreigner.

So here's the genealogy of the Hero of the New Testament, of the human race. And here are four characters, not men but women, not pure Jews but unclean Gentiles, and all but one of them is stained by scandal and sin. Any devout Jew would be shocked and scandalized by this genealogy. So what in the world is it doing here? Matthew is tipping his hand right at the start. He's saying, right from the word go, that Jesus Christ, in becoming a son of David, in becoming a human, was taking on himself the suffering and sin of the entire, fallen, human race. In other words, as the son of David, Jesus came to throw the kingdom of God wide open – to women as well as men, to Gentiles as well as Jews, to spiritual pigmies as well as spiritual giants. Jesus came to take the guilt of prostitutes and pagans, adulterers and murderers, selfish, hypocritical people like David, like you, like me. And Jesus says to people like us, "You can be part of my story. Whoever you are, whatever you've done - you who think I would be shocked and scandalized by your sin - you can be part of my story. I want everyone to be part of my family."

One of my favorite verses about David, and it's also in the New Testament, is in Acts 13:36: "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors." David got a lot of stuff wrong. But, for all his brokenness and sin, David served God. In his generation, in his day, he served God's purpose. Well, this is our generation. This is our day. It will soon be over. But right now the Son of David says to us, "You can be part of my story. You can serve my Father in your generation." We're about to celebrate communion. I asked you before the question, "What would you like God to give you this season?" Let me ask you one other question. "What would you like to give to God this season?" Maybe it's a significant financial gift. Maybe it's making the effort to be reconciled with somebody from whom you've been estranged. Maybe it's inviting a friend or neighbour to a Christmas meal or a Christmas service. What do you want to give God this Christmas? In the seat pockets you'll see a card with the picture of a tombstone and the words of Acts 13:36 written inside. There's a blank for you to insert your name: "*For John Tucker, after he served the purpose of God in his generation, fell asleep and was gathered to the Father.*" Just as Acts 13:36 was the epitaph for David, this could be your epitaph. So would you do something? Would you take a pen and write your name, then take this card home, put it in your Bible or on your dressing table – someplace where you'll see it – and let it remind you that the Son of David chooses you to be a part of his story, to serve God in your generation.

Questions

1. Thinking back over this series on David, what have been the key lessons you've learned?
2. What did the prophets mean when they said that one day the "son of David" would appear? See Jeremiah 33:14-18.
3. Read the story of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. What impacts you in this story? If you could ask the Son of David for anything – like Bartimaeus – what would it be?
4. What stops you from crying out to him?
5. Cast your eye over the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. What does this record of Jesus' ancestry tell you about him and his mission?
6. Read Acts 13:36. Could it be said of you that you served God's purpose in your generation? What could you give to God as an act of service or worship this Christmas?

Acknowledgement

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