

## **The Lord Has Spoken**

2Samuel 23:1-7

*It will probably come as no surprise to many of you hear me say that we have problems in our society.*

One of the biggest problems that I see is the problem of reliable information.

Many traditional sources of information have become bias in the extreme, concerned more with moving forward an agenda or philosophy than with events and facts.

Of course bias has always been a problem in the human condition, but if we feed it instead of fight against it we can end up with information that is very heavily skewed in favour of a position rather than a reasonable picture of reality.

If that is all it was it would be troubling enough, but we have entered into a time where determining what is real is even more difficult.

*The advent of so called AI technology has opened a door to deception in the extreme.*

Out of curiosity I typed into google the other day, “How long does it take to make a fake video using AI.”

The search suggested that with the right tech and knowledge it takes somewhere between 5-8 minutes to create a video that looks real but is totally fabricated.

They can do the same with phone calls, emails, essays, books, and alike.

The result for me has been one of distrust.

I trust little to nothing of the things that come across social media and I am completely convinced that Christians should be very wary of sharing things without asking serious questions about the reliability of the source.

Think about it! If we are party to spreading lies is God pleased? Is that helpful for the work of the gospel?

Not in the least.

*I know there are benefits to social media and I think that AI can be used for good purposes, but there is also the capacity for tremendous evil and we ought to be thoughtful about how we use and interact with it.*

That brings me to a question, “In a time where so many things are fake, what can we trust?”

I am happy to say, that in a day and age where reliable information is scarce the reliability of God’s word remains completely trustworthy.

No other book is like it and no other book has stood the test of time and scrutiny like the Bible.

[We see evidence of that from cover to cover and the passage we are looking at this morning is an example of that. The first seven verses of 2 Samuel chapter 23 give us the last psalm written by King David. This is likely near the end of his life and before he passes into eternity he leaves God's people one last word from his pen inspired by the Holy Spirit. These verses give us very helpful reminders about what the Bible is, the blessing of listening to it, and how God acts in relation to it. We get a sense of what the Bible is and how it came into being in verses one and two. David reminds us here of how God speaks to His people, he shows us that...]

**Point #1 – God speaks through those He has appointed. (Verses 1-2)**

The LORD in His unsearchable wisdom has determined to make Himself known through people of His choosing.

Let's look together at what it says in verse 1.

When it says that these are the 'last words of David' we might get the picture in our minds of David lying in bed about to breath his last and this is what he says.

While he may have been close to that time, this is clearly referring to something much more substantial than that.

The ESV tries to make that clear using the word '*oracle*' twice in this verse.

The word most literally translated means 'utterance' or 'declaration', but commentators point out that this is a particular kind of 'utterance' or 'declaration'.

This Hebrew word is connected to the declarations of the prophets and a prophet is someone called by called to speak the word of God to the people of God.

So this 'last word' from the king is something much bigger than his last thoughts as a man about to die, these are the last words God speaks through the son of Jesse to his people.

This verse also answers the question of, "Why David?"

We are told three things about the king here. We are told he was a 'man who was raised on high'.

No doubt many of you will remember where David was when God called him to be king, he was in the field tending his father's sheep.

From that humble beginning God lifted him up and sat him upon the throne of Israel where he sat for forty years.

He was raised up and it says here that he is 'the anointed of the God of Jacob'.

Anointing is a ceremony where olive oil and usually a mix of fragrant spices is poured over the head of an individual.

It is a vivid picture of marking someone a being called by the LORD into a particular task or office.

*This David, the son of Jesse, was raised up by God, appointed by God to be king, and thirdly he is called 'the sweet psalmist of Israel'.*

The word psalm means a song of praise in honour of God and the word 'sweet' indicates that these songs served for the blessing and delight of those who sang them.

A good number of the psalms preserved in the bible are written by King David.

These are more than songs that David came up with on his own, these are songs of praise inspired by the Holy Spirit, which is the claim of **verse 2**.

The claim here is that the LORD so worked in the heart of His chosen servant that when the king put pen to paper he was writing exactly what God wanted him to say.

That is what the Bible is from cover to cover. It is the Word of God given through His chosen servants.

*Not surprisingly, some people don't believe that.*

They say, "The Bible is just a book written men and church people over the course of time tried to turn the words of men into the word of God."

Others will say, "Some of the Bible is God's word but not all of it."

Neither one of those positions deals adequately with what the Bible is.

There is simply no other book like this book. This book bears what some theologians describe as divine finger prints.

What it says cannot be explained by human skill or wisdom.

God reveals Himself in this book as being passionate about His Word both in its inspiration and in its preservation.

The idea that He inspired this book without overcoming the weakness and imperfections of the human writers contradicts the sovereignty and power of the LORD.

*No brothers and sisters, God has put His divine stamp upon these pages. Every word as originally written is as He intended.*

When the people of God got together through the centuries to discern what books belonged in the bible and which ones didn't they were not turning the works of men into the word of God, they were simply recognizing these books for what they truly are.

[I brought something with me this morning. Who can tell me what this is? That is right it is an apple. How did you know that? Because it possesses all the characteristics of an apple and you can recognize it as an apple. What if I tell you this is an orange? Does that make it an orange? Of course not! What if you think it is an orange, does that make it an orange? Again no. This is an apple now we can recognize it as an apple or not, but no matter what we do it is still an apple.]

It is the same with this book.

No man or woman makes this into the word of God.

This has been God's word from the moment it was spoken and we can either recognize it as it is or reject it but we cannot change what it is.

[This book according to Luke 24 has the stamp of approval of Jesus Christ Himself. He has clearly spoken about who God appointed to speak His Word and none of them are alive today. People claiming apostleship or prophecy today are delusional, foolish, dangerous, or a combination of the three, but they have not been appointed by the LORD. In a time when so little can be trusted I am incredibly thankful we can trust the Scriptures. As David continues to point us to God's word he shows us one of the many reasons why it is trustworthy. He shows us that...]

**Point #2 - Listening to the Lord is life giving. (Verses 3-4)**

The more human beings seek to live under the rule of God, the more people and nations benefit from the goodness of His ways.

Verse 3 opens with two more lines of poetry emphasizing that the LORD is talking to the king (Verse 3a).

Matthew Henry sees the suggestion of the Trinity here. Verse 2 mentioning the Holy Spirit, 'The God of Israel' being a reference to God the Father, and 'the Rock of Israel' being a reference to Christ (which is how the apostle Paul refers to Jesus in 1 Corinthians 10:4).

That may well be the case and it would make sense because the inspiration of the word of God clearly shows the unity in the Persons of the Godhead.

We do not believe in three gods, we believe in One God Who exists in three distinct Persons.

Between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit there has always been stretching all the way into eternity past and there will always be forever in the future a consistent will, each desiring to reveal the glory of the LORD throughout creation.

When the Holy Spirit speaks He speaks according to His will which He shares completely with the Father and the Son.

This God Who is unchangingly the hope, strength, and refuge of His people speaks to people.

On this occasion, this is what He says to the king (Verse 3b-4).

What does it mean to 'rule justly'?

Another way that phrase could be translated would be 'rule rightly' or 'rule in righteousness'.

In order for that statement to be possible there must be an objective standard for right and wrong.

An objective standard for right and wrong requires a transcendent law giver.

Transcendent simply means to me above all things and to be a law giver means to have a moral standard.

*If there is no God above all things and if He has no moral standard that must be applied to His creation, then there is no foundation for right and wrong.*

Actually, there is no foundation for any meaning in life at all.

God, though does exist. He is far above all things and He has a standard of right and wrong to which He holds people accountable.

People may deny that reality, but they cannot change it.

What happens when those in authority live in that reality?

*David refers to that here as ‘ruling in the fear of God’.*

That means the ruler/leader sees himself as being under the LORD and he cares about what God says about how people ought to live.

It means he sees people as belonging to the LORD and not to kings, queens, presidents, or prime ministers.

It means that any rights and freedoms that are God given should not be compromised by the state.

It means there should be equal treatment under the law instead of favouritism and corruption.

*What happens when people live like that? (Verse 4).*

I love a clear morning! When the sun comes up over the horizon and there is not a cloud in the sky it lights up the world allowing us to see the beauty of creation and brings warmth to the earth.

It is likely that David intends for us to picture this sunrise coming shortly after the rain mentioned at the end of the verse.

The combination of the rain and the sunlight makes the ‘grass sprout from the earth’

That is true of all vegetation on the planet. When there is rain and sunshine stuff grows and life is sustained.

[Have you ever considered what God’s favourite colour is? I took a class with Dr. Michael Haykin some years ago and he quoted the famous theologian Jonathan Edwards as arguing for green as God’s favourite colour. His reason was that much of the land is covered with green things. I thought it was an interesting point. One thing is for sure when there is plenty of sunshine and rain the land is green with life.]

That is what it is like when people rule/live in the fear of the LORD.

Admittedly, the number of people impacted by a person listening to God will vary depending on their position and influence.

The leader of a nation is going to impact more people than an average citizen, but even so every single person has some kind of influence in the lives of others.

If we live in the fear of the LORD how will we treat them?

We will treat them like they belong to God and not to us.

We treat them like they are made in God's image, called to worship and love Him with all of who they are and the effect will be life giving.

[Listen, God is NOT a killjoy as the devil would want you to believe. The devil wants us to think that the LORD is trying to keep us from being happy by telling us how to live. The truth of it is that the bible tells us how to have abundant life and joy in Christ. I have lived enough life and I have seen enough in the lives of others to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God's ways work and when we listen to them it is for our highest good. It is not often easy that is for sure, but it is always for the best. Someone might ask, "Can I really trust that? Why are you so sure about these things?" The last couple of verses answer those questions for us. They show us something very important about the LORD speaking to His people, verses five through seven show us that...]

### **Point #3 – God is faithful to what He says. (Verses 5-7)**

The LORD will always act according to His kindness and His justice because it is impossible for Him to deny His unchanging and perfect nature.

*There are two implications of the LORD being faithful to His word. The first we can see in verse 5.*

The verse begins and ends with rhetorical questions and has some very important statements about God in the middle.

The first rhetorical question is David's reflection on his own life.

Remember this is his final psalm, he is writing this at a time when he can look back on the vast majority of his life and reflect on all that has happened to him.

To say the least he has been through a lot through the course of his days.

As he considers all the years he has walked with God he can say that listening to God works.

He can say that knowing the LORD has been life giving to him and his family.

*The rhetorical question at the end of the verse anticipates that the LORD will continue act in life giving ways towards him.*

The middle of the verse explains the reason for his confidence.

Do you see it there? His assurance is based on God having made an ‘everlasting covenant’ with him.

A covenant is a solemn promise to act according to stipulations of an agreement.

God’s covenant with David was to establish His throne forever.

Notice how this ‘covenant’ is ‘ordered in all things’.

David’s confidence in God’s covenant keeping ability is that the LORD is more than an observer in the universe.

There is nothing that happens outside of God’s knowledge or power; therefore, His people can be certain that He will do what He has promised.

We can see that in His covenant promise to David. For generations the sons of David sat on the throne some good and many of them bad, but each one of them died.

There came a time when there was no earthly descendant of David sitting on the throne of Israel, but even so God’s covenant remained.

You see Jesus, in His humanity, is a descendant of David and having made atonement through His death for the sins of all who would repent and believe, God almighty breathed life into His lifeless body and exalted Him to the highest place seating Him upon the throne of heaven and to His rule over all creation there will be no end.

There may be some who doubt that in the present, but when the heavens are opened and Christ comes His visible rule will be upon the earth and He will rule in perfect justice forever giving eternal life to all who have call upon His Name for salvation.

That will happen because God is faithful to what He says.

There is also, however, another side to that equation. We see that in verses 6-7.

Where the rule of the just king is life giving, “worthless men” are like thorns.

We have seen the word ‘worthless’ a few times in the book of 2Samuel.

It translates the Hebrew word ‘belial’ a word that is used in 2Corinthians 6:15 as a reference to Satan.

Paul uses it in that way because it has the sense of opposition to God and His laws.

That is the sense here.

Worthless men are those who care nothing for the rule of God, in fact they want to destroy it.

That makes them like thorns.

These thorns are the kind that are long and sharp.

Have you ever seen thorns like that? What will happen if you try and take hold of those with you bare hand? You will likely be injured and bleed.

You see it is the opposite image of what is life giving.

[Imagine for a moment that your back yard is full of those kinds of thorns and you have children that you want to use and enjoy that yard. What are you going to do? Likely exactly what is described here. You will get some tools and cut down the thorns toss them into a fire and get rid of them so that the yard will be free from danger and your children can play.]

If God is going to be faithful to His everlasting covenant. If Christ is going to rule in perfect righteousness, then the LORD must deal with everyone and everything that is opposed to what is right in His sight.

I know people often don't like to hear that, but it is necessary to Who God is.

He is loving and kind beyond measure and He is also just. What many often fail to see is that His love depends on His justice.

He cannot be one without the other.

If we minimize His justice we empty the cross of Jesus of its meaning.

*Jesus died because we have a real problem with the LORD. We have broken His laws and for Him to remain justice those offenses must be paid for.*

God is so passionate about His love and justice that Jesus was willing to die in our place, to fully satisfy the wrath of God against our offenses, so that we can be forgiven and welcomed into His eternal kingdom.

That offer is for you today if you would turn from godlessness and believe upon His name.

If not you will face His justice on your own and be eternally condemned.

You will be like a thorn cut down and thrown into the fire forever.

That is what is necessary for God to fully redeem His people and His creation as He has promised in His Son and He will be faithful to what He has said.

*He has done more than we can imagine to redeem those in Christ.*

He has spoken through His servants. He has put His Divine stamp upon this book from cover to cover, there is nothing else like it. The question is, will you accept it or deny it?

He has shown time and again in the life of individuals and societies that His ways are good and life giving. Will you walk in them?

From all eternity past and into all eternity future He has kept His word. Will you trust it and live and reject it and perish.

The Lord has spoken and put these things before us, may He give us all ears to hear what He has said.