

The Great Eight Core Stories of the Bible – Story #5 – “The Davidic Monarchy” Sunday March 14, 2010 – 900hrs and 1100hrs at Ladner United Church – Preacher Jim Short



SCRIPTURE LESSONS FOR Sunday March 14th, 2010

Our lessons are selections from the Hebrew Scriptures, the books of Samuel, Kings and Zechariah. These passages concern the fifth of the great eight core stories of the Bible, the Davidic Monarchy. (Pause)

Hear these words of introduction. The 12 tribes of Israel divided the now conquered “Promised Land.” Who exactly where these tribes? Israel was the name given to Jacob, Abraham and Sarah’s grandson. Most of the names of the 12 tribes came from the name of Jacob’s sons. The tribe of Levi was designated for priestly service and given no land. Two tribal areas were named after Joseph’s sons (Manasseh and Ephraim). Joseph was Jacob’s youngest son.

For several hundred years the tribes ruled the land with a system of judges who were like charismatic leaders. There were times of both great tribal unity and disunity resulting in conflict.

Eventually the tribes requested a more centralized authority – a King. The prophet Samuel opposed the request of the tribes, warning them about the consequences of aristocratic power. The tribes though insist and God gives them what they want – a King, first Saul and then David.

Saul’s kingship ends in great disappointment. The prophet Samuel anoints David King, the unlikely youngest son out tending the sheep but the one who grows to be both Israel’s brilliant King with great leadership skills and strength of character but also great flaws.

In these selected verses from 2 Samuel 7, God acknowledges David’s greatness with these promises.

Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies.

Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

Hear these further words of introduction:

Under David and Solomon his son Israel had grown strong with Jerusalem being made the political capital of the nation and with the building of the temple. After the death of Solomon, the dream of a united Israel did not last long and when the King Rehoboam refused to lift the oppressive tax burdens, the 10 northern tribes rebelled and formed the Northern Kingdom – the remaining two formed the Southern one.

Over the years the people forget the original promises to Abraham to be a blessing. They focused on personal fortunes, worshipping idols and the rich got richer as the poor got poorer. The warnings of the prophets such as Amos and Hosea were ignored.

In 721 BCE the expanding Assyrian Empire swept across the Northern Kingdom and carried off most of its population into exile, never to be heard of again. Reading selected verses from 2 Kings

Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria; for three years he besieged it. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria.

This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt. They had worshipped other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had introduced. The people of Israel secretly did things that were not right against the LORD their God.

They did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger; they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, 'You shall not do this.' Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your ancestors and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.' They would not listen but were stubborn, as their ancestors had been who did not believe in the LORD their God. They despised his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their ancestors, and the warnings that he gave them.

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone. Hear these words of introduction.

The remaining Southern Kingdom Judah had an addition century until the consequences of breaking covenant caught up with them.

Prophets like Micah and Israel challenged their turning from the covenant God and God's ways. Occasionally there were times of renewal but they were derailed by the Monarchy that revered to the religious shortcuts of idolatry and the ethical short cuts of greed and oppression.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold the doom and destruction of Judah which was fulfilled in 587 BC when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. All but the poorest people were carried off in exile hundreds of miles to Babylon. The David line and all hopes seemed to have dead ended.

In exile though, in a strange land, words of hope begin to form.

Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain. Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus says the LORD of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the LORD of hosts? Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the West Country; and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

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Prayer: Gracious God, made the meditations of our hearts and the words of my lips, if they be your words be worthy and acceptable unto you and may your word come to your people either through me or despite me. In Jesus name....amen.

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We are looking today and the promise of the Davidic Monarchy and the last of the five core stories of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament)...

It's a lot of material in terms of historical material, people and events...

Next week we begin three weeks of sermons – Jesus' life, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection which take us to Easter Sunday...

I said last week that it is so much material – especially if you are hearing it perhaps for the first or second time or may not have heard any of it since Church school years when you were young – don't get hung up on that...

I read recently that the average person needs to hear something 13 times before they really hear it...because its not about just head knowledge of facts and events alone -

So push to the side – those thoughts of – I have not followed everything, I can't get all of the details...and instead ask you, savor, meditate upon, pray upon... (And remember there is no test)

One or two life shaping thoughts

Something that intrigues you

Something that gives you a different perspective

Like all things – this is a life long journey – and hearing the word of God in scripture mediated by God's Holy Spirit is a bit like eating...

I don't remember the make up of every meal that I have eaten in life...but I know that it was important to eat them and if not – there would have been some consequences and deficiencies...

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I want to do three things today: this kind of hinge week between the Hebrew Scriptures and the birth of Jesus...

a) A brief History lesson (focusing on covenant) from the establishment of the Davidic Monarchy to Jesus' birth (remembering that in the scripture lesson we covered about 800 years of history in 10 minutes)

b) Reflect briefly on King David and God's promises to him

c) End up with a few words on the image and reality of "exile"...

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a) The History Lesson

At this point in our core stories, the Promised Land has been conquered and settled by the people of Israel...

The land divided between 11 of the 12 tribes (the 12 tribe is set apart for priestly duties – Levi) and own no land...

This loose knit tribal confederacy exists for several hundred years – ruled over or governed by a group of what the bible calls – Judges – we'd refer to them as home grown charismatic leaders

Eventually – a more centralized form of government was required and the people of Israel asked Samuel for a King (1 Samuel 8)

Samuel consulted with God who responded by saying warn the people that in asking this they have rejected me as their King and that if they want a king – they need to be aware of the consequences...a King...

Will put their use their young men and women for an army and a bureaucracy – he will tax heavily tax them and when they cry out to me for relief – I will not heed their cry (central government means war, bureaucracy and taxes)

The people insisted and God told Samuel to give them a king...

King Saul – the first King was a great disappointment and David was chosen, still a young Shepherd to be the King... (More about him later)

David's Kingship would be Israel's golden years with the three promises made to Abraham and Sarah – to be a nation, a land and a people – strong and secure would be fulfilled...

And then Solomon – who would eventually build the great temple which was both a blessing as a home for YHWH (where the Ark of the Covenant) would reside – the stone tablets Moses brought from the mountain but a curse in terms of taxation and debt

(Old Testament fiscal equivalent to the cost of a modern day Olympic Games)

At Solomon's death (King David's son) his son Rehboaham came to the thrown – and he refused to lift the oppressive tax burden and a civil war brought the end of the dream of a unified Israel...

In the North – 10 tribes seceded a formed a separate state – Israel

And in the South – the two remaining tribes formed a state called Judah...

Over a period of two hundred years – the separate monarchies though would turn their back on God – worship other Gods, forget their calling to be a blessings

bribery, the perversion of justice, corruption, the oppression of widows, orphans and strangers, self centered life styles of opulence and wealth for a few, empty worship rituals in the temple that meant nothing, entering into political and military allegiances - would corrupt the social, political and religious fabric of these two nations...

Israel fell first to the Assyrian Empire in 721 BCE – and the people were taken into exile – never to emerge again

And in 587 – the Southern Tribes of Judea were conquered by the Babylonian Empire – the city and temple were destroyed and the people taken several hundred miles to Babylon – and with that period of Exile...

Psalm 137 – made into numerous songs – By the Rivers of Babylon – there we set down and wept...

Though in that time of exile in Babylon – powerful messianic hopes and dreams would emerge...

Though the various prophets – Hosea, Amos and Isaiah had been extremely critical of the monarchy and the people...

It would be the prophets like Jeremiah would plant the seeds of hope that even in the midst of this most devastating exile in which all the hopes of the Davidic Monarchy seemed extinguished...

God, though God had punished the people being angry with them – would not forget God's covenantal promises that Israel would always be God's people...

For example – just as the Babylonian army entered Jerusalem – Jeremiah put a down payment down on a piece of property now occupied by the enemy...

Eventually a remnant of the people of Israel would return to the Promised Land...

For about 100 years they would enjoy some independence...

There is a 400 year silence in Israel history before Jesus emerges n the scene...

By then – a series of powers has occupied the Promised Land – the most recent being Rome to our study being at the birth of Jesus – having installed the puppet King Herod...

Post exile – many Jews migrated to distant parts of the then known world – and settled – this being known as the Diaspora...

into this time in Israel's life will come the person of Jesus...more on that world that was founded on and haunted by these core stories next week - on that next week...

b) David...

Israel's greatest King...and the one in whose time and leadership the promises God made to Abraham and Sarah came true...

A people

A land

A blessing

David's "house" as the scriptures say was great – and in those days the word house encompassed the palace, the temple, status and dynasty...

The qualities of David's leadership are legendary...he made his name so to speak...and his life reads like a modern day political thriller or autobiography – surpassing the color of Brian Mulroney's or Jean Chrétien's life...

On his defeat of the Philistine Army's champion – the giant warrior Goliath by using his shepherd's sling – and six smooth stones...proving the bigger they are...the harder they fall...

He was a brave warrior, articulate, musical, handsome, close to God, eager, confident, merciful, in touch with his feelings, popular with his people...

and he had his flaws...the most "infamous" being his falling for his Commander Uriah's wife Bathsheba – and after having an affair with her and discovering she is pregnant – arranges for Uria to lead the troops in an upcoming battle at the most dangerous part of the assault – and when Uria is killed – he marries Bathsheba...

Confronted by the prophet Samuel – the punishment for David and Bathsheba is the death of their first born son...

Despite that ...God whose covenantal plan from the very beginning has been to restore the shalom and blessings given at the creation of the world to those who through sin and rebellion...continually lose it...

Never giving up....so that judgment, punishment, anger is not God's last word...

Love is...

Renews with David the covenant...first made with Abraham and Sarah, then with Moses, renewed with Joshua upon entering the Promised Land and through the Kingship...

Through David... (2 Samuel 7)

David's genetic line would continue

David's throne – government would be for ever

The people would always have a land and security...

This would not be because of David's accomplishments but due rather to what God had done...

Again – the emphasis in the covenant is always on God's action...

This covenant with David would foster those deep messianic hopes (messiah being the anointed ones) that would smolder and burn in the hearts of the Jewish people...in the time of Jesus and beyond...

For Christians – we see all of those covenant promises – fulfilled in the person of Jesus...

For example – it makes sense then – doesn't it – in the very first chapter of Matthew's Gospel...in Matthew's genealogy...

You can understand the power for Matthew's readers...

1:1

A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ... (Where you come from is important in those days)

A son of David...

The son of Abraham...

And lastly exile (c)

Since we can't go too far into the future...

"By the rivers of Babylon – there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion (another word of Jerusalem) – remember all the various versions of that great song...

Imagine what that was like...

You have survived a bloody merciless siege and battle – slaughter, rape and pillage...

You've seen your city and temple destroyed...

You can take what you can carry...

The scripture says that the people led into exile...were linked together by fish hooks in their noses...

You walk/are dragged hundreds of miles – if you can't go on you are probably killed...

Men, elderly, women, children, pregnant women, sick, infirm

And you languish in slavery in Babylon... (Shades of Egypt)

How could you ever wrap your heart and mind and strength around God's promises...?

Trauma – which leads to Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome...?

One of the causes....you experience something extra ordinary, not expected, beyond the normal reality of your life...

When the reality of your situation assaults mentally, spiritually and emotionally what you have believed about yourself and life...

We all have an "inner" framework...like framing of a house its made up of what we believe, trust in, hope for, our relationships, experiences...

it helps us make sense and deal with most experiences of our lives...most times even though a wind blows upon it and it shakes that framework remains firm...sometimes a bigger storm comes along and a portion of the roof is blow in and we can rebuild it and move on...

But sometimes something so catastrophic comes along that the whole structure is blown down and it cannot hold and we are lost...

Destroyed – what do you have left to hang on to...?

What happens when what you believe no longer dances with your reality...?

Another spiritual landscape emerging...

Wilderness

Promised Land

Slavery

Exile...

What a powerful image – have you ever felt exile – lack of hope – will I ever find a "home" again...

One way of life, one way of being has ended – and one sits in exile... and the future...

Well...it's gone, not clear, unimaginable...impossible to conjure up...

The death of a child...

The death of a spouse...

A life taking illness...

Losing your job unexpectedly...

Being sexually abused/raped by someone you trusted...

Betrayal

Losing everything

Discovering you have a mental illness

It feels and seems like God's wrath...apocalypse... (Interesting how we really like those kinds of movies like 2010 – they must touch some fear with in us)

It feels like as it did for the people of Israel in exile in Babylon the end of the hope of the Promised Land and all the covenantal promise...but just at that point – when there is no future – hope emerges...

Jeremiah...just as the city of Jerusalem falls to the Babylonian Army who now effectively owns everything...

Goes to the Jewish owner of a piece of property and puts a down payment upon it for his future use...

In the hearts of a people in Exile...a small green shoot of hope pushes through the hard earth of oppression and hopelessness...

to a people enslaved by Rome, taxed to death by a turncoat King and betrayed by their temple leaders and priests...the hoped for David Messiah is recognized by a few in the person of the son of a poor carpenter from the back water town of Galilee and his name is Jesus...

God says to Jeremiah...

(29:11)

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord...plans for your welfare and not for you harm, to give you a future with hope"

Faith challenges us, doesn't it...in the midst of exile...to trust in Jesus, to trust in hope – to trust that we will move into a future that will not be the same as the past but will be a future....

To trust that which is beyond our sight

That our lives are meant for good even when all is lost

To look to the future with hope...even when all that is left is despair or nostalgia...

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Much of the material is taken or quoted (often unacknowledged) from Adult Crossings God's Journey with Us...The Eight Core Stories – Logos Productions, 2008 – Inver Grove Heights Minnesota