

The Life of David

Week 13: David's Redemption

2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- November 19, 2023

So, this is not my introduction. I want to be clear on that. I'll tell you when the introduction starts. We're concluding our series on David in 1 and 2 Samuel, and the phenom of the biographer of David, a genius, is going to give us a lesson in 2 Samuel 24. And it is profound in its implications. The application for our lives is heavy and weighty. Even what it teaches about God is expansive in the way we think about things. But it's taught in what is called a "story told." And I didn't want to go through and botch up the story and lose the story, because that's where it's gold. You know how sometimes you're watching a movie with a friend and they keep pausing it and saying, "Okay, let me explain the background to you. Okay, this is a real stunt Tom Cruise he does ..." You're kind of killing the buzz.

So, I'm going to try and go through this story, telling the story, stopping as infrequently as possible, so as to punch that meaning through. So, if you want, I would love for you to consider reading (for homework) 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21 and 22. That's where this story is being told.

To grasp the lessons that I've talked about here there are two points you need to know. One is that 2 Samuel chapters 21 through 24 are an epilogue. In other words, they're added at the end by this genius author, independent of chronology. These aren't the last things David does, but ... here's the point ... we find the lesson in trying to find the answer to the question *Why would the author insert this as the last story told about this great king when it's a story about David's most costly sin?* In other words, since there's no reason (because the author is not writing this in order of time), he's intentionally put this here for a purpose. And that purpose is for our lesson to learn. So, the first way we find that is to ask why he put this last.

And the second thing I want to bring up is kind of a nerdy storytelling device that people use in storytelling if you want people to understand your big idea or your purpose. You use a device called "bookends." And that's when you put your lesson at the very beginning and you

put it at the very end. They're bookends. You make sure you repeat in the front and in the back. And generally, your audience won't miss that point.

With that in mind, I'd like to start and get going with my introduction. Okay, I want my time back on my timer, because now it's starting. Ready? You guys ready to start? All right, here we go.

Introduction to the Story

His name is David—King David. More is written about David in the Bible than of anyone else in the Bible except Jesus, and it's not even close. The story of David is the first real biography in all of ancient literature.

David is the first Renaissance man. He's a poet, he's a musician, he's an author. But he's also a warrior, a commander, a king. David is the giant killer. There is no one like David.

And his life is one of the few in all of human history that you can say is a hinge of history. Because after David everything changes. And for this simple reason: because David brings the shadow of the kingdom of God to planet Earth--God's king in God's city bringing God's presence.

The Temptation

2 Samuel 24:1

And the anger of the Lord burned against Israel ...

And this story is the last picture of David that this author wants you to remember. It begins in verse 1: "Again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel." We don't know why exactly. We have some pretty good clues. I'll show you in a moment, but what happens is that the Lord allows Satan to go and entice David to sin. And the sin, the thing that he is tempted to do, that he will comply with, is to number the troops, to count his soldiers. And it is a terrible crime against God. It is an assault to who He is and to trusting in Him.

The Warning

1 Chronicles 21:3

But Joab replied, “May the Lord multiply His troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s subjects? Why does my lord desire to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?”

It’s so bad that even General Joab knows this is a bad idea—to number the troops. This is what Joab says when David says, “Let’s number the soldiers.” “But Joab replied, ‘May the Lord multiply His troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s subjects? Why does my lord desire to do this? Why should he bring this guilt on Israel?’”

Now this is Joab. Joab is a blunt instrument. His conscience is seared almost numb, if for no other reason that he has deceitfully murdered two men that were his possible rivals. He stabs them. And so, if this man’s conscience can get a *ping* that it’s a dreadful idea to number the soldiers, then it must be a gong to anyone else who is tender towards the Lord.

The Sin

So, what is so heinous about numbering the troops? I mean, I don’t know if you know, but the fourth book of the Bible is called Numbers. And it’s called Numbers because God tells Moses to number the troops—twice. That’s how the book starts and that’s how the book ends. So, it’s not the thing; it’s the motive.

2 Samuel 24:3

“May the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are ... but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?”

And you can see in the Book of Samuel’s description, here’s how Joab responds in that book: “May the Lord your God add to the people a hundred times as many as there are ... but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?”

The Chronicler said, “Why do you desire this?” The writer of 2 Samuel says, “Why do you delight in this?”

And the reason is pride. That’s the motive. No, it’s way more than pride. It’s hubris. The strength of the king’s army is where the king gets his stature. It’s how he becomes notorious. That’s his fame. That’s the source of his protection--the size of his army, the number of soldiers that he has. And it gives him the ability to be aggressive when he wants to be. Now he can be the neighborhood bully. He can push his weight around.

And so, David—King David—replaces his trust in Jehovah with his own newfound success that Jehovah gave him. That’s where David is going for his identity, for his security, for his happiness.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

This is what the Lord says: “Don’t let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. ²⁴ But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord. I, the Lord, have spoken!”

And “This is what the Lord says: ‘Don’t let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord. I, the Lord, have spoken!’”

This is a grievous sin for David, but he speaks for all of Israel, because they have all turned away from their dependence and boasting in God, and now they’re boasting in their new strength.

Application

And this is a lesson to all of us, to each and every one of us: that God-given gifts can turn into idols. Do you know idols eat their worshippers? That’s the nature of idolatry. You die of irony. And what God has given...sometimes you’ll see people who are healthy, but they turn their health into an idol, and then they become sick. People who have God-given beauty can become compulsive about trying to stay young. And it becomes vanity. And when it becomes

vanity, they become ugly. A person's wealth given to them by God can turn into greed when it's idolized. And then you can just see the poverty in their souls.

You can look at it this way in David. Look at the radical transformation in David's heart and the paradigm that he sees all of life through. Think back to the David that we love and enjoy, that we hope we can be like someday. There's this glaring contrast between now and from when he is facing Goliath the Philistine. He mocks the Philistine for his values, for what the Philistine hopes in, what the Philistine desires. He goes out to that battlefield and he says, *Oh, where is your hope, Philistine? Where is your hope? Where is your boasting? You boast in your sword and spear and javelin, but I boast, I hope, in nothing more than the name of the Lord God, the God of the armies.*

And now, David, in the last story of his life, is putting his hope in his army. He's putting his hope in the strength of his military. David has become a Philistine. Numbering his troops is showing that this is where he's getting his identity; this is what he's turned into his significance and his safety.

The Census Is Carried Out

So, the story continues. David insists when Joab pushes back, and Joab complies. So, he does a survey and it takes nine months and twenty days. I think the writer tells us that because he has nine months to repent. This is what is called in the Bible a "high-handed sin."

2 Chronicles 21:6-7

But Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king's command was repulsive to him. ⁷ This command was also evil in the sight of God; so He punished Israel.

And again, it's such a dreadful sin. This is Joab, the mob enforcer. Look what it says: "Joab did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king's command was repulsive to him. This command was also evil in the sight of God; so He punished Israel."

Repentance and Consequences

Nine months, twenty days, the survey comes back. It's put on David's desk. *This is the size of your army.* And no sooner does he get that response than—Boom!—David is crushed with guilt. God's thumb is now on his back, and he says, "Lord, I have sinned greatly in this. Lord, I beg You, take away the guilt of Your servant. I have done a very foolish thing."

The very next morning, that prayer is answered. God sends Gad, a prophet, who is a friend of David's—they go back decades. He delivers the consequences. He's going to give (this is from the Lord) three choices of what he wants for his punishment. They are going to be decreasing in duration, but they're going to be increasing intensity.

You might have done this as a parent. We've done this with our kids. We're outside playing kickball and someone gets snotty, we sit them down and say, "Look, you can timeout for thirty minutes—you'll miss the rest of the game. Or I'll just hit you with a spoon and you'll be out there before it's your turn at bat again. You choose."

It's kind of like that, but nothing like that. Here are the choices. One, David can have three years of famine. He can choose three months of being hunted by his enemies. Or he can have three days of a plague brought on by the Lord.

2 Samuel 24:14

David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands."

It doesn't take David long to consider, and here's his decision. "David said to Gad, 'I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for His mercy is great; but do not let me fall into human hands.'"

The Cost

So, the Lord sends the angel of the Lord to Israel. And He sends this plague out, and seventy thousand soldiers are killed. Soldiers—seventy thousand! *How's the strength of your army now?* The thing he worshipped is now being destroyed.

Before we move on too much, I want to say, this is a problem, right? David commits this sin and seventy thousand people are killed. That doesn't seem fair. Well, right ... let's just look at this briefly. One is, it's not just David—it's all of Israel. Israel is at war with the Lord. The first sentence: **“Again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel ...”** Israel has become (if you'll remember) as in the days of the judges. They have become independent of God and absolutely ungrateful. And they are now living lives the way they want and think that all they have is because they are self-made men and women. And because of their pride and because of David personifying that pride, everybody is in this somehow.

Second, it doesn't seem fair that David sins and others pay, but isn't that the nature of sin? Aren't we all paying for somebody else's sin? And when we sin, somebody else pays for that, in many ways? You can see it certainly exaggerated when someone in your house maybe has an addiction and they're not dealing with it. It could be one of the parents or one of the children, but everyone under that roof is paying. So, it's the nature of sin that other people have to pay with your decisions.

But I would say that, most specific to this book (1 and 2 Samuel is actually one book) is that a leader's sin exaggerates the consequences—amplifies the consequences. Because one of the themes of the book is that we're going to be judged for our use and our abuse of authority. Whatever authority we have is God-given, and with that authority we are reporting back to God. And we can use our authority for helping other people and being generous, for being kind, like David in his early days. Or we can abuse our authority and throw it around for our own personal gain. And whatever that is, we will answer to God for that.

And can I just say—let's not go Old Testament here—can you think of any time recently throughout all of human history when kings and politicians and people in power make laws and start wars for on other reason than their own increase wealth? Stupid rules, crazy laws, starting wars so that they can get rich. Does that ring a bell? Yeah, it's still happening, all the time, everywhere.

And when it comes to authority in the Bible, the theme is “to whom much is given, much will be given account to.” We will be rewarded for the way we use our authority; we will be answering for the way we abuse that authority.

The Pause

So, let's go back to the storyline. Let's get this thing going. We have the angel of the Lord coming and he is yielding this sword of a plague. And he has now gone seventy thousand in his head count at this point. He has gone from Dan to Beersheba, Israel and Judah. And now he's coming into Jerusalem, the most important city in the Bible, the most important city in the world. It is the capital of Israel. It is the city of David. It is the city of God. And apparently, the angel of the Lord comes in, and he is threading between two mounts. On the west side is Mount Sinai and on the east side is the Mount of Olives. And he's standing there on what is called the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Jerusalem used to belong to the Jebusites, so he's owned this threshing floor, this hill, maybe for generations. And he and his four sons are threshing on the threshing floor. And they look up and they see the angel of the Lord with that bloody sword. And then David, from the palace, not far from there, is looking up at that same hilltop, and he is seeing that angel. And that sword is backing up. And what does it say next?

2 Samuel 24:16

When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, "Enough! Now, stay your hand." The angel of the Lord was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

"When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the Lord relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, 'Enough! Pause. Now, stay your hand.' And the angel of the Lord was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

God puts a pause to it. Stop, wait. Wait for what? *David ... David, wake up! You're seeing what is happening. Do something. You've not lost your innocence, you just failed to maintain it. Do something! Be the giant killer again. Be that shepherd who would give his very life to save his sheep. David, do the thing you were meant to do.*

1 Chronicles 21:16-17

David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. ¹⁷ David said to God, “Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Lord my God, let Your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on Your people.”

And David does this. “David looked up and he saw the angel of the Lord standing”—remember this—“between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand extended over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell facedown. David said to God, ‘Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I, the shepherd, have sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Lord my God, let Your hand fall on me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on Your people.’”

1 Chronicles 21:18-19

Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. ¹⁹ So David went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the Lord ...

Do you know what happened next? David is standing in this gap, and he’s willing to die and see his whole family die to stop this plague. Here’s what happens. “Then the angel of the Lord ordered Gad to tell David to go up and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David”—now he’s in obedience—“went up in obedience to the word that Gad had spoken in the name of the Lord ...”

The angel of the Lord tells Gad to tell David, *You’ve got to do an offering, a sacrifice, right there on that hill.* And so David goes to Araunah and says, *I want to buy that.* Now keep in mind that Araunah saw the angel of the Lord with the sword out ready to come down. And he

said, *Are you kidding? You can have the land. You can have the ox for the sacrifice. I have firewood for you and I even have some wheat for a sin offering. It's all yours—take it. Let's stop this thing!*

And then David responds, *No. We're experiencing grace here, and we're going to do this sacrifice, and how could I possibly give a sacrifice to the Lord that costs me nothing? Isn't that the nature of people responding to the grace of God? Oh, yeah, I want to give. I want to give out of my wallet, not out of your wallet.*

1 Chronicles 21:26-27

David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.²⁷ Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

So, David buys that hill, those oxen, that firewood, and the wheat. “David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.” The Lord approved this offering. “Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.” End of story.

The Lessons

Isn't that a powerful drama that's taking place here? There's a weighty application that I'm trying to show you here. And how do we find out what the lesson is that this author is trying to show us? Remember? This is the first biography of anyone in ancient literature, and it ends this way? Why?

Lesson #1: The Redemption of David

I think there are three reasons. One is that this is actually the story of the redemption of David. David is redeemed in this story. David lost his way many years before. He's descending into the heart of darkness. In this story he shows himself to still be a man of God. In this story his

youthful love for the Lord and his innocence is resuscitated. You can see here that David returns to be the shepherd who is willing to give up his life for his sheep.

One author put it this way: “The Lord is in a constant search to help us repent and make something beautiful from our sinful mistakes.” And so, the Lord pauses that angel so that David might finally wake up and be the man of God he was meant to be.

The last memory we have of David is that he’s a hero once more. That’s a great way to end a story.

Lesson #2: David Was the Best We Have and Still Not Enough

The second way we can find the lesson that we’re to learn here is to look at the story. It’s actually a culmination of fifty-five chapters. The lesson is this. David is the very best that we have. And he’s not enough. The promises that were given to Adam and Abraham and Jacob about the coming king—this man fulfills so many of those. But he is still a son of Adam. And every son of Adam is totally depraved. In other words, if David can’t get this right, then who are we to say that we even have a hope?

And so, we need to maintain our hope in the promises of God. But our hope needs to be directed towards the right thing—a different kind of David, a different kind of Adam—not a son of Adam, but a second Adam—not a son of David, but a second David—one who is not contaminated by original sin.

And one of the ways that the Lord teaches us to know what specifically to look for is very clever. It’s genius. It’s sovereign. It’s power. It’s this—that threshing floor. Remember the story? The angel of the Lord is posed and is paused right there over the north of Jerusalem at Aruanah’s threshing floor in between Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, the very place where it says—let me read it again—“And David looked up and saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth”—this is the place where the angel of the Lord stands, between heaven and earth. And there’s another name for Aruanah’s threshing floor. It’s called Mount Moriah. And David buys Mount Moriah, because that is the sacred place. It is a place where a king stood in the gap to save his sheep. And it’s the very same place that Solomon will build the temple.

1 Chronicles 22:1

Then David said, “The house of the Lord God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel.”

Let me just keep reading here. The first sentence of chapter 22 of Chronicles says, “And David said, ‘The house of the Lord God is to be here’”—on this threshing floor—” ‘and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel.’”

2 Chronicles 3:1

Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.

So, when Solomon builds the temple, look what it says in 2 Chronicles 3: “Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah where the Lord had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.”

Lesson #3: Mount Moriah Is Where Heaven Touches Earth

Mount Moriah is the place where heaven touches earth, because that’s the place where blood pays for our sins. Mount Moriah has quite a story. It starts four thousand years before us, two thousand years before Christ, when God said, *I want to see your undivided love. Abraham, Abraham, bring me your son Isaac, your only son, the one you love. And bring him to Mount Moriah that he might be sacrificed for me.*

And Abraham does it. He takes his son, his only son, the one whom he loves, and ties him to an altar and has a knife. And his hand is up, and then an angel comes and says, “Abraham, Abraham, don’t do it. But you can still offer a sacrifice, and I’ve provided this ram.” So, he takes

the ram and he slaughters that ram and makes that his sacrifice. You need to be looking for a future fulfillment of the Lord providing a sacrifice for you.

A thousand years after Abraham at 1000 B. C., here we are with David. And now he has purchased Moriah. And in this story line we see the wrath of God and His hatred towards sin. And when that angel of the Lord comes to Moriah and his arm is stretched out, it is put to a stop because a king, a good shepherd, says, "I will give my life for my sheep." And then he's told that Solomon will build the temple there. And at that temple once a year on the Day of Atonement, animals are slaughtered and the blood covers our sins. It's just an interest payment. It doesn't pay the debt. But it will buy us some time on that very mountain.

A thousand years after David's story is Jesus, the Lamb of God, the King of all Kings, the Good Shepherd. And in that story, the request is, *Demonstrate to me your undivided love*. And so, "God so loved the world that He gave His Son, His only Son, the one whom He loved, so that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life." He sent that Son up to Mount Moriah. "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him." How's that? Because this undivided love was also demonstrated on Mount Moriah that day with the demonstration with God's hatred and wrath towards sin. Because when this substitute was provided and the angel of the Lord and the wrath of God was coming down upon Jesus, there was no stopping it. And so, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me!" And then He said, "It is finished." *No more interest payments—I'm paying the principal*.

That's the story that's being unfolded here. Mount Moriah is the place where God touches man because of the blood of Jesus. It's the place where heaven touches earth.

One author says, "Mount Moriah therefore becomes the fulcrum for the universe."

I would say that Mount Moriah becomes the fulcrum for every single human soul. Because you have to answer the question, *What are you going to do with Mount Moriah?* That is the fulfillment of many of the promises that were made to Adam and to Abraham and to David, that a substitute would be provided on that very mountain so that we might not be judged, but have eternal life, because He will pay a debt that we couldn't afford to pay so that we might receive a righteousness that we don't deserve—His righteousness.

When I see this played out, I step back. You see the level of the depth of this truth? It's a vivid picture of the sovereignty of God, is it not? Sovereignty means that God has a plan—that's

good, I have plans—but He has the power to make the plan happen. And He yields that power any way He wants. And His plan is “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” He’s bringing His kingdom here. That’s the point.

Make way for the kingdom of God! You can stand in front and be trampled or you need to follow behind and be led. But there’s no place for copilots. He’s a king. He doesn’t consult us. He tells us, and then we obey. That’s how monarchies work.

This whole storyline is a call to surrender. If he’s in charge (it’s not troublesome to Him—I don’t mean it that way)—if He can orchestrate just this little piece of real estate to constantly be pointing in the same direction as the kingdom of God that’s coming and what to hope for and who to hope for, doesn’t it make us want to step back and say, *Wait a minute*.

One, are some of you in this kingdom of God? Are you one of His children? Are you putting your faith in your own good deeds like David was with his army? Or are you putting your faith in the work of Jesus Christ? He died so that you wouldn’t have to. He rose to prove that the Lord accepted His sacrificial payment.

And then there’s another level here, isn’t there? This is where you just say, *Oh, He is sovereign, by the way. He is sovereign. He’s the King. He’s the King of all Kings*. He’s to be obeyed. We are to follow, not to advise.

Maybe just this story all by itself sobers us up, doesn’t it? It just sobers us up, saying, *Wait a minute. He’s imminent, He’s close. But He’s transcendent. I need to live a life completely surrendered to Him, because that’s the only one that makes sense, in light of His title*. He doesn’t share the throne, is the point. He’s the King.

This clever writer ends the story in chapter 24 of 2 Samuel because he wants us to see that God is out to help redeem even the Davids. He’s trying to show us that David was the best we have, but we’ve got to keep looking. He’s giving us more clues here.

And the third one is because, well, frankly, he’s added a bookend. You know, the bread-and-butter, go-to way to make sure people understand the big idea of a story in a story told is to put your theme at the very front and the very back. You put it at the beginning and the end, in the introduction and in the conclusion. And most people won’t miss it.

And in the story of 1 and 2 Samuel, which is technically one book, starts with Hannah being in a temple crying out to the Lord for justice. And it ends with David on the hill of the new temple crying out to the Lord to stop justice. It starts with Israel saying, “We want a king. We

want to put our identity in a king who's going to give us security and strength." And it ends with a king that has put his security and strength in—not the Lord, but in the number of soldiers that he has. And the point is, again, that David is the best we have. There's no one like him. And he's not enough.

Don't stop hoping; just hope in the right thing: a second Adam, a second David.

His name is David—King David. More is written about David than about anyone else in the Bible except Jesus. It's not even close. He's the original Renaissance man. He's a poet, a musician, an author. But he's also a warrior, a commander, a king. He's a giant killer. There is no one like David. And he's not enough. And his life is one of the few in all of human history that you can say is a hinge point for all of history. Because after David the world is never the same, for no other reason than David brings the shadow of the kingdom of God to planet Earth, where we have God's king in God's city bringing God's presence, so that we might know what the kingdom of God might be like. "Thy kingdom come"—pray this prayer—"Thy will be done."

And now David serves in His renaissance as an arrow. He's pointing towards that kingdom, towards that future King, Jesus, and Jesus' second coming. When Jesus came the first time He brought God's King into God's city and brought God's presence, so He's leading the way for His second coming. He'll be like David the warrior.

David serves as a guide to us. He's a warning to us, isn't he? Guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. And if David could be so good and pure and be corrupted at this level, then how about you and me? Sure.

And David is a foreshadow of things to come—the Good Shepherd, who did, in fact, give His life for His sheep so that He might bring us into the kingdom of God. And now, we long for this day—the kingdom of God returning: God's King in God's city bringing God's presence on Mount Moriah. And listen: this is our only hope. The misery, the evil, that mankind has brought upon itself cannot be fixed by a political party or a person. It is only in the return of the King that our hope is. That's what we live for—the return of the King. That's the lesson this writer wants us to believe.

Would you join me in a word of prayer?

Revelation says, **“And Jesus, the one sitting on the throne, said, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’**

“And then He also said, ‘It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life.’

“So then He took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending from heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal.

“And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city.”

Lord, we long for that day. And we admit, we confess, that we put our hope in things that are trivial or temporary or bent by the sins of Adam. We argue and we fight and we ruin relationships because we place hope in the wrong places.

Lord, I’d ask that You would help us understand where our true hope should lie, and the clues that you’ve given us to live by, that we might be enjoying Your presence and the fellowship of our brothers and sisters more effectively.

Lord, I’d ask that You would pierce our conscience when we are making Your gifts that You have given us into idols and we’ve made them more important and we’re putting our hope and our identity and our safety in those things, so that we might not be devoured by those things; that we might enjoy them and give them back to You.

Lord, in many respects, I’d ask that You would keep us fully aware of the use of the authority that You have given us, even if we’re just one person ahead of our little brother or sister; that we know that we have a responsibility in that, whether we own a company or just throw papers for a living, whatever it might be.

Lord, we long for the day of heaven on earth, Your kingdom come and Your will be done, in our lives as it is in heaven.

I tell you what, let’s do this. We’re going to sing a song about a kingdom and what it’s like to live in the kingdom of God from the Beatitudes. But before that, why don’t we all stand together, and if you want, maybe hold the hand of somebody next to you who you might have met during our meet and greet time—or not. Hey, okay—cooties.

Let's say the Lord's Prayer together as a church. Okay, Grace, let's do this. Ready? Let's go.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts and we have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.