

# Presence

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Gracious Lord and Heavenly Father, I am a man of unclean lips, and we are people of unclean lips. I pray, Father, that you might sanctify my words this morning, make them yours. Ultimately, we pray, Father, that through this morning, our knees will be bowing to the Lord Jesus, the Son of David, and all glory and power and honour will go to him, and that your rule might be extended in our hearts, in our community, and in all the world.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the things I think annoys my wife to no... Is she here? No? Good. To no end is we'll be having this conversation, and she'll say something, and there'll be some words that she mentioned, and I'll seize upon those words, and I think I know what she's saying.

And then, you know, and I'll react to it, and that annoys her to no end. Because that's not what she wanted to say to you. That's not, I just haven't taken the time to hear what she's saying.

And I think that this is something that we do to God. We read the Bible, and there'll be certain words that are really important to us, and we'll take those words, and we start thinking, right, you know, this is what the Bible is saying to me.

I wonder if God is as annoyed as Jan is when I do it to her. I want to suggest to you that there are three, there are four, there's some things that we can do to actually guard us against that.

[ 1 : 3 3 ]     There are four questions that we can ask when we approach the Bible, particularly the Old Testament. And let me outline those questions for you.

The first question is, what is the story so far? In the first week of the series, I've suggested that the Bible is not just some random selection of material and wise sayings and principles, but rather it is a story, a narrative, an unfolding story.

And so when we approach the Bible from any part, we have to ask, where does it fit in the unfolding story of God? And we'll get to that in a sec.

The second question that we need to ask is, okay, given that this is where the story is, the episode, what is this particular episode about? And it is a question of comprehension.

If you like, the first two questions describe what the text that we are reading tells us. The third question is more analytic, is really asking the question, well, what does it mean?

[ 2 : 4 4 ]     The Bible claims to be the Word of God, and so when we read the Bible, we have to ask the question, well, what does this tell us about God? And about the way He works in the world, and as we know God, we know ourselves, what does this passage tell us about us and our world?

And the last question is, what difference does Jesus make? We're reading the Bible as Christians. The Bible claims that Jesus is where you find God.

In fact, Jesus Himself says that the whole of the Bible ought to take us to Him. And so the fourth question we ask is, well, what difference does Jesus make to our understanding of this particular part of the Bible?

And what does this particular part of the Bible help us to understand Jesus? Okay, so four questions. Where does it fit in the story? What is this episode about? What does this tell us about God?

And lastly, what difference does Jesus make? Is that good? Okay. And what I propose to do is to apply that method to Samuel 7. And hopefully we can see how this method could work.

[ 3 : 57 ] Well, the first question is, what's the story so far? I have some props, and I just feel that we didn't have enough time. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to invite you to open your Bible to the contents page.

So grab your Bible in front of you. Hopefully this will... And, you know, if the person next to you look a little bit lost, help them to find a contents page.

This is where we'll start from, the contents page of the Bible. Okay, how are we doing? Yeah? All found a contents page?

Okay. Now, we started our story from Genesis. Okay? It's... Your Bible is more or less chronological, as in the follows time.

And the Bible begins, really, at the beginning of the universe. The Christian religion involves not just us who are Christians and believers, but it involves a whole world.

[ 5 : 00 ] And if you go to Genesis 1, it tells the beginning of a story of God and us. And it is a story of a kingdom, you recall. Genesis 1 is a story of how God created a people, Adam and Eve, his people living in his land, in the Garden of Eden, under his good rule.

So that sets the frame, the background to our story. And, of course, you know, immediately the story doesn't make sense because that's not the world that we live in. It's not a world of harmony.

It is a world of floods, of wars, of divorce, of... Well, why is that? Again, stay in Genesis. If you move the story from Genesis 1 to 3, it tells us the source, the beginning of all our problems.

Okay, whatever problem that you have, that our society have, the Bible says this is the ultimate source. And the source is sin. Okay, that's the Bible word for the source of all our problems.

And sin, of course, is more than just eating chocolate when you're on a diet. Sin, sin, as the Bible explain it, in the context and frame of the kingdom, is a regime change.

[ 6 : 17 ] It is rebellion. It is people who have no right to rule decide to rise up against the one who has the right to rule. Sin is taking the right to be God onto ourselves.

Sin is deciding that we are the one who can decide what is good and what is bad, what is right and wrong. Sin is, as you're driving here this morning and you see a big sign saying 50, and you decide, I'm late for church, so I'm just going to ignore that because I am the king of my car.

So I can drive whatever speed that I think is convenient and right for me. That is sin. And what the Bible says is, again, in Genesis 3, tracing in the contents, sin leads to curse.

God is still the king of the universe. And so, everything in this world is cursed. The land is cursed. This is why, for those of you who have a lawn, every week you go out there and you've got to pluck those darn weeds.

You know, our lawn is cursed. Our work is cursed. Our family are cursed. Our marriage, everything is cursed as a result of our rebellion.

[ 7 : 33 ] Sin wrecks everything. And again, saying in Genesis, if you read from chapter 4 to chapter 11, it sort of traced the spread of sin from one family, you know, Cain and Abel, just faticide, to mass murder, to violence and chaos, something that characterizes our whole world.

But God is still God. He has not abandoned us or the world. And when you go through the story to Genesis 12, you see that God has revealed that He has a plan to reverse sin, to undo sin and curse in the world.

So if you get to Genesis 12, you will see that God makes a promise that He would undo Genesis 3 through one man and His descendant.

Through that one person, a new human race will be created. A human race that would, the new race of people who will once again be blessed by being the people of God, living in the security of His place and being blessed by being ruled by Him.

And through this one race of people, the whole world will be blessed, we read Genesis 12. Again, if you look at the contents page, you keep going from Genesis to Exodus.

[ 9 : 04 ] See, the plan is promised in Genesis 12. and we see the working out of that plan. And last week you saw we came to Exodus 19.

Another covenant, a new dimension is introduced. God will reverse sin, bless the world, save the human race and the universe and the environment through the descendants of Abraham.

And we are told in Genesis, sorry, Exodus 19, that the way God would do it is calling, saving a people to Himself and making them into a kingdom of priests.

You remember that phrase, a holy nation, a people who will declare the glory of God. The way God will save the world, bless the world, is by having a bunch of people who are different to the rest of the world.

They will live under the kingship of God in God's land. The way they're different to the rest of the world is that they will wholeheartedly love God and they will love their neighbors as themselves.

[ 10 : 20 ] How different is that to the rest of the human race? That is how God will choose to save the world, to bless the nations. But again, looking at the contents page, that's the promise of Exodus 19.

you keep going to the end of Deuteronomy, the first five books of the Bible, there is a promise but there is no land. There is no place to call home. There is a people and so we begin the book of Joshua and the beginning of the conquest of the land.

So there's the kingdom of God, the people of God living under his rule in his place and here God is delivering on his promise, the beginning of the conquest of the land. There were decisive victories, for example, the conquest of Jericho but victories and conquests were slow and hard and there are two main reasons for it.

One was the enemies from without, the enemies of God's people, the Hivites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites.

They're like this malignant cancer in the land like all those who oppose the good rule of God. We become a cancer to the environment. You just can't get rid of them but as you trace through Joshua and then to the book of Judges you will find that the will of divine justice grinds slowly but it grinds exceedingly small for you see that the land progressively was conquered and one by one the Hivite and Amorite and Canaanite and Hittite and Perizzite and Jebusites they disappeared into the ether of history.

[ 12 : 10 ] I assume that walking down Chesswood, multicultural Chesswood, you have never met an Amorite. So the promises of God is being fulfilled but they're not the problem.

See, we tend to think that the problem is outside. You know, it's the Mardi Gras, it's the gay people or the atheists. The real problem as you trace through the history that is being unfolded is actually the enemy from within.

The real problem were the Israelites. See, the way that God would reverse the curse on the world is by having a nation of priests, a royal priesthood, they were anything but priestly.

They didn't bring blessing to the nations because when they went into the land you couldn't tell the difference between an Israelite and a Perizzite. They were just like everybody else.

They didn't love God with their whole heart and they certainly didn't love the neighbours as themselves. And so the biggest problem you see, God could get rid of the Perizzites.

[ 13 : 26 ] There was no promise made to them. But he is his people. He's made a promise that through these people the world will be blessed. What's he going to do? They themselves are the ones who threaten to undo God's plan, to make God into a liar as it were.

And if you keep travelling, you know, there's Joshua, the book of Judges and he's Samuel. By Samuel's time, the problem is still there. There were the external threat, the nation of the day was the Philistines.

There were people with superior military power. But the problem of the Israelites themselves persists. And if you begin the book of Samuel, 1 Samuel, we get the story of Eli, the priest and his two sons who were ripping off the worshippers, exploiting the young girls in the temple, they were terrible.

And 1 Samuel 4, Israel went into battle with the Philistines. They thought we couldn't lose because God is on our side. So what they did was they took the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol, the guarantee as it were in their mind of the presence and the approval of God into battle with the Philistines.

And what happened? They got absolutely smashed. They had to run away, tails between their legs and worst of all, the Ark itself was taken by the Philistines.

[ 14 : 56 ] And from 1 Samuel 6, any mention of the Ark was gone from Israel. And what was Israel's solution to a problem?

Again, tracing through the history, we're up to 1 Samuel 8, if you look at the contents page. Their solution to that problem and the solution that we, I think, often go to is we've got a problem, what we need is a new rector.

Sorry, Steve. A new rector, which is, of course, from the Latin to rule. What they thought they needed is a leader, a new leader, a strong leader, a visionary leader, a wise leader.

That was the problem, wasn't it? They didn't have that sort of leader. And so, they found themselves a king. And if you trace through Samuel, he couldn't do what, well, they needed.

Couldn't beat the Philistines. By the beginning of 2 Samuel 1, the people's king was dead, and so were his sons. They were killed in battle.

[ 16 : 01 ] And the question remains, here's the problem of sin and curse. Here's the promise of God to fix it all. To bless the world through his people. How is God going to do that?

How is he going to save the world, reverse the curse and sin, bless the nations, keep the promise, given the way witness of his own people? Can you feel the tension?

And here we are at 2 Samuel 7. So this is where the story has led us so far. Right? The next question we ask is, what is this episode about?

Okay? So cast your eyes down, broadly, possibly two parts to this passage. 2 Samuel 7 is where we are. What is 2 Samuel 7? Well, there are two parts. The first part, verses 1, 2, 3, you will see that political power and military power is now consolidated in one person, David.

Okay? There is now a leader, a rector, a new rector. And he was able to beat the Philistines, something that the people of God under Saul couldn't do. And the other thing is the mention of the ark, which disappears since 1 Samuel 7, has now reappeared.

[ 17 : 20 ] David has now taken the ark, the symbol of God's presence and approval, he's taken the ark into his city. Everything is working out just fine.

God has blessed David and David thought, first three verses, God's done something nice for me, I'm going to have to do something nice back to God. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to build a great big temple for God.

That's what I can do for God. So first part. Second part is from verse 4 onward. You see God's response. And it's quite remarkable.

God is essentially saying to David, well, nice plan, good plan, don't need a house. I'll tell you what, I'll give you another plan.

I'll tell you my plan, verses 5 to 9. And when you look at this plan, it just takes your breath away. And I want to draw out some of the details of this plan.

[ 18 : 23 ] You see that this plan involves another promise. Hopefully you can see that every high point in the unfolding history of the Bible involves some sort of promise.

Genesis 12, Exodus 19, and now 2 Samuel 7. And now the promise, well, what is that promise? The promise, chapter 7, verse 9b, the promise is that David's name will be great.

Reminds us, of course, a little bit of Genesis 12. Just like Abram, David's name will be great. I don't know, I'll just mention this really quickly. We don't think much of names or importance of names.

Of course, they are important. That's what we associate ourselves with. That's what branding is about. Why do we drive Mercedes-Benz? Why do we think they're good quality?

That's what a name is. Having a bad name is the opposite. It's a matter of identity, of endurance, in a world of change. David will have a great name.

[ 19 : 25 ] And just like Genesis 12, him having a great name means blessing will flow. Verse 10, Israel, this is in the context of war and harassment, in the context of that, Israel would have a home and they will have peace.

They will have peace so that they can enjoy the good of the land and the fruit of the labor. is a recasting of Genesis 1 and the promises of Genesis 12 and 19.

They will be blessed once again to be living under God's rule in his land as the people of God. Well, what is new in 2 Samuel 7?

What is new? All these promises God has made and he's essentially promising the same thing, that God's kingdom will come. What is new? Well, the new bid is in verses 11b to 16, I want to suggest.

The new bid is the promise of the one who will execute the plan. I think this is the new bid.

[ 20 : 35 ] The one who will bring peace to Israel, the one who will destroy evil. Well, who is it who will bring all the promises to reality?

the son of David. The son of David. God, we are told, will establish his kingdom. He, in turn, will build a house, a plan word, could be a temple, but it could be a family.

He, in turn, will build a people for God. Verse 14, God will be his father and he will be God's son.

Okay, we read that and we go, what does that mean? You know, because we think the son of God is a reference to deity. Right? It's God.

But that's not what it is talking about and incidentally, every time you read the phrase, the son of God, this is what it's talking about. It's not talking about the deity of the son of David, rather, it's talking about the kingship, the kingship of the son of David.

[ 21 : 45 ] We don't get it because we don't live in an agrarian society anymore. The father and son thing is a functional reference. You know, if you were living in an agrarian society, sons do, what fathers do, did, do.

So your dad's a farmer, you're going to be a farmer. You know, in that society, you can't decide, I'm going to be a musician. That's just, no.

Dad and sons, the sons do what the fathers do. And so the son of God is a king because God is the king.

The son of David will become a king and exercise the kingly rule of God. That's what the promise is. Of course, what does this remind you of in terms of the unfolding story so far?

It reminds us of Genesis 1. When the human race was created, what were they supposed to do?

[ 22 : 49 ] What was the brief? What was the instruction? They were to rule the world as God's agents. But that was all undone in Genesis 3.

But here it is, God's promising once again that a man, a human will once again rule the earth as he had planned.

Not just any man, but the son of David. And it's breathtaking for three reasons.

One is, when you read the terms of the promise, the kingdom of God, which seems to be what the story of the Bible is about, seems to be coterminous with the kingdom of the son of David.

They're almost used interchangeably. You know, God will establish his kingdom. You see, the kingdom of the son of David is the same as the kingdom of God.

[ 23 : 52 ] That's amazing, isn't it? To think of a man whose rule will be like that of God. But more than that, did you notice in verse 13 and 15, this one, his kingdom, his rule will be forever.

I mean, is that just ancient talk for a long time? Or do you think he really meant forever? You know, it raises that question.

What about Genesis 3 and the curse of death? Surely, if he is the son of Adam, he could not rule forever because death will strike him down like every other man.

Could it be true? And there's another problem, another breathtaking aspect to this promise? And it is the problem of hereditary rule.

See, there is salvation for the Australian Labour Party. If they did have a bad leader, she or he, could eventually be replaced by a vote.

[ 25 : 07 ] That's what we do in a democracy. But you know what is not available in a monarchy? A vote. You're stuck.

If there is a king, you are stuck. That's the problem of hereditary rule. And the problem of hereditary rule is clearly apparent in the book of Samuel.

You know, at the beginning of Samuel, there's Eli and his two no-good sons. Imagine if they had... And then Samuel himself, one of the last great judges of Israel, his sons turned out to be a real red bag as well too.

And then there is Saul, the king. What if he... The problem of hereditary rule. And now God is promising that the son of David will have absolute power.

It's wonderful, of course, because in this world, righteousness and justice and peace could only be brought about through absolute power. But the problem for us is who will we give that power to?

[ 26 : 21 ] A new rector? See, God is promising something that is enormous and breathtaking. He's saying the son of David is the one that I'm going to give absolute power and glory and honour to him forever.

He would have to be a very different person to us, wouldn't he? Well, third question. What does this episode tell us about God and us and the world? The very first thing that strikes us, which is picked up in John 2, and again in the speech of Stephen just before he was martyred, is that where does he dwell?

He's David wanting to create a temple for God, and God is saying, I don't need a temple. The whole world is mine. By the time we got to Stephen, and people were accusing Stephen of preaching against the temple, they had the same problem.

They thought God is, well, is there, is here. God does not dwell in temple built by human hands. But the new element, I think, in showing us how God works in the world, particularly in 2 Samuel 7, is that God has promised that he will create a new human race.

He hasn't given up on the nations, he will bless the nations, he will save the world from the ravages of sin and curse, and here, the new element is he will do it through one person.

[ 27 : 56 ] The whole human history will be centered on this one person, and it's not, well, it is the son of David, the son of God.

In the Old Testament, in the time of David, the way you recognize the king is by putting oil on his head, is a process called anointing. And the Hebrew word for the anointed one, the son of David, the son of God, is the word Messiah.

Messiah. In Greek, it's the word Christ. The one who will bring about peace and the redemption of the world is through the Messiah, the Christ of God.

One of the nations, you know, there's a lot of promises here about Israel. You know, Israel will have peace. What about the nations? Where's the blessings to the nation? Where's the mention? And here, I want to just very quickly take you to Psalm 2.

And I apologize for the length that this is taking. Psalm 2. It's worth just reading that. And I'm just going to read it very quickly.

[ 29 : 06 ] This is a coronation psalm. So every time a descendant of David goes to the throne, this is sung or read. Why do the nations conspire and the people plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his anointed. Let us break the chains, they say, and throw off their feathers. This is a way of saying, when I'm driving down a 50 stone, I want to decide how fast I want to drive.

This is what they're saying to God. Except God in response says this, in verse 4, the one unphoned in heaven laughs. Puny. He scoffs at them.

And then he bilks them in his anger and terrifies them in his worth, saying, you know, you aren't really ruling the world. And you're not even ruling yourself. And I'm going to show you how you can know that you are not the king of the earth.

And this is what he says in verse 4, I have installed my king on Sion, my holy hill. The way you know that God is still in control, that he's still king, is because he will put his king into your life and this world.

[ 30 : 14 ] Verse 7, this is what the son says, I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me, you are my son today, I become your father, ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth, your possession, you will rule them with an iron scepter, you will dash them to pieces like pottery, therefore you kings of St.

Paul's, be wise, be warned, you rulers of Chesswood, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trampling, kiss the son, lest he be angry and you will be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in the moment, blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Where are the nations in 2 Samuel 7? There they are, there they are. You see, there are two responses to this son of David, the son of God.

You can either run away from him in rebellion or you can run to him in refuge. The way that the son will bring about justice and peace in the world is by destroying evil.

He will smash evil in this world like pottery. But there is escape, there is mercy. Run to him. Last question, what difference does Jesus make?

[ 31 : 28 ] See, we're still staying in the Old Testament. We're not even up to the New Testament. What difference does Jesus make? Romans 1. Okay, don't read it up. Romans 1 summarizes for us the gospel of Jesus.

And do you know what it says? Jesus is the son of David. And then it goes on to say, declare to be the son of God. Jesus declared to be the son of God.

The king of God, how? By the spirit at the resurrection. How do you know that our God is still in control of the world?

How do you know that he will bring all to account and that he will destroy evil and bring about justice and righteousness in this world and peace for all? Because he raised Jesus from the dead.

And by doing so, he crowned him as the king. Death has no place in his kingdom because he's defeated it. This is what Paul is talking about.

[ 32 : 36 ] This is the one 2 Samuel 7 is talking about. This is the one who will execute the plan to reverse curse and sin to bless the nations to save the world and he will do it with justice and righteousness.

His kingdom will be established. And the question that will be asked of us is, well, what difference does Jesus make? How will you and I respond to this son today? A little bit of religion in our world, in your life, is just not good enough.

The very heart of Christianity is the person of Jesus. And there are only two responses. You either flee from him and be smashed like pottery or you run to him in safety and for mercy.

This is what 2 Samuel leads us to. I wonder how you would respond to the son. Amen.